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membership@myfloridahistory.org



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TEQUESTA Vol. XIII

THE JOURNAL OF THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF
SOUTHERN FLORIDA

The 1953 issue of *Tequesta* appeared after the last number of this *Quarterly* went to press and contains three articles of unusual historical interest. Together they make this the most valuable issue of the thirteen which have been published-in fact, perhaps no other one issue of any Florida historical periodical has included three articles of equal importance. These are:

F.E.C. R'Y. EXTENSION TO KEY WEST

The Building of the Overseas Railway to Key West is by Carlton J. Corliss who, as Chief Clerk of the headquarters office of construction, served under the Chief Engineers J. C. Meredith and W. J. Krome; so he writes from a personal knowledge of what went on, and his twenty-page article with its map is authoritative and informative.

SOUTH FLORIDA'S FIRST BOTANIST

John L. Blodgett was the first botanist to make an extensive exploration and plant collection in South Florida. He settled at Key West in 1838 as a physician and druggist, and until 1853 explored the Florida keys at intervals and sent the unusual plants he collected to John Torrey (the leading botanist of his day in the United States) at Columbia University. Torrey later came to Florida and wrote of our vegetation himself. This *Tequesta* article is by Dr. R. Bruce Ledin who taught botany at the University of Miami for several years and is now horticulturist on the staff of the Sub-Tropical Experiment Station at Homestead. He is author of "Compositae of South Florida" and co-author of "400 Plants of South Florida."

What is known of Blodgett and his work is recounted here by Dr. Ledin, with reference to the rarer plants which he collected and which are still preserved in certain herbariums in the North. Reproduced is a long and interesting letter from

Blodgett to Torrey. There are extensive foot-notes which form a bibliography.

THE "SPANISH INDIANS"

The most extensive article (40 pages) is on the so-called "Spanish Indians" of South Florida and their noteworthy chief *Ckakaika*. William C. Sturtevant, as a graduate student of Yale University, has spent several summers and most of the past year in visiting the camps of the present-day Seminoles and gathering information on them for his doctoral dissertation. He had become interested in what is recorded on the so-called Spanish Indians, now extinct as a tribe, who were quite separated and more or less distinct from the Seminoles of South Florida. So one of his projects has been to compare those records with Seminole tradition relating to the tribe. He says "The oral traditions of the local Indians are a neglected major source of data on the history of Florida. This paper provides an example of one of the types of historical information which are recoverable from the present day Florida Seminole."

After recounting what can be found in documentary evidence and what he learned from Seminole tradition the author writes: "There were certainly 'Seminole' bands, and individuals with mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry. There was probably a small group of 'Choctaws'. . . . There was probably a Calusa settlement. . . . There was certainly also a band of 'Spanish Indians'. These. . . were perhaps Choctaw, perhaps Calusa remnants, or perhaps a more independent Seminole band." Included also is "Note on Orthography and Personal Names" (5 pages), a map of the area, and a comprehensive bibliography.