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Regional and Local Historical Societies

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REGIONAL AND LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

THE ST. PETERSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

While this issue of the *Quarterly* is in -press the St. Petersburg Historical Society is a cordial and generous host to the Florida Historical Society for our annual meeting, March 30, 31.

THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

TEQUESTA

The tenth issue of *Tequesta*, *The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida, 1950*, appeared while the last issue of our *Quarterly* was in press. This is an annual, the last five issues of which have been under the editorship of Dr. Charlton W. Tebeau, Head of the Department of History, University of Miami, and President of the Florida Historical Society for the past two years.

The contents of this number as usual is limited to the history and period description of South Florida. Through these successive issues of *Tequesta* the history of that region is being written and published year by year with the aim of a well-rounded whole. The articles in this issue add much to that mosaic, and the editor and the Association which supports *Tequesta* should be gratified with this volume and the continued success of the project.

The five articles in this number relate to periods and subjects from the aboriginal Indians to a brief biography of the late Dr. John C. Gifford, conservationist and Professor of Tropical Forestry in the University of Miami.

The first of these is:

A Tour of Tropical Florida

Soon after the War for Southern Independence, Col. George F. Thompson made an official survey of conditions over much of South Florida for the Freedmen's Bureau in order to learn the products of the soil, the employments of the people, the economic opportunities, and the needs of the Negroes. He visited the counties of Hillsborough,

Manatee, Monroe, Dade, Brevard, Polk, Orange, and Volusia. His reports to Assistant Commissioner Thomas W. Osborn were published in the Tallahassee *Sentinel* during April and May 1867. They are of especial interest because descriptions of the region at that time are few. Prof. George R. Bentley of the University of Florida; who has made a study of this period in Florida, has brought together in this article the important points in these reports. In Tampa and elsewhere Col. Thompson noted that "the Negroes were doing well . . ., they did not want for food or clothing, and that they found plenty of labor at fair wages." At the end of his tour he asserted that, "So far as hostility of the people to Northern men is concerned, I would as soon live in any part of Southern Florida as in the city of Washington or Boston."

Indians of the Matecumbe Region

"At the beginning of Spanish occupation in Florida there were two dominant Indian groups in the southern part of the country. The most important were the Calusa who centered on the lower Gulf coast. On the east coast the Tekesta, located on Biscayne Bay, were the most powerful," says Dr. John M. Goggin, the author of the next article. "Both of these groups were political confederacies rather than tribes."

There are descriptions of the men and the women, of their scant clothing, of their food, which was largely from the sea; also their weapons, transportation, disposal of the dead, the priests and their ceremonies, and whatever else is known of the *ethnology* of the Indians of the Keys.

Of the *history* of these Indians there is much more material available, and the author recounts the important features of the series of contacts and of events from Menéndez who visited the tribes and established missions as far south as Biscayne Bay, Bishop Calderón's visit in 1675, and the sojourn of five Franciscans in 1697.

The author says, "The modern occupation of the Keys apparently began . . . around 1750 . . . The forerunners were men from the Bahama Islands who came for turtles

and mahogany . . . and had frequent brushes with the Indians."

Later came "wrecking," to be followed by Dr. Perrine with his horticultural importations and experiments. Then there was nothing noteworthy on Matecumbe until Flagler came along with his Key West railroad.

An Army Surgeon on the Lower East Coast, 1838

During the Seminole War Jacob Rhett Motte, an Army surgeon, "faithfully kept a journal in which he recorded, in a 'fascinating style, his travels, experiences, activities, observations and impressions.'" In 1838 he accompanied an expedition of fifty picked dragoons, under the command of Col. William S. Harney, from Fort. Jupiter southwards along the coast "to find Sam Jones and his band of resolute and vindictive Mickasukie Indians."

Establishing his camp south of Fort. Dallas, they embarked in fifteen canoes and skirted the coast in the open sea. Motte describes the impenetrable coast and the other difficulties encountered. At length; coming upon a trail which led to the Indian camp, they followed it and surprised the Indians. Resistance was spirited for a time, but finally the Indians gave ground and fled after a charge by the regulars, being able to remove virtually none of their belongings, which included bows and arrows, cooking utensils, with large quantities of coontie or arrow root, fresh venison, skins of deer, bear, and alligators, and also a bag of gun powder. There was little loss of men on either side, and as pursuit was impracticable the force returned to their boats.

Motte's entire journal has been edited with notes for early publication by James F. Sunderman who has selected this portion on South Florida for inclusion in *Tequesta* and added an introduction with many of his notes for clarification.

Across South Florida in 1882

This is an extended account of an expedition sent out by a newspaper of New Orleans, the *Times-Democrat*,

to investigate the Everglades, as noted in an editorial, "The 'country generally is very anxious just now to get information about this new territory which will soon be thrown open to settlement and cultivation."

The "*Times-Democrat* 'exploring party" left Kissimmee in two sailboats with supplies for thirty days. They followed the Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee from which their boats were dragged overland to the canal then being dredged by the Atlantic, Guif Coast and Okeechobee Land: Company between Okeechobee and Lake Hicpochee and the Caloosahatchee river, from whence they followed the river to Fort Myers, having travelled 500 miles in about *two* weeks. The *Times-Democrat* then announced proudly that they were "the first white men who ever succeeded in making the journey."

The party continued up the coast to Charlotte Harbor, Tampa, and Cedar Keys.

The first portion of the journal of the expedition is printed entire in this number of *Tequesta* and the remainder will appear in the next issue. An introduction is included written by Morgan D. Peoples and Edwin A. Davis.

The feature of the thirty-seventh Program Meeting of the Association held on January 31 last, was a paper on newspapers of the lower East Coast, "Newspapers of America's Last Frontier," by Jeanne Bellamy, herself a newspaper writer of the present area which was that frontier. Miss Bellamy twice received awards in her school days for essays on Florida's history. The origin and history of the papers from West Palm Beach to Homestead made an interesting narrative.

A series of colored slides of historic sites in Florida furnished by Mrs. L. G. Lewis, Chairman of the Dade County Committee of the Colonial Dames of America, was shown. They were described by Mr. Oliver Griswold.

Other Program Meetings are planned for the remainder of the season.

THE JACKSONVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The Quarterly Program Meeting of the Jacksonville Historical Society on March 7 was featured by an address of Mr. Charles Jackson Williams on "Practicable Aspects of History." Several items of Floridiana recently discovered in the Jacksonville area were exhibited.

MANATEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Manatee County Historical Society, which is cooperating with the Florida Historical Society, meets every month this winter, and is featuring in its papers experiences and events of the early part of the twentieth century.

For the November meeting Mrs. E. C. Balis gave the history of the founding and developing of the Episcopal Church in Bradenton.

In December Miss Alice Fry recounted her experience teaching in a one-room school of twelve pupils from five to nineteen years of age at Rye Bridge, a tiny settlement.

In January Miss Ruth Abel spoke of the early days of Terra Ceia Island, once known only for its Indian mounds, now for its extensive gladioli farms.

These reports are being typed and filed, and will afford valuable material to researchers in future years.

THE OSCEOLA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

At the meeting of the Osceola County Historical Society on February 16, Mr. Warren Wilkinson spoke on the early history of the area.

The more than life-size statue of Osceola which was presented to the Society by the Florida Historical Society has been placed in the Osceola County Court House.

The museum planned as a memorial to Mrs. Elizabeth Aultman Cantrell was told of in the last issue of the *Quarterly*.

YELLOW BLUFF 1861-1865

Duval county chapters of The United Daughters of the

Confederacy have erected a marker on the site of a fortification of the War for Southern Independence, near New Berlin in Duval county. This is inscribed:

Dedicated to the Memory of the Confederate Soldiers who defended Jacksonville, 1861-1869.

DELAND IS SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD

The history of DeLand was shown in several pageants during a Diamond Jubilee Celebration, March 5-10. One reenacted a gathering in 1876 at which Henry A. DeLand offered to donate a site and one-half the cost of erecting a building for a school which would be used for divine worship on Sundays. It was voted to name the town DeLand "in perpetuation of the name of its liberal founder."