

1972

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Recommended Citation

Graham, Thomas S. (1972) "Who Wrote "Barbour's Florida"?," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 51 : No. 4 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol51/iss4/7>

WHO WROTE "BARBOUR'S *FLORIDA*"?

by THOMAS S. GRAHAM*

IN THE years following the Civil War Americans in increasing numbers were becoming interested in Florida as a winter resort, a refuge for the infirm, and a frontier of opportunity. A brisk demand developed for accurate information about the state, which was romantically envisioned as the "Italy of America" or disparaged as a wilderness of swamp and everglades. To satisfy the market for knowledge about Florida a considerable quantity of newspaper stories, magazine articles, and tourist guide books were produced. Harriet Beecher Stowe, a pioneer in promoting Florida, sent out a series of articles from her winter retreat at Mandarin which were collected in the book *Palmetto Leaves* (Boston, 1873). Sidney Lanier painted a lyrical portrait of the land of flowers in his *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History* (Philadelphia, 1875).

A leading publisher of guide books was D. Appleton Co. of New York, which devoted a substantial part of its *Illustrated Hand-Book of American Winter Resorts* to Florida. In 1882 Appleton published a book that would become a classic among Florida tour guides. *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* combined the personal observations of a visitor to the state, intelligence on Florida topics of interest, and specific information on transportation and accommodations for the traveler in Florida. It was reprinted with updated information in 1883, 1884, 1885, and 1887. In 1964 the University of Florida Press printed a facsimile edition in its Quadricentennial series with an introduction by Emmet B. Peter, Jr.

In preparing his introduction, Mr. Peter found that very little was known about the books supposed author George M. Barbour. Checks with the successors of D. Appleton Co. and the Florida State Library added nothing to the few facts which could be learned from the book itself. Barbour came to Florida in January 1880, with the tour party of former President Grant, and subsequently worked for several months in various capacities

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for the South Florida Railroad. He had been a reporter for the *Chicago Times*, writing articles for northern newspapers prior to the publication of *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers*. During a swing around the state with Commissioner of Immigration Seth French he penetrated the peninsula as far as Titusville on the east coast and Tampa on the west coast, and he later accompanied Assistant Commissioner Samuel Fairbanks on a train trip from Jacksonville across the northern counties of the state to Pensacola. This is all that can be learned from the text and Peter's introduction, yet there is more to be known about Barbour's sojourn in Florida and an interesting story as to how *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* came to be written.

In late November 1881, while Appleton was distributing the book to dealers for sale during the winter season, Barbour began work for the *Florida Daily Times*, a new Jacksonville newspaper. The *Daily Times* prospectus listed Barbour as co-editor with Charles H. Jones.¹ Formerly a writer in New York for Appleton and a recent immigrant to Florida, Jones had been acknowledged in the introduction to *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* for his "aid in the arrangement and revision" of the book.² At the *Daily Times* Jones was to handle the editorial and literary work, while Barbour, who claimed ten years experience in western journalism, would manage the practical newspaper side of the business, as well as state and local news. *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* was advertised prominently in the *Daily Times*, and was given away as a premium to subscribers who agreed to take the paper for six months or more.

Within a short time Barbour became embroiled in a dispute with Jacksonville's older, more established newspaper, the *Daily Florida Union*, which charged that he had been spreading false rumors about the *Daily Union's* finances while canvassing for subscribers in Central Florida.³ Barbour denied the charges, and soon departed on another canvassing circuit to Middle Florida in January 1882.⁴ Then on February 10, 1882, a notice by Jones appeared in the *Daily Times* stating that Barbour had ceased to be an employee of the newspaper, and that, contrary to

1. Jacksonville *Florida Daily Times*, November 29, 1881.

2. George M. Barbour, *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* (New York, 1881), 5.

3. Jacksonville *Florida Daily Times*, December 28, 1881.

4. *Ibid.*, January 17, 1882.

popular impression, he had never owned any interest in the *Daily Times*. Jones explained that Barbour's contract had been terminated on January 9, and that he had been sent out to collect subscriptions and advertisements under a new contract, but he had instead worked "treacherously and insidiously" against the interests of the *Daily Times*.⁵ Later Jones charged that Barbour had been telling potential patrons that the paper was secretly Republican in sympathy, a suicidal declaration in Democratic Florida.⁶ Barbour departed Florida for Chicago, apparently never to return to the state.

On the day following the announcement of Barbour's discharge, Jones had another revelation to make: Barbour was not the author of *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers*. It had been written by Jones himself from an original manuscript by Barbour, plus other materials and information collected by Jones. The preface and seven complete chapters were written entirely by Jones, while "not ten successive lines" of the text remained as Barbour had originally set them down.⁷ Barbour and Jones shared a contract with Appleton giving them equal shares from the profits of the book.⁸

Jones's involvement with the book began in the spring of 1881 when Barbour first submitted a manuscript to Appleton for publication. Jones, who had written several books for Appleton and was an editor of Appleton's *Hand-Book of Winter Resorts*, was asked to examine Barbour's draft. Dubious about some points, Jones wrote a letter to the Reverend Mr. T. W. Moore of Fruit Cove, an orange grower whose *Treatise on Orange Culture* had been published by E. R. Pelton, another of Jones's employers. When Moore replied that some of Barbour's statements were erroneous and would tend to harm Florida, Jones decided to visit Florida to have a look for himself and to gather additional materials for the book.⁹ Jones sailed from New York on June 3, relieved to escape the rigors of his editorial duties in New York.¹⁰ He met Moore in Jacksonville, and together

5. *Ibid.*, February 10, 1882.

6. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, August 2, 1884.

7. Jacksonville *Florida Daily Times*, February 11, 1882.

8. *Ibid.*, March 29, 1882.

9. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, July 3, 1887.

10. Charles H. Jones to Julian Abernethy, May 25, June 3, 1881, Charles H. Jones Papers, Xerox copy, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

they supposedly toured “a large part of the state,” but it is uncertain just how extensive their travels really were. During his three-week stay in Florida Jones conferred with former Governor Harrison Reed and with Assistant Commissioner Fairbanks.¹¹

A careful scrutiny of *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* reveals the composite nature of the writing which went into it. Some chapters and sections of chapters are evidently parts of Barbour’s original narrative, detailing his own perceptions and personal experiences. Chapters three and four describe his tours with Commissioner French and Assistant Commissioner Fairbanks. The account of a trip up the Oklawaha River in chapter seven is ostensibly by Barbour, while chapter fourteen tells of his labors with the South Florida Railroad. More personal sketches, probably by Barbour, can be found imbedded in other chapters, but much of the remainder of the book is written in typical flat, impersonal guidebook style. These sections are largely the work of Jones. Chapter two on Florida’s geography, chapter thirteen on history, and chapters fifteen through eighteen on agriculture are the clearest examples of standard-formula tour-guide writing. Long sections of the book are acknowledged as coming from Bureau of Immigration pamphlets, newspaper clippings, books on Florida, and local commercial publications.¹² This reliance on promotional literature and biased sources led one contemporary critic to say that *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* was not the “inside story” which it claimed to be.¹³

One source Jones used without acknowledgement was his own Appleton *Hand-Book of Winter Resorts*, from which he plagiarized long sections with only the slightest revision in wording. For example, the passage “a cluster of rocks and sandbanks called the Tortugas” in *Hand-Book of Winter Resorts* becomes “the cluster of sand-heaped rocks called the Tortugas” in *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers*.¹⁴ Several of the book’s illustrations also came from *Hand-Book of Winter Resorts*. An accomplished “Grub Street” writer, Jones considered such practices simply part of the business.¹⁵

11. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, July 3, 1887.

12. For example, see Barbour, *Florida*, 26-29, 73-78, 89-90, 149-52.

13. Review of *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers*, *The Critic*, II (July 1882), 187.

14. *Illustrated Hand-Book of American Winter Resorts* (New York, 1887), 3; Barbour, *Florida*, 17.

15. Jones to Abernethy, March 14, 1881, Jones Papers, copy, P. K. Yonge

In spite of Jones's prominent role in writing *Florida for Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers*, it has remained "Barbour's Florida" down to the present—a surprising fact since Jones became a much more important figure in Florida than the shadowy Barbour. The *Daily Times* soon absorbed the *Daily Union*, becoming the *Florida Times-Union*, the state's premier newspaper in the years before the turn of the century. As its editor Jones spent a great deal of energy in campaigns to advertise and develop his adopted state. Jones's *Times-Union* originated the idea of the Sub-Tropical Exposition which attracted President Cleveland to Jacksonville in 1888.¹⁶ That same year Jones left Florida, becoming editor of the *St. Louis Republic* and later Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. When Jones's own health failed his doctors recommended that he settle in a warm climate, but he rejected the state he had praised as a haven for invalids because of its humidity and chose to retire in Europe, dying in Italy in 1913.¹⁷

Library of Florida History.

16. For an account of Jones's career in Jacksonville, see Richard A. Martin, *The City Makers* (Jacksonville, 1972), 132-37, *passim*.
 17. Jones to Dora Jones, December 6, 1909, Jones Papers, in possession of Mrs. Dorothy Freeman, Bat Cave, North Carolina.