

2024-2025

EXPLORE



The Putnam House, Palatka, Fla.—14



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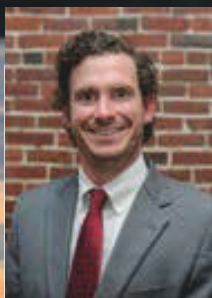
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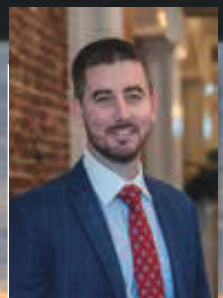
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Explore Putnam's past to better appreciate its present

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We sometimes get so concerned with what's happening at the moment or what's on the horizon that we forget to properly acknowledge our past. That is part of the reason we decided to go back to our roots, so to speak, for this year's Explore magazine.

With the exception of this introductory piece, the rest of the pieces in this year's magazine are stories that originally published no later than the 1980s. For reference, one of the people who worked on this project was born about 10 years after the most recent story was published. I was born only two or three years before that story first ran.

In a way, this year's Explore is for the Palatka Daily News staff as much as it is for our readers.

In these pages are real-life tales of life in Putnam County in the 19th and early 20th centuries. You can read about notable properties in Crescent City and how Pomona Park was forced to adopt its moniker because it kept getting confused with a South Florida city.

We have stories about how Northern railroad titans set up shop in Interlachen because of the town's idyllic setting. You'll find out how dredging played a role in Florahome's development.

What may be surprising to many is how Palatka and other areas of Putnam County were social hubs for local residents and well-to-do visitors from across the nation.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn – and in some cases relearn – about the place where I was raised and spent most of my adult life. I'm sure you will find the stories in this year's Explore just as fascinating as I have.

There is almost always more to something than what meets the eye. That's certainly the case with Putnam County.

Brandon D. Oliver
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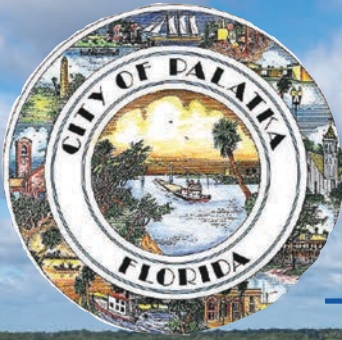
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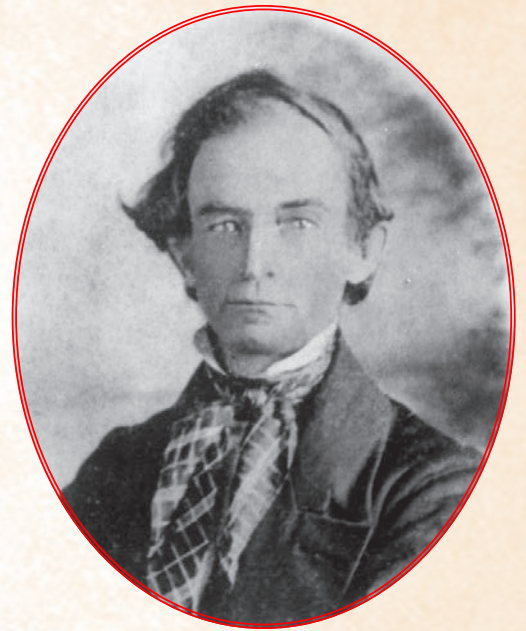
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County namesake often overlooked in history



Benjamin A. Putnam

When St. Johns County officials wanted to create a second county on Jan. 11, 1849, a bill was introduced in the General Assembly to name it Hilaka County. However, during a second reading of the proposed name, a man cited only as Mr. Tanner proposed that “Putnam” should be the name.

The suggestion was presumably to honor Benjamin Alexander Putnam, who was the Speaker of the Assembly, a fighter in the Seminole War and a St. Augustine judge. One man named Mr. Baldwin objected, but the General

Assembly overruled him, and a vote of 26 to one created Putnam County with Palatka as the county seat.

For some reason, perhaps known only to the whim of fate, Putnam has not received the recognition he deserves.

Not only is Putnam County his namesake, but Putnam founded the Florida Historical Society.

Unlike William D. Moseley, the first governor after Florida became a state, Putnam’s grave in Palatka’s Westview Cemetery attracts few people. Not many pause to read the words on the tall monument sheltered by aged trees that stands with others from Putnam’s family.

The tombstones rest at Westview for Putnam, his wife, daughter, grandchildren and other descendants who reflect ties to the illustrious South Carolina statesman John C. Calhoun of the early 1800s.

Putnam was active in politics before Florida’s admission into the Union, so it was not surprising that Tanner wanted to name the county for him.

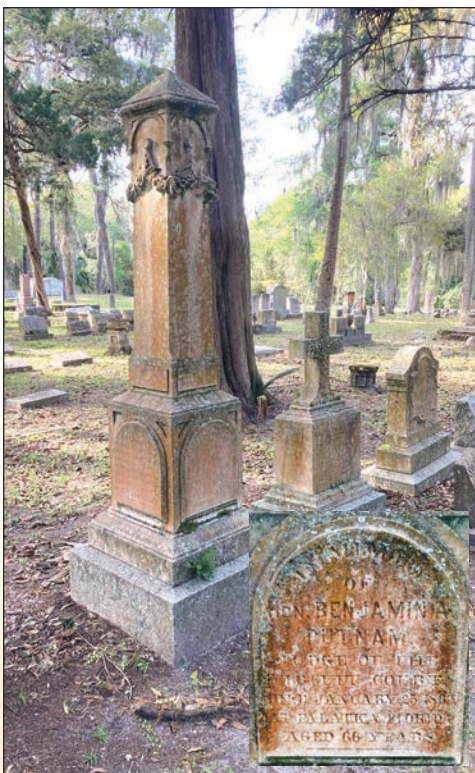
When Gov. John Branch called for elections to be held in 1845, the Democrats nominated Moseley for governor and David Levy, a candidate for the House of Representatives in Congress. The Whigs nominated Richard K. Call of Tallahassee for

governor and Putnam for the House. Some historians say the Democrats won the election with the flow of many spirits.

Putnam was a principal in the Whig party, which had opposed Florida entering the Union as one state. He signed documents protesting the suggestion, historical records show.

Whigs contended that under the Treaty of Cession between Spain and the U.S. in 1819, East and West Florida were ceded as separate provinces. As separate states, they thought they would have more voice in “the Councils of the Nation,” and separate states would better serve commercial, political and agricultural interests.

Putnam was born in 1803 at the Putnam plantation near Savannah, Georgia. He was the nephew of Israel Putnam of Revolutionary War fame. His father was an Army surgeon in that war. He was educated in the North, entering Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts in 1817 at 14 and Harvard two years later. In 1823, he received a law degree.



The weathered tombstone of Benjamin A. Putnam is found in Westview Cemetery, 2024.

Continued on page 8



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After graduation, he and his widowed mother moved to St. Augustine, where he became affiliated with U.S. Territorial Judge James L. Smith. He married Helen Kirby, the judge's sister-in-law, in 1830. A year later, a daughter Catherine was born.

During the Second Seminole War, Putnam organized the Second Regiment Florida Militia and became a major. Historians said he was wounded in a skirmish with the Native Americans in the Big Scrub region and carried a bullet in his leg thereafter. His retreat from Bulow to St. Augustine caused historians to refer to him as an "unsuccessful military leader."

In 1848, Putnam was elected to the General Assembly of Florida and became Speaker the next year. It was during that year, 1849, that Putnam County was separated from St. Johns County.

Putnam organized the Florida Historical Society in 1855 and was elected president the same year. In 1856, he was appointed to fill an unexpired term of judge of the Eastern Circuit William A. Forward. In 1860, he was elected to serve an eight-year term. Once elected judge, he no longer used the title of major. He is referred to as judge on his monument in Westview Cemetery.

Like others too old to fight in the Civil War, Putnam took refuge inland, away from the river and the coast. He traveled to Madison where he stayed for the duration. After the war, he moved to Palatka where he bought the Joseph P. Webster home in 1866 at the corner of Main and 1st streets. He became active in Palatka's development with his nephew, James Burt.



In 1845, before a new county was separated from St. Johns, Alachua, Marion and Orange counties and named after Benjamin Putnam, Florida looked like this in Mitchell's New World Atlas, copyrighted 1846. - PDN Archives

Putnam died in Palatka on Jan. 25, 1869. His wife lived until 1888.

Their daughter married John C. Calhoun, the eldest son of John Caldwell Calhoun, the American statesman and parliamentarian of South Carolina. When he died soon after their marriage, Catherine married her husband's brother, Lowndes Calhoun. After her second husband died, she moved to Palatka with her three sons, Benjamin Putnam, John Caldwell and William Lowndes.

Today, the graves of Benjamin A. Putnam and his wife Helen, Catherine (Kate) and her sons, John and William, lie along with many other members of the Calhoun family near the open chapel in Westview Cemetery.

Benjamin Alexander Putnam, jurist, Indian fighter, Assembly Speaker, Florida Historical Society founder and Palatka developer, long identified with the state's early history. So far in modern times, has failed to draw the attention and recognition that he deserves.

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When the Gem City glittered

To many people, especially newcomers, Palatka always seemed to have slumbered in the sun along the banks of the sleepy St. Johns River. But if you ask someone who has lived here long, you'll come up with a completely different picture of Palatka. And if you talk to someone over 70, you'll not notice that their description of life in Palatka will be laced with adjectives like "exciting," "elegant" and "sophisticated."

It's historical knowledge that before the turn of the 20th century, Palatka was the No. 1 tourist center in the entire country. It was the St. Johns River that opened Florida for tourism, and for several years Palatka, nicknamed the "Gem City," was as far south as the railroads went.

The picturesque river was the main attraction, and steamboats, like the Crescent, plied the St. Johns River. In Palatka, one could board a steamboat for an adventuresome cruise up the river to the wilds of the Ocklawaha River. Many notable people, including Civil War Gen. Robert E. Lee and the poet Sidney Lanier, took the exciting voyage into the wilderness.

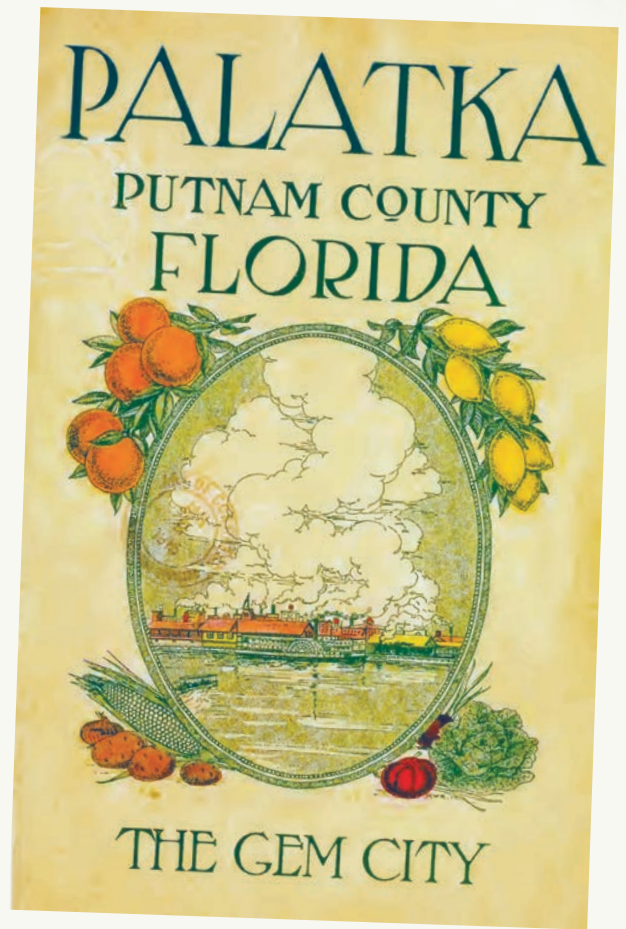
Steamboat lines, like the Hart and Clyde Lines, operated on the St. Johns River out of Palatka, carrying passengers and cargo. There were even two large ships that provided transportation from New York City to Palatka; one of them was named The City of Palatka.

During that time, the riverfront was known as a port and it had its own inspector of the revenue of the Port of Palatka.

"The river was a wonderful thing when I was young," recalls resident Clara Andrews. "We had row boat trips up the river to dances that would last all night."

They would row back to Palatka in the morning and such activities hardly represent what one would have expected of the prim and proper Victorian era.

To accommodate the many tourists who visited the area, several ornate hotels were built. But the largest of all was the second Putnam House, which was built in 1885. The elegant 500-room structure covered the entire 200 block between St. Johns Avenue and Reid Street in Palatka and was three stories high. It was built in a horseshoe shape and had a courtyard planted with "the



The cover of a brochure published by Palatka Board of Trade

- Courtesy of Library of Congress Archives

choicest flowers and tropical plants" in the center.

The hotel was equipped with an elaborate elevator and sported electric lights. Guests dined on local specialties, including fresh seafood and vegetables, prepared by several fine chefs and served in a sumptuously appointed dining room.

For local residents, an evening at the Putnam House was a special treat and often a gala affair, for it was the site of many parties and social events. The parties of that era often were of various themes that would include costumes or special entertainments that pertained to the subject chosen.

Palatka's downtown business area bustled with activity day and night

Continued on page 12



Hart Line River Steamers postcard - PDN Archives

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Landmark reminder of days when horses and man shared a drink

On the west side of the Putnam County Courthouse stands a granite fountain that, for many years, served the community. It was a landmark and gathering place in its day. The fountain has been moved several times and today no longer serves its utilitarian purpose.

But in 1891, the Ladies Civic Improvement Association placed the fountain at the corner of Lemon and 2nd streets, and people used it daily. Because horses were the means of transportation then, the fountain was just as vital to the animals as gas stations are today. Water came into it from an artesian well.

Palatka had a horse-drawn trolley system back then, J. H. Millican recalled. The system regularly circled the corner, pausing at the fountain for horses to quench their thirst.

Clara Andrews remembered the water was "so cool and clear." The bubbling artesian well was popular
Continued on page 14



An artesian well supplied water to the granite fountain when it stood at the intersection of Lemon and 2nd streets.- *PDN Archives*



Postcard of Kupperbush's New European Hotel. - *PDN Archives*

Glitter *continued from page 10*

when ornate gas lamps illuminated the walkways where gaily dressed ladies and gentlemen strolled and made their way to parties or to either of Palatka's two "opera houses," Andrews said.

The opera house was in one sense a theater, and the best of the silent screen appeared there nightly to the strains of melodramatic or comical piano music. But the opera house was also the scene of plays, pageants, and popular minstrel shows.

Transportation in town took many forms, but the most picturesque was Palatka's Rapid Transit system of street cars drawn by mule-power. No doubt that the cool, bubbling fountain in the center of Lemon Street and Second Street was a popular stop for the street car mules.

Many wealthy winter residents built ornate Victorian

vacation cottages, many of which remain in use today. Together with the tourists, these visitors brought an aura of excitement and sophistication to the city of Palatka. The town became, in a sense, a boom town of tourism, for when the southern part of the state was opened up by the railroads, Palatka's tourist trade withered away.

Few remnants of Palatka's days of glory remain. When the tourists left, Palatka, once again, became a sleepy village carrying on its turpentine and sawmill operations. But there came a day when these, too, became of the past.



Postcard of Lemon Street looking east. - *PDN Archives*



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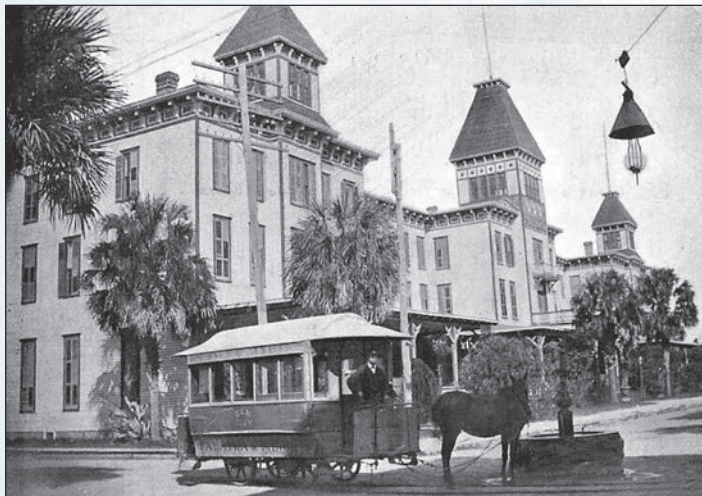


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Postcard of the fountain at Lemon and 2nd streets. - PDN Archives



Putnam House and Palatka Rapid Transit
- Courtesy of Florida Memory

Fountain continued from page 12

with many of the townspeople who used it to fill a pitcher with drinking water.

“It was a place for everyone to stop and give their horse a drink and get a drink for himself too,” she said. The fountain was always kept clean and made a pretty addition to the

downtown area, Andrews said.

Some time between 1906 and 1909, Lemon Street was bricked over, and the fountain was moved to the east side of the courthouse, where it continued to be used. Still a gathering place, people tied their horses to the branches of the nearby oak tree, now known as the Maltby Oak.

As the years passed and automobiles became common, a horse trough had little purpose, and again, the fountain was moved. Some people say it stood for a time near the front of the courthouse. But in any event, it was moved to its present location on the west side of the courthouse, where it no longer serves its purpose as a

fountain. However, it remains a quiet reminder of a way of life that has long since passed.



Mary Kaye Wells/Palatka Daily News
A fountain from 1891 sits on the Putnam Courthouse lawn in 2024.



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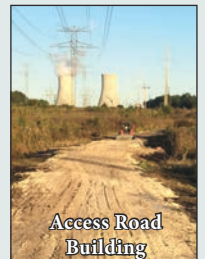
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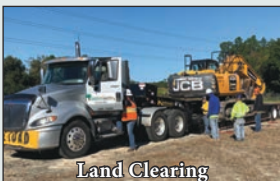
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In its heyday, the Putnam House had some 500 rooms. The massive building took up the entire 200 block between Reid and Lemon (St. Johns Avenue) streets.

-PDN Archives

What did Henry B. Plant, Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher and Clara Barton have in common?

They were all guests at Palatka's famous Putnam House 100 years ago.

The Putnam House

The Putnam House was an imposing luxury hotel spread over what is now the 200 block of Palatka between Reid Street and St. Johns Avenue. It was the largest and most luxurious of several hostleries built during the riverboat era when Palatka was the jumping-off place. Back then, the St. Johns River served as the only thoroughfare for travel into rural Florida.

In 1986, the Daily News obtained the registration book for the Putnam House, which had visitors' signatures from December 18, 1875, to April 29, 1878, when the hotel opened for seasonal business. A little detective work gave insight into the visitors' lives.

Among the names of the ordinary tourists are sprinkled the signatures of some of the famous people of the era.

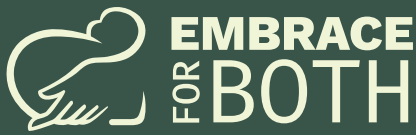
The Putnam House was built sometime before 1869 and destroyed by fire in 1884. It was rebuilt in the same

location where it remained until 1922. One wing moved to Ormond Beach and became part of a resort hotel there. The remainder was dismantled and the material was used in the construction of houses and commercial buildings in the area.

This hotel was just one of several that played host to the barons of Wall Street and the captains of industry. Florida, so recently reopened to travel following the Civil War, was still awash with memories of the noble Seminoles and their fight to remain a part of the state's population. The Putnam House was a popular frontier for those with money to spend and a spirit for adventure.

The large registration book contains 284 pages of names written in varied styles, but largely in the beautiful and embellished scrolls from a period when people took pride in personal things like handwriting.

Continued on page 18



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The Putnam Hotel, Palatka, Fla.

Postcard of the Putnam Hotel (House) - PDN Archives

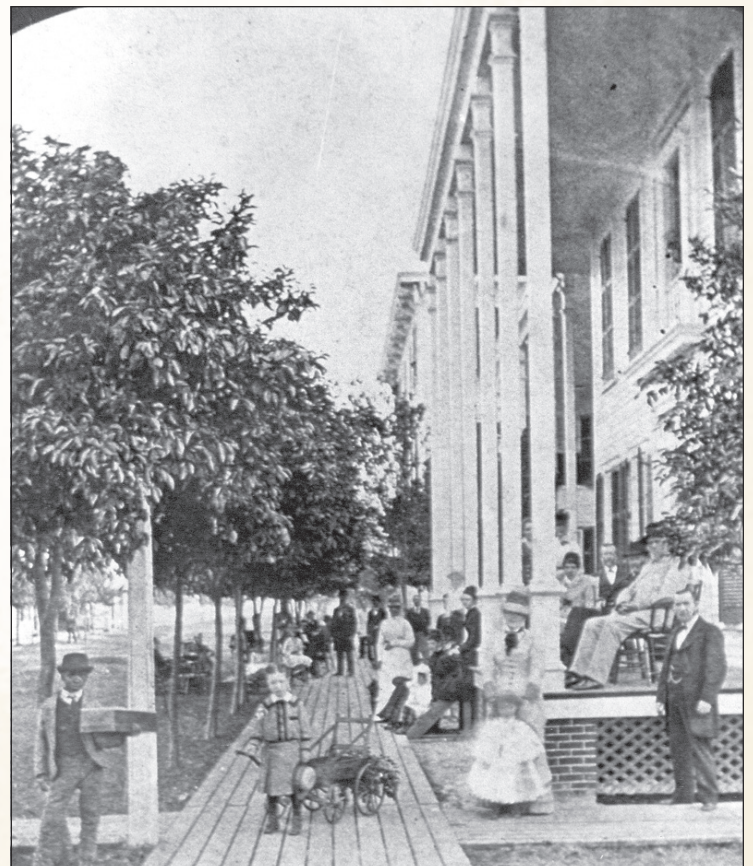
House *continued from page 16*

The book is 11 inches by 16 inches and bound in heavy cloth with leather-reinforced corners. Each page has a printed heading with the hotel's name and columns printed for the date, residence and time. A black leather block is attached to the front and printed in gold leaf with an ornate border. The price tag, still affixed to the inside back cover, reads \$10.

Following are some facts, and perhaps some fantasies, gleaned from its pages.

It appears the passenger boats arrived on Wednesday and Thursday because those days show more registrants. Many parties registered for a night and proceeded to places like Silver Springs, Sanford or other points along the river, before returning three days later.

Guests checked in from many states along the eastern seaboard, mostly from New York or similar areas. Visitors from 10 countries, representing Canada, England, Belgium, Cuba, Austria, Russia, Scotland, Switzerland, Nova Scotia, and Italy, also took a room.



Putnam House guests April 14, 1881. - PDN Archives

Continued on page 20

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Sometimes, travelers from different parts of the country shared rooms. Overflow guests were housed in private homes, namely the Prices and Pratts.

A new wing was built, or at least was opened, in January 1876, because rooms 101 to 104 were suddenly used. In February, 17 rooms, 116 to 125, were entered. Prior to that, room numbers went only to 99. Room 126 was probably a dormitory because several people entered there on the same nights.

In the brief span of three seasons, the Putnam House being just one of the many hotels in Palatka, numerous notable people visited the area. They included:

- Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher, wife of the famous preacher and lecturer (1813-1887). She checked in on Saturday, April 8, 1876, and stayed in room 61. She must have been pleased with the trip because she returned on March 16, 1877.

- Clara Barton (1821-1912), who founded the American Red Cross Society and supervised relief work during the yellow fever pestilence in Florida. She checked in during February 1887, and stayed in room 68.

- T.A. Nast, possibly Thomas Nast (1840-1902), the American cartoonist and caricaturist who won fame with Civil War and Reconstruction Era cartoons, stayed, too. He was best known for attacking the Tweed ring and designing the Democratic donkey, the G.O.P elephant, and the Tammany tiger.

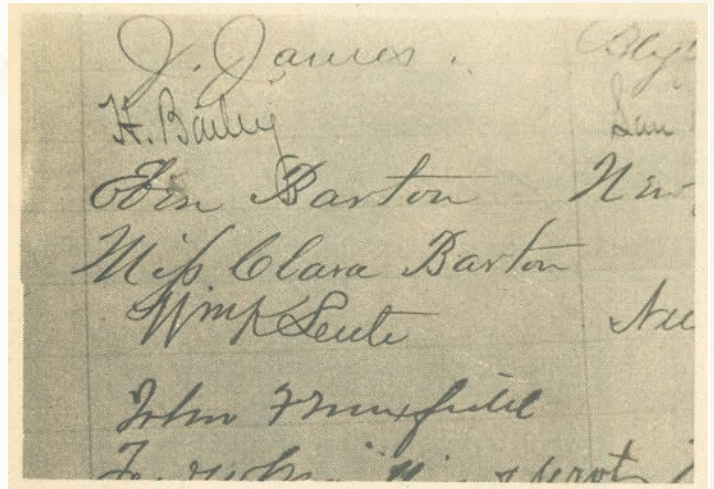
- Jay Gould, an American financier who gained notoriety by wresting control of the Erie Railroad away from Cornelius Vanderbilt.

- Mr. Fairbanks, possibly Thaddeus Fairbanks who invented the cast iron plow and platform scales.

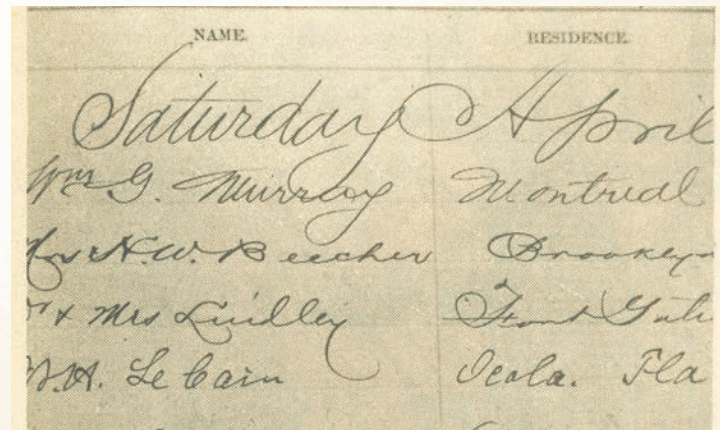
Continued on page 22

THE PUTNAM HOUSE.				
DATE	NAME	RESIDENCE	APARTMENTS	TIME
Friday February 16 th 1877	Continued			
11.5	W. Dailor	St. Albans, Vt.	29	✓
	Hugh Adams	Albany	29	✓
Saturday February 17 th 1877				
	Prof. S. D. Willaway	Brooklyn, Ct.	40	✓
	Wm. Hewitt	Dayville	✓	✓
	G. B. Ayer	Jacksonville	✓	✓
	J. James	Northwood, N.H.	58	✓
	H. Bailey	Lowell, Mass.	✓	✓
1	Edw. Barton	N.Y.C.	66	✓
1	Miss Clara Barton		68	✓
	Wm. Leete	New York	18	✓
	John Fairbanks	N.Y.	40	✓
2	Prof. Wm. Brewster	Flt.	24	✓
2	C. H. Anderson & wife	N.Y.	28	✓
2	Francis DuBois	"	6	✓
2 1/2	H. B. Savage	Albany, N.Y.	4	✓
Monday February 19 th 1877				
	Mr. C. Martin	N.Y.	52	✓
	Mr. Wm. Van Doren	New York	71-63	✓
	Eugene C. Beck	New York	49	✓
	M. B. Lloyd	Greenwich	45	✓
1 1/2	Geo. P. Chapman	Brooklyn, N.Y.	27	✓

Courtesy of J. M. Dezell



Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, signed the Putnam House Register -PDN Archives



Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher, wife of the famous preacher and lecturer, was among other notables registering the Putnam House.

-PDN Archives

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DINING HALL. PUTNAM HOUSE.

The Putnam House dining hall ran the length of the building.

- PDN Archives

House *continued from page 20*

- Joshua Speed, the Springfield storekeeper that shared his upstairs bedroom with an impoverished Abraham Lincoln when he went there to practice law. Speed became a lifelong friend of Lincoln.

- H.B. Plant, builder of Florida railroads.

Other prominent surnames are sprinkled throughout the three-year span, like Lanier, Taft, Pick, Har, Pierpoint, Morse Whitney and Astor.

There was Joseph Day from Boston who purchased Fort Gates, and George H. Grosvenor, the famous family, who later founded the National Geographic Society. J. E. Breckenridge, Vice-President under Buchanan, Sir Robert Ambercromby, Henry Kellogg, and George S. Dow.

A couple of other familiar names in the local are W. M. Newbold, of Dunn's Lake (later called Crescent Lake), a pioneer family of that area whose ancestors are still prominent residents and C. Codrington, of the "Florida Agriculture" of Jacksonville, a pioneer Florida publishing family. The Codrington family was once associated with the Palatka Daily News.

And, probably as a joke, somebody signed in on March 29, 1877 under the infamous name of John W. Booth, the man who 11 years earlier had assassinated Lincoln.

The Daily News found certain entries taken from the registration book to be of interest.

- Friday, Dec. 24, 1875, H.S. Sanford from Sanford stopped by when heading north.

- Thursday, Jan. 13, 1876, Ralph Townsend, wife, child and cat checked in from Philadelphia, accompanied by Mrs. Hollingsworth. They occupied rooms 45, 47 and 49. On Wednesday, the 19th R. Townsend was back with Mrs. Hollingsworth but no mention of wife, child and cat.

- Sunday, Jan. 23, 1876, H. Bailey and Chile (sic) from San Mateo, Bailey checked in. Sometimes he checked in with his wife about every 10 days over the three seasons.

- Wednesday, Jan. 26, 1876, N. S. Lindley came up from Fort Gates and met C.H. Call and his wife from Michigan. The Calls checked in again on Feb. 3, possibly on their way home.

- Wednesday, Feb. 23, 1876, H. Bailey from San Mateo was back

again...couldn't stand the boredom and listed his address as Kankeekie, Illinois.


- Wednesday March 22, 1876 Mr. W. F. Fuller of San Mateo and Brooklyn checked in. According to the noted river historians, Hannah and Cabell, Mrs. Fuller was the lady, residing at Edgewater Groves in San Mateo who picked up some water hyacinths from a South American pavilion at New Orleans Cotton Exposition and brought them home. After they overran her fishpond, she took the "lovely blossoming plants" down to the St. Johns River and tossed them in, thus setting up an aquatic plant plague that has cost the state millions and millions of dollars to control. We are still losing the battle.

- Thursday, April 23, 1876, Seven names were written in what appears to be Arabic. Closed for season on this date. The new season opened on Dec. 9, 1877.

- Friday, Jan. 19, 1877, "Miss Swantson's Maid" checked in to room 20. No name listed.

- Tuesday, Feb. 6, 1877, The New Orleans Minstrels, Wm., Foote, Jr. mgr., took an entire page to boldly list all the cast to appear at "Burt's" that evening.

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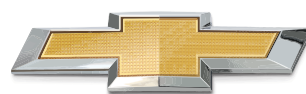
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Brush's General Store, founded in 1882, was a popular gathering place where one could shop, post a letter or catch up on the news of the day.
-PDN Archives

Early general stores either had it or found it

Before the days of shopping centers and malls, supermarkets, convenience stores, and high-speed highways, the general stores satisfied consumers' needs.

Perhaps the old general store supplied fresh vegetables right from the garden, home-smoked hams and bacon, cheese by the pound or by the slice and a homemade pickle for a hearty snack. Still, a general store was much more than a grocery store.

Those stores functioned as shopping centers—places where you could buy nails, cloth, feed, a horse collar, new boots or whatever people might need. Shoppers could be sure that if the store

didn't have it, employees would do their best to get it. Now that's service.

Personal service is one function where the old general stores excelled. Often owned and operated by the same person, the general store offered credit, too. Putnam County has boasted some of the best general stores to be found throughout its years. These are just the beginning of the story of how commerce has changed here in Putnam County.

One general store called Brush's Store used to serve Interlachen. Founded in 1882 by Charles A. Brush, the man's enterprising wife, Elizabeth, ran the business. When Brush came to

Interlachen as the town's first railroad agent, the only store in town was G.E. Gillett's Store.

The tale goes that Elizabeth Brush decided Interlachen needed a store with a good line of dry goods and that's how Brush's Store began. Her specialty was millinery, but Brush's Store also carried a complete line of sundries, dry goods, hardware and groceries, as well as serving as the town post office.

A look at the old store ledger's time-faded entries for June 8, 1882, shows some of the bargains offered then. Shoppers could grab a shovel for 75 cents, a tub and boiler for \$2.35, a tie for 25 cents, a hatchet for 35 cents; ball

and bat and blacking (for polishing the wood-burning stove, of course!) cost 10 cents.

Longtime Palatka residents may remember Little Store. The word around town was that if you couldn't find it anywhere else, "Go see Roy. He's got it," and he probably did. True to its name, the store was little indeed, but every inch of the space was stacked high with merchandise. Even more hung from the ceiling.

Palatka has changed a lot since the Roys started running their store in 1953, but back then, the end of Crill Avenue was mostly undeveloped, and Cities Service gas pumps were the only ones out on Highway 20.

When the convenience stores came in, Roy's Store just couldn't compete with their prices and hours and they sold out. That's just about the way it has been with the general stores all over. Like other rare species, they are almost

impossible to locate these days. One of the last was run by the late Homer B. Sikes Sr. over in Grandin.

When traveling through Grandin on State Road 100, residents may remember the friendly gentleman in his rocking chair, waving to each car



Mrs. Roy offered cheerful service to a customers from behind an array of merchandise. Roy's store didn't waste an inch of space, stacking and hanging merchandise everywhere possible.

-PDN Archives



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that passed his store. That was Homer Sikes Sr. and his courtesy is indeed missed.

His store opened in 1917, and for many years, it was the only place to buy gasoline, along with groceries and other necessities, for miles. Back in 1917, people hauled gasoline in barrels, and Sikes had to siphon one bucket at a time from a 55-gallon barrel. Fortunately, there were only three cars (Model Ts) in the area then, and they could be filled with nine gallons.

Of course, as the area grew, more stores arrived in Putnam County and offered more variety. Soon, area residents had their choice of stores and merchandise.

It would be difficult to calculate the impact the arrival of Palatka's first genuine department store had on the community, but you can bet it was substantial.

The year was 1928, and the Palatka J.C. Penney Store was built on the corner of Lemon and 3rd streets. It was not only Palatka's first department store, but its Palatka store marked the

first J.C. Penney in the state. C.J. "Matt" Matthews was the manager.

The store opened Sept. 1, 1928, with 10 employees, including Matthews.

A sale ad in one 1931 Palatka Daily News edition advertises ladies' bloomers at 98 cents per pair. The advertisement states that the bloomers are made of "a new fabric, silk and Bemberg, genuine Celanese included. Picot knit, like glove silk."

Of course during this time area residents were feeling the pinch of the Great Depression, as others were throughout the country. That could explain why H.C. Merwin and Co. on Lemon and 6th streets offered their 30-by-3 tires at \$4.27 each in 1931, when back in 1920 the Diamond Tire had their 30-by-3 "smooth" tires on sale for \$11.69 each and their 35-by-5 "squeegee" tires at \$47.46 each.

As the years passed other stores filled downtown Palatka. In 1920, the Ernest Co. advertised special sales on such items as big huck red border towels for 29 cents each, Palm Olive soap at 10 cents per bar, ladies' silk hose at 45 cents, fancy trim white middies for \$1

and fine lace trim corset covers at \$1 each.

The C. J. Herrington store advertised fireworks to celebrate Armistice Day the Nov. 8, 1924 issue of the Palatka Daily News. Gross Pharmacy also had fireworks for sale that year to help celebrate the joyous occasion.

That year, Yelverton Furniture Company was helping area residents furnish their homes tastefully and at an affordable price. They ran an ad in the Daily News announcing an "Overstuffed Davenport and two chairs for \$295."

Also in 1924, there was the Harrell Clothing Company, where people could buy men's one and two-pant suits for \$21.75 to \$43. The Fernside Clothing Store had a new shipment that winter of spring footwear, Sueded Oxfords in forest, brown and black with medium vamp and very graceful full-breasted Louis heel. The price? They went fast at \$16.50, and also on sale were linen sport Oxfords at \$8 per pair.

Apparel prices took a tumble with stocks during the Depression years. Just look at Hardin's 316 Lemon St. ad in a 1931 issue of the Palatka Daily News for ladies' newest spring dresses at \$7.95 and hats for Easter at \$2.95.

By the 1940's, residents' situations weren't much better in Putnam County, economically speaking. The Wilson Cypress Co. mill shut down and many were still out of work. In the spring of 1945, the Mar-Twin Store on Lemon Street advertised Easter dresses at \$4.95 to \$14.95. Now, things were really looking up for the area.

The Hudson Pulp and Paper Company would soon be in operation here, and by 1953, after the mill had been in operation for half a dozen years, there were many more stores here. Consumer choices and competition were increasing.



Homer Sikes' Store in Grandin. Mr. Sikes is fondly remembered waving to all who passed by.
-PDN Archives

That same year the Belk-Lindsey Store had one of its big clear-out sales, with such bargains as lace tablecloths at \$2.79, men's dress slacks at \$2.99 a pair, Miami-style skirts at \$2.98 each and ladies' sandals at \$1 a pair.

Some of these old stores have gone the way of corset covers and garter belts. Today, shoppers in this area have many stores from which to shop. But there is one commodity that cannot be substituted or outmoded, and that's service. Local shoppers will attest that service is a byword for area stores today, just as it was years ago in the old general stores.

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The Crescent was one of eight boats owned by James Wilson Miller and George U. Beach in a partnership formed in 1869. The firm engaged in merchandising also, supplying the surrounding area with groceries. The Crescent made her maiden voyage from Jacksonville to Crescent City on Oct. 23, 1893.

-Courtesy of the Margary Neal Nelson Collection

Crescent City founded on noble pursuits, thrived through farming families

Crescent City historians can trace the city's beginnings to "one Lord Dunn of England who discovered the lake and creek (Lake Crescent and Dunn's Creek) in the seventeen hundreds," according to Bessie Williams's writings. Since the British occupied Florida from 1763 to 1783, Dunn's presence in the area could be pinpointed to that 20-year period.

Former Crescent City historian Margary Nelson compiled the history of Crescent City and South Putnam was compiled through years of research. She gathered volumes of information and pictures from many sources, including the memoirs of Bessie Williams, an unpublished manuscript by Robert Dowda from 1939, interviews with George A Main III, "Historic Putnam," by D. D. Main in the Crescent City Journal and the "History of Crescent City" by George C. Miller, Sr.

Miller said that Dunn received an English grant to certain lands located about a half-mile south of the present center of Crescent City where he built his home, cleared land and planted crops. Another source says Dunn was a coffee planter who farmed all the land between the two lakes with one field on Bear Island on Lake Crescent.

Although it is generally accepted that Crescent City was settled in 1853, the reference to Dunn indicates settlers came to the area before then. One of the largest landowners was George Oliver, who owned over 1800 acres known as the Oliver Plantation. It's where the heart of the city now lies. Records indicate he began buying property in Putnam County on June 6, 1853.

The Crescent City area and other parts of Florida were not heavily involved in

the Civil War, but documents show that Federal troops frequently crossed into the state from other areas to forage for food and supplies.

Three different stories tell of encounters with Federal troops indicating that Capt. J.J. Dickison commanded the Second Florida Cavalry in South Putnam and near Volusia County for at least one year.

Most of Dickison's accounts seem to be about his victories, and most have come from a book, "Dickison and His Men," written by his wife.

One account from May 28, 1864, describes a battle. It describes how Dickison's company sank Northern gunboats at Horse Landing on the St. Johns River. In February 1865, he captured the 17th Connecticut Regiment

at Braddock's Farm, south of Crescent City. The skirmish at Braddock's is said to be the southernmost battle of the war.

In 1875, the city of Ellington (Crescent City) was sold for \$250 to Charles R. Griffing and his wife, Jennie. Charles Griffing formed a real estate company in partnership with Joseph W. Gardiner and William Case. In 1876, company employees printed a small brochure describing Crescent City's advantages.

In the Florida Handbook, Allen Morris says that Jennie Griffing named Lake Crescent and the city because one of the lakes was shaped like a crescent moon. The other lake, in the position of a star, was named Lake Stella.

The Griffing real estate firm hired Major E. G. Dyke to survey the town in March of 1876, and the plat was recorded with the county on May 19, 1876. The town was divided into blocks containing four acres with streets and



Street view of Crescent City.

- Courtesy of the Margary Neal Nelson Collection

avenues running at right angles to each other. The blocks then were divided into four one-acre plots, making each a corner lot.

Williams wrote in her memoirs that in 1883 "Florida was under carpetbag

rule when we came here, and there were some negroes in the legislature. A few years later when our town was incorporated, the laws of the state required that there be one negro alderman, and all he could do was say "Yas-sir" to any and every proposition."

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The list of names on the notice to have a meeting includes the following names, which are believed to be black people: John Booker, Nero White, George Mackey, William Westcott, Homer Ward, and Pres. White.

In 1885, Chapter 3636 of the Acts of the Florida Legislature states, "An act to legalize the incorporation of the town of Crescent City valid in the County of Putnam and to declare the incorporation of the town of Crescent City valid and of full force and effect. "

Miller's writings tell of "the big freeze" of late 1894 to early 1895. The first cold snap came in December, killing the fruit on the trees, and the February 1895 freeze killed the trees back to the ground. All the citrus trees throughout the state were killed, leaving a desolate countryside. Many people left their homes, returning to the places from which they had come because their livelihood in the South had depended on the fruit from the trees.

Those who stayed soon learned that scraping the soil away from the roots of the trees would emerge new sour shoots that could be grafted with sweeter stock, Miller wrote. In 1899, another hard freeze killed the fruit, but Miller writes that by then, the growers had learned how to protect the trees against the cold. Some went so far as to build individual shelters for each tree that could be dismantled in the spring.

Undoubtedly, there was some sort of commissary for supplying the needs of the early settlers. The first record of a general store seems to indicate one opened in Lee Benham's Flat in the building that used to be the Masonic Hall. It was known as Benham and Hart and sold everything from shirt buttons to sugar to buggy ships.

In the 1895 editions of the Crescent City News, multiple advertisements are found. The editions advertise for the West End Hotel and Bakery, McGrady's Market, the Crescent City Pharmacy, Austin's Cakes and Bread, Torrey's Shoe-ery, a dressmaker and Gautier's Hay, Grain and Feed, to name a few.

Ten of the town's principal businesses were destroyed by fire in 1887. The loss was not fully replaced until 1900.

C. H. Cash installed the first water works at the ice factory to supply residents with water at a cost per month regardless

of how much or how little water was used. Artesian well water was pumped to a storage tank on top of the hill where Cash lived. The power used for pumping was a huge water wheel, which was also turned by water from the artesian wells. He served many people and stores until the present municipal water system was installed.

George C. Miller Sr., of Beach and Miller Steamship Line, went into the grocery business in 1922. Miller Enterprises began after World War II when Miller arranged for his three sons to buy into the business. In 1950, his sons took over operations.

Crescent City roads were paved in 1924-25, and property owners paid the cost of the street in front of their property.

Until 1923, cattle had as much right on the streets and sidewalks as anyone else. An effort was made to legislate the cattle off the streets. Investigation revealed that after the town had attained a certain population, cattle running at large could be legally forbidden. People hoped and believed that at last Crescent City could count enough citizens to remove the cows to pasture so a census was taken.

So, the story goes, upon taking a census, the town lacked a few names for reaching the required goal, but the honorable city council was equal to the occasion. It was ruled that inasmuch as all the cattle had been named and enjoyed the same

citizenship rights as anyone else, they too should be counted in the census. By this means the required population was attained and cattle were banned from the streets amid the complaints of those who now had to lock up their animals.

During the early 1920s, Crescent City had two banks the Bank of Crescent City and the People's Bank. The Bank of Crescent City opened in 1909 and prospered until the stock market crash in 1929.

The People's Bank was organized in January of 1922 with 41 original stockholders. It was one of the first banks in Florida to reopen after the National Bank Holiday in 1933.

Crescent City continued to grow and prosper. In 1957, a special act passed by the Florida Legislature abolished the



One of the many packing house labels from the Crescent City Fruit Co. -PDN Archives

town of Crescent City. The legislature accepted the new charter of the City of Crescent City and Joe E. Thomas, incumbent mayor of the town, became the first mayor-commissioner of the City of Crescent City.



Brandon D. Oliver/Palatka Daily News

Bank of Crescent City on Central Avenue was organized in 1909 and was the city's first financial institution. It failed in the Great Depression. The building was later used as a city hall and fire department.




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Brandon D. Oliver/Palatka Daily News

Hubbard House is a mix of the Shingle and Queen Anne architecture styles.

Looking back at what the Hubbards built

Now a housing subdivision, the Hubbard Gardens was once a mecca for horticulturalists. All that remains are the name Hubbard Park and the original house, now in the National Register of Historical Sites.

In the late 1870s, Edward King Hubbard, with financial assistance from his father, Bela Hubbard, purchased 20 acres on the lakefront at Crescent City with the intention of living there and developing an orange grove. Edward drowned Aug. 16, 1879. Development of the property was taken over by his oldest brother, Henry Guernsey Hubbard, an entomologist, and their 65-year-old father, Bela.

Bela built a 10-room house utilizing all the native woods, which were hand-carved by northern artisans. Broad verandas extended around three sides of the two-story structure.

In a newspaper account dated April 5, 1886, Mrs. J. R. Preston wrote about the Hubbard grounds, located just north of the city on Lake Crescent, which then covered about 50 acres.

She described the natural growth of the native trees, bamboo, thickets of bananas and the variety of plants and items with which Bela Hubbard was experimenting.

Preston wrote, "He has a fine variety of water lilies and a very new and pretty arrangement for growing them. He throws water from a spring down near the lake up with the hydraulic ram and it flows down through a chain of pools of odd design. About the center of his grounds is a bungalow in which he has specimens of birds, snakes, shells, corals and insects of every variety. It is surrounded by a charming porch with chairs and rustic seats, and masses

of vines and numberless varieties, climbing all over the little structure."



Entrance to Hubbard Park.

- Courtesy of Florida Memory

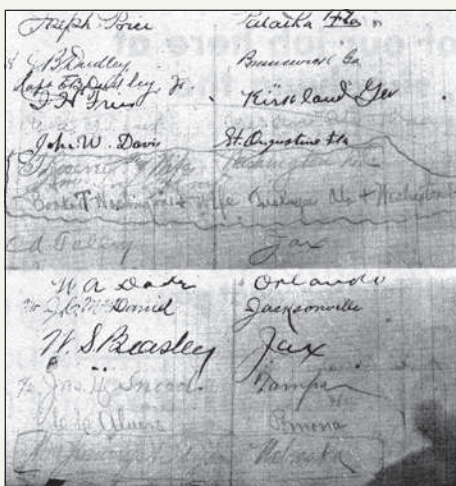
Sprague House played host to distinguished guests

The Sprague House in Crescent City, one of the finer hotels in this area at the turn of the 20th century, still stands near Lake Crescent on Central Avenue.

Built in 1892 by Jim Morrow, the house was opened in December 1902 by Dr. and Mrs. Guilford Sprague as a tourist hotel, serving visitors year-round.

By the mid-20th century, Mary Kinard Norfleet, a direct descendant of the Spragues, discovered an original Sprague House registry. The entries under June 30, 1908, reveal that overnight guests at the Crescent City hotel were President Theodore Roosevelt and his wife; his soon-to-be successor, William Howard Taft, and his wife; and Booker T. Washington and his wife. An entry under Oct 20, 1908, was signed by William Jennings Bryan, Nebraska.

George C. Miller Sr. recalled hearing his parents talking about the arrival of famous guests to the city. As he remembered, Roosevelt, Taft and



The registry of the summer of 1908 shows visiting guests of the Sprague House. -PDN Archives

Washington came to the area to survey Dunns Creek in an attempt to develop ideas on how to improve navigation on the waterway, which was used as shipping land between Crescent City and Jacksonville.

Miller said Washington was a Coast Guard officer stationed in Jacksonville and "had something to do with riverboat inspections." Bryan, according to Miller, was a frequent visitor to the city.

The Sprague House had changed hands many times since the early 1900s. Since its construction, the house has undergone extensive renovation and at one time was on the verge of ruin. It was rehabilitated, however, and still stands on Central Avenue in Crescent City.



Brandon D. Oliver/Palatka Daily News
Sprague House still stands on Central Avenue.

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Where did Georgetown and Fruitland come from?

Georgetown reportedly got its name from King George III.

It was a regular port of call for boats running between Jacksonville and Sanford, and at this point, much freight from that section of the county was shipped.

In the early 1880s, there was a box factory, a packing house and 36 orange groves containing 9,537 trees. There was also a private bank. In 1895, the population was 250 and the village had two stores, a blacksmith, a boarding house, school and churches.

One of Georgetown's earliest settlers, Thomas Hind served in the state legislature, first in the House in 1887 and then the Senate in 1889.

J. R. Saunders settled Fruitland in 1858 and subsequently named Fruitland by L. Jacobs who later moved to Jacksonville.

Jacobs conducted a general merchandise business here in 1878. In the early 1880s, S. R. Causey, a postmaster and general merchant, delivered mail to some 50 families in his postal district.

There were two churches and good common schools. Good facilities for stock-raising and a dairy business were available. An 1887 account lists 75 families served by the post office and three stores. The Beulah Baptist Church was founded in 1874. After the big freeze of 1894, its doors closed for some time. However, it became active again in 1923 and still stands and serves the community.



A general store on the lake at Georgetown. The dock was equipped with a track to load and unload fruit and supplies from the ships that made their way up the St. Johns River.

-PDN Archives

What's in a name? A lot for Welaka, that's what.

“Wee-la-la” was the name given to the St. Johns River by the Timucaun indigenous people, who considered it a chain of lakes. The name was shortened to Welaka and bestowed upon the town, which was founded in 1821 on the east bank of the river opposite the mouth of the Ocklawaha.

Another source says the name “Welaka” comes from the combination of indigenous words meaning “tide” or “intermittent springs.”

Welaka was originally known as Mount Tucker – in honor of Lord Tucker, a member of the English nobility who secured a large grant of land from the English government and settled upon it during the occupation of Florida by the British.

Webb's history says Welaka was settled by someone named Col. Bryant in 1853 and in 1859 had a population of 100. By 1870, the population had dwindled to 20. During 1883 and 1884, the post office received mail for about 80 families. The village contained three general supply stores, two churches, a good school and two sawmills.

At the time of the Civil War, the federal government, in an attempt to stop the flow of food and supplies over the river from the interior to the Confederate Army, caused most of the towns along the river to fall into its hands and an outpost and officers' headquarters were set up at Welaka.

One report says a Federal camp was established on part of the river

to try to keep beef from being sold to Southerners. In 1864, one report said Capt. J.J. Dickison recaptured Welaka and drove Union troops out of the area.



Sportsman's Lodge was a well known fishing resort on the St. Johns River. Formerly it was called the Colonial inn and was once the Blue Ridge School for Boys.

-Courtesy of Florida Memory



Pomona Park Groves along Lake Broward - May 1887.

-PDN Archives

Named after goddess, Pomona got name change to avoid confusion

An 1850 land survey of the town that surrounded Lake Broward was done incorrectly. People who had built homes on the lakefront later found they were on state land. In 1946, another survey was made with the proper upland riparian rights and the residents were given the right for approximately \$7 an acre on the land they thought was theirs.

One of the first accomplishments of the early Pomona settlers was the founding of Pilgrim Congregational Church, which has origins dating back to 1881. The building was erected in 1884, and in 1885, the congregation sent delegates to Winter Park to help in the founding of Rollins College. The population of Pomona in 1883 was made up of 75 families.

Both Pomona and Pompano changed their names in 1940 because so much mail was sent to the wrong town, Pomona became Pomona Park and "Beach" was added to Pompano.

Sisco and Satsuma are two small towns between Crescent City and Palatka that were founded in the 1800s.

Sisco took its name from its founder, Claire Cornelia Bartlette Sisco and her husband, who died before his wife was 30. Mrs. Sisco served as an editor of the Shanghai Times in 1902 and was a European and African correspondent for newspapers in Paris and New York. She was decorated by King Victor Emmanuel of Italy for her dedication in the rehabilitation after the Messina earthquake of 1908.

Satsuma was settled in 1882 after three men purchased a 10,000-acre Spanish grant. The town was named for a particular type of tangerine-orange grown there.



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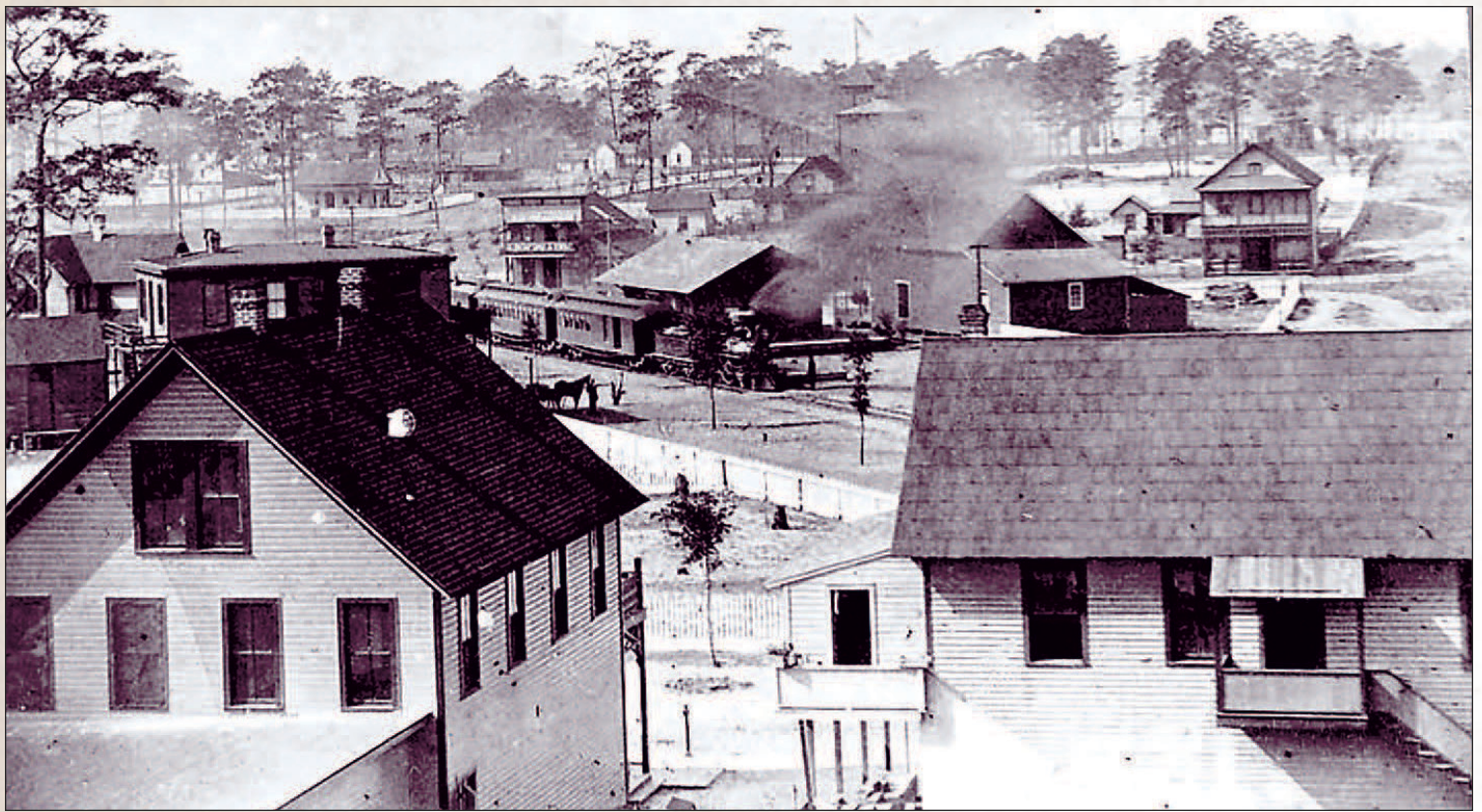
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Bird's eye view of Interlachen, most likely from atop the Interlachen Hotel.

-Courtesy of Interlachen Historical Society

Lakes helped decide Interlachen's future

In 1881, N.R. Gruelle, chief engineer of the Florida Southern Railway Co., arrived on a Saturday evening with engineers to view the intended route of railroad lines. At a point, 1 or 2 miles south of the present site of Interlachen, one of the men called his attention to

the picturesque spot between the lakes, then occupied by only one log cabin.

After camping in the area on Sunday, Gruelle was so pleased with the location and its desirability that he stopped operations on

the intended lines and ran the route of the Florida Southern Railway between Blue Pond (now known as Lake Chipco) and Lake Lagonda, now part of Interlachen.

almost all of the land at this time, but soon, George W. Hastings moved in and bought a lot of land on the east end of the present town. A Mr. Conover from Canada bought the west end, with the railroad holding on to the middle section. Although the town was divided into three parts with three owners, it was platted into city blocks, and streets were eventually put in.

Before the turn of the 20th century, the population was made up mostly of immigrants from England and settlers from the North who were attracted by a milder climate and the possibilities of citrus farming.



1911 Interlachen train station. Charles Buttress Engineer, Engine 56

-Courtesy of Interlachen Historical Society

The railroad company owned

As the town grew, the townspeople wanted to

incorporate. In December 1887, a meeting was called for this purpose and the name Interlachen, a Scottish word meaning “between the lakes,” was chosen. The naming solved an identity crisis for the town, which until that point had been known as both Blue Pond and Wilcox. Blue Pond was the previous name of Lake Chipco and Wilcox was used because someone named Mr. Wilcox owned the first log cabin in the area.

The town was incorporated in 1888 and elected such officers as mayor, marshal, clerk, collector and a town council commonly known as “the seven aldermen.”

The first bank opened around 1890 under the name The Bank of Interlachen but was incorporated. After the freeze of 1895, the bank closed its doors with no loss to its depositors.



The General Store on Commonwealth Avenue, Interlachen.

-Courtesy of Interlachen Historical Society

Although there were few children in the town, a school was built in 1890, originally planned as

an academy. The land was given by Hastings and he also assisted financially in the building. It was originally built with two rooms,



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Not all these trees remain along Prospect Street now, but old and spreading oaks are found throughout Interlachen. The building in background is the former Lakeview Hotel.

-Courtesy of Interlachen Historical Society



Top: Hotel Lagonda. Above: Hotel Interlachen which burned down sometime in the 1900s.

-Courtesy of Interlachen Historical Society

and a third was soon added. This school, dedicated in the latter half of the 1900s as the Sid Martin Building, is believed to be the oldest wooden schoolhouse in Florida still in use today.

The exact date of the construction of the original Town Hall is not known but was probably built between 1888 and 1890. It burned in 1891. Fires were a common threat in the area due to an ongoing conflict between the townspeople,

some of whom were fruit growers, and some the cattlemen.

The cattle were free to roam and graze wherever they wanted and often wandered among the citrus trees eating the fruit and leaves from the trees. Trees often died. The cows would also trample on the townspeople's gardens, flowers and grass. Angered by the constant problem, a pound to hold the roaming cattle was established and a fee was charged before the cows were returned. As a result of constant trouble, town cattlemen slipped into town and set the pound on fire. Unfortunately, Town Hall, which was located next to the pound, caught fire also.

Later a fence was erected around the town by the townspeople in order to keep the cows out.

The new town hall was built the next year, 1892, and consisted of an office, meeting room, jail and

upstairs social room. Later, a kitchen was added and restrooms were built in the vestibule. The jail proved almost useless because of the fast transportation to the county jail in Palatka. The upstairs social room was later utilized by entertainers such as country and Western personality Minnie Pearl. This building is now a museum that displays much of Interlachen's history.

Through the years, the town grew, adding a barber shop, hardware store, blacksmith shop, nick-nack store, telegraph and express office, a money order post office, Town Hall, several hotels, the masonic lodge, Grand Army of the Republic post, Clark S. Edwards Post 32 and three churches.

With a donation of two lots from Hastings, First Congregational Church of Interlachen was built in 1885, and today, the church building and its membership are still vital parts of the community. The Methodists began the second church around 1894 and theirs was followed by the Episcopal Church in 1895.

Still attracting residents from the North, this community between the lakes continues to grow, with schools, restaurants, churches and other features.



Historical Town Hall now houses the Interlachen Historical Society.

Archives/Palatka Daily News

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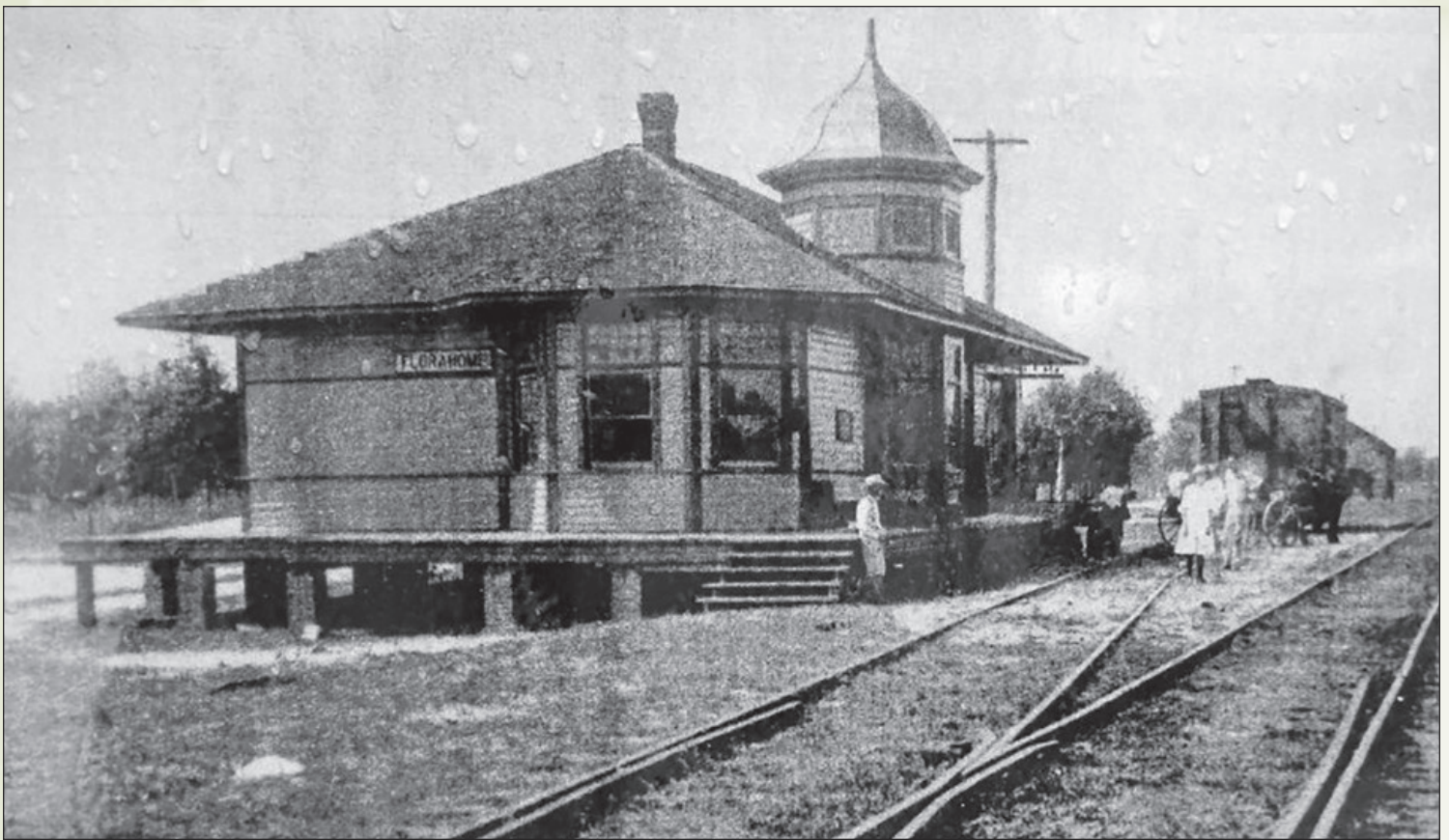
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People wait at Florahome train depot.

-Courtesy of Interlachen Historical Society

Former Florahome drainage system staple for crops

The Florahome Drainage District, which eventually opened up some 12,500 acres of rich farmland, originated from the inspiration of one man.

Florahome's Dr. G.L. Sipprell could be why the area's farmlands are rich and always have enough moisture to grow nearly anything. Over the years, a variety of crops, like sugar cane and green beans have been grown there.

Development of the shallow lake area began as early as 1898 when Sipprell obtained a franchise from the Florida Legislature to drain all

of the "Prairie" between Florahome and Grandin.

The canals to drain the first section were dug by hand, but before long, various complications arose and R. Sipprell sold his franchise to the Etoniah Canal and Drainage Company. Under the direction of a man named only as Mr. VanNetta, the company dug about five miles of shallow drainage ditches with a dredge. Their promoter, a Mr. Wilson, sold the drained property and although fraud probably was not intended, many of the buyers who came from the North to farm the rich muckland, were unable

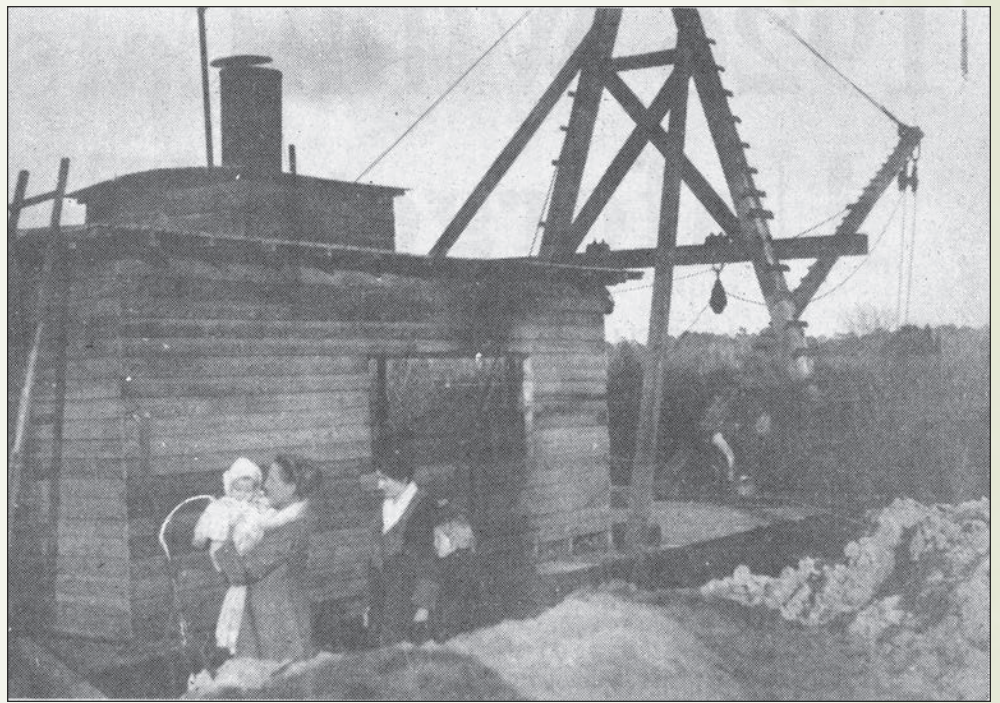
to work the land due to recurrent flooding and had to abandon their farms.

Recognizing the need for a successful drainage project in the area, Florahome leaders established a Drainage Commission in 1914. Under the control of the elected drainage commissioners, the Florahome Drainage Commission built a new "clamshell type" dredge (operated by Leslie Bell for many years), reconstructed the old canal system and dredged new canals, which emptied in the St. Johns River and Rice Creek.

Three of Florahome's early drainage commissioners were W.R. Revels, G.C. Hardy, and K.C. Wilcot. J.A. Revels was a young boy when the project began, and he recalled how impressive but peculiar sight the dredge and its newly dug canals looked.

Construction on the canals continued, and when the original dredge wore out, a Bonnet Topper, a barge with a propeller in the front, was built. During the old WPA, extensive hand labor, using shovels, was utilized to straighten out canals. By the 1940s, with almost 15 miles of canals, the drainage commission purchased a modern dragline, which was used until the 1950s, when another dragline was purchased.

The drainage district has since been demolished and the area was lumped into Putnam County's drainage system.



A dredge with clam-shell type busker built the first canals in the Florahome Drainage District of Northwest Putnam County.

-PDN Archives

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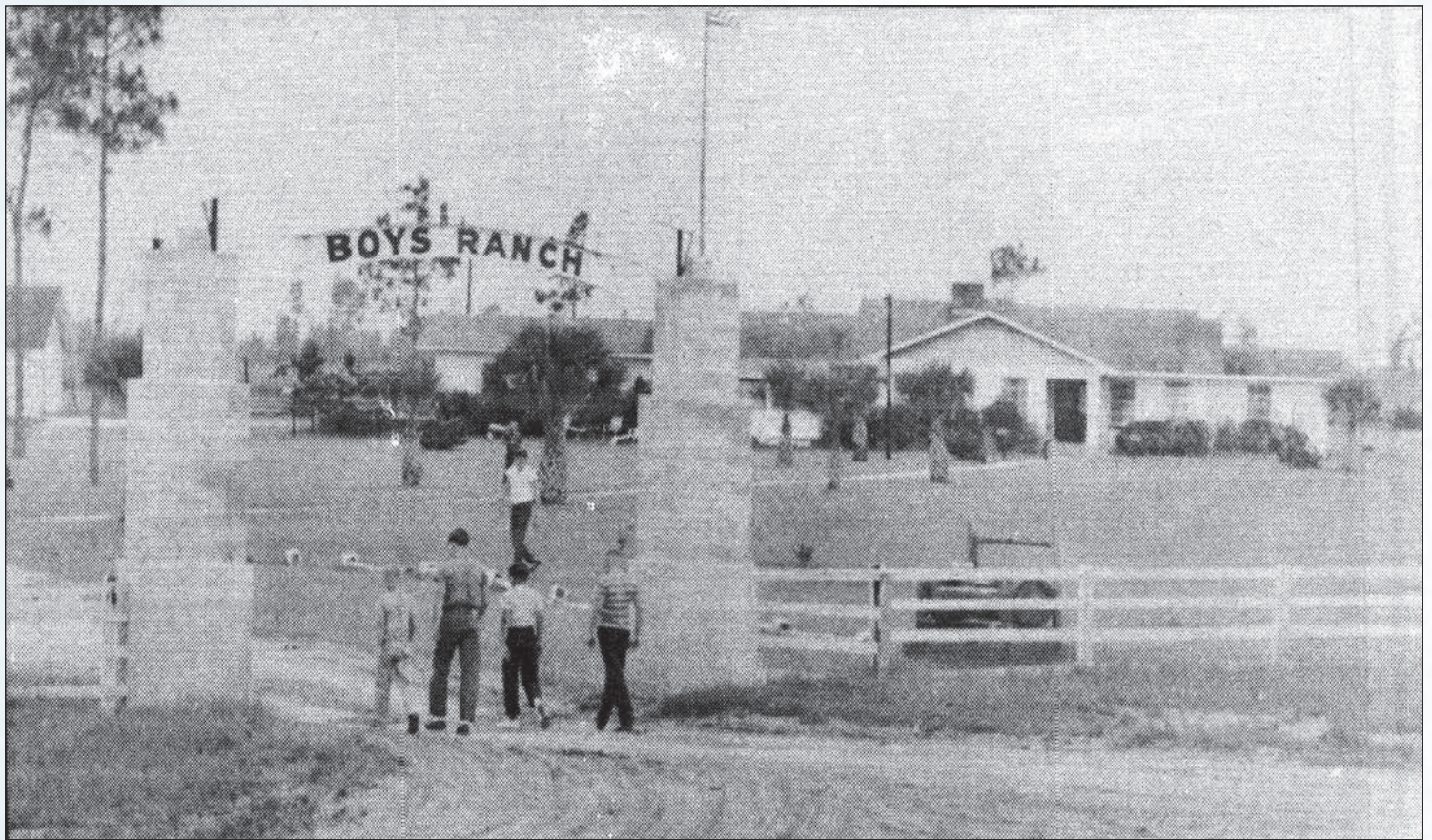
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Early days at the Boys Ranch.

-PDN Archives

Boys Ranch continues mission of helping young men

On May 22, 1951, groundbreaking ceremonies for Rodeheaver Boys Ranch, then called Rainbow Ranch for Boys, took place. The ranch sits 12 miles south of Palatka on the St. Johns River.

Founding directors on hand for the groundbreaking were Robert C. Beaty, Don L. Tullis, W.V. Stephenson, Karl Lehmann, Judge Mattie H. Farmer, Ellis Phillips, Homer Rodeheaver, Alonzo Rouse, James Thomas, Harry Westbury, J.H. Millican Jr., Harry Edwards, Clarence C. Jacobs and A.P. Clark.

“Crime will never stop in Florida until the better people begin to work with children in their formative years, from 3-12 years of age,” L.F. Chapman, the superintendent of Florida State Prison in Raiford, told a delegation of officials and civic leaders.

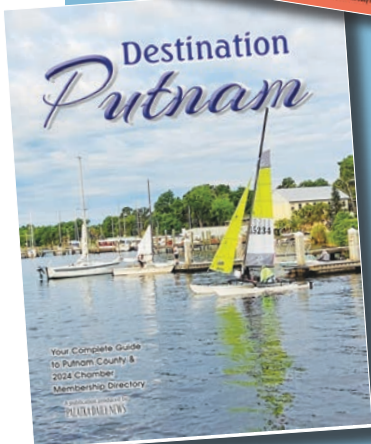
He commended Homer Rodeheaver for his foresight as the founder of the ranch and those associated with him. Rodeheaver and Westbury, his partner, dedicated 320 acres of land and a large sum of money for the project.

Since opening, the ranch has housed thousands of boys who, for one reason or another, have needed a place to turn to when other options seemed – or actually were – nonexistent.

The boys who live at the ranch go to Putnam County schools, work at the ranch to keep the facility looking and operating smoothly, and acquire life skills to be successful members of society.

In addition to being the boys’ home, the ranch also plays host to numerous fundraisers and other events. Twice a

Continued on page 46



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Groundbreaking ceremonies, May 23, 1951 -Pictured above are 12 directors of Rainbow Ranch for Boys; back row, left to right: Dean Robert C. Beaty; Don L. Tullis; W.V. Stephenson; Karl Lehmann; Judge Mattie H. Farmer; Ellis Philips; Homer Rodeheaver; Alonzo Rouse; James Thomas. Front Row: Harry Westbury and J.H. Millican Jr. Inset left: Harry Westbury. Inset right: Homer Rodeheaver

-PDN Archives

Ranch *continued from page 44*

year, the Palatka Bluegrass Festival attracts music lovers from all over the country to see some of the best acts in the genre. There have also been bass tournaments, car shows and other events to draw attention to the ranch and secure funding to further its mission.

Rodeheaver, who served as master of ceremonies at the groundbreaking ceremony and called the assembly to order with his famous trombone, said the first boys, ages 12-16, would begin to arrive within the next few weeks.

Boys at the ranch were to receive “understanding, love ... an education, religious background of their choosing ... and taught a vocation...,” Harry F. Edward, the chief probation counselor for Juvenile Court in Orlando, had said prior to the groundbreaking.

It was estimated it would cost about \$1,000 a year to keep a boy at the ranch. Relatives and guardians of the youths were to pay “something” to the home.

In the years since then, the ranch has continued to house

a large number of boys in need. Contributions of money and time have increased the services the ranch, whose current executive director is David Poupard, has provided.

And through it all, the ranch and its supporters have continued daily to put into practice the philosophy: “It is better to build boys than to mend men”.



Dock on the property of Rodeheaver Boys Ranch.

-PDN Archives



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