

The Spanish River Papers

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Boca was a "handful of ancient houses clustered near one of the typical diminutive yellow packing box stations of the . . . railroad.

Kenneth Roberts, Florida's Golden Sands
Bobbs Merrill, New York City

Property of
BOCA RATON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
report to the membership of
Boca Raton Historical Society, Inc.

P. O. Box 1113, Boca Raton, Florida 33432

from Mrs. Dorn Lee Redd, Mrs. Russell W. Fisher

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Harley Gates, pioneer settler of Boca Raton from his sales publication
History of Boca Raton.

From 1910 to 1920 Boca Raton was a shipping center for winter vegetables and several carloads left here daily during the season. The town was noted for the high quality of its peppers and land along the East Coast waterway were admirably adapted to growing this crop. One drawback to farming was the high waters during the fall months. In the summer the inlet would often close and have to be opened in the fall to drain the farm lands. The farmers of Boca Raton and adjoining towns would join to open the inlet and thus relieve the overflowed lands. In those days a hand shovel was all that was available for the purpose and shoveling wet sand for hours was hardly a pleasant task, but being necessary to save the farms, all took a hand.

* * * * *

During 1914 twenty-five acres on what is now Palmetto Park Road and extending back to Royal Palm Road was subdivided by Geo. A. Long, Frank S. Lewis and H. D. Gates. Fifty foot lots along Palmetto Park Road sold at private sale for \$100 each, and at auction brought \$29 to \$100 each. Along the inland waterway Kinney & Gates subdivision lots, 95 feet on the water and extending back to Fifth Avenue sold for \$500 each. In the same year J. E. Ingraham filed two plats, one west of the railroad and one east of the railroad where his grove was situated.

Palmetto Park Road received its name from Palmetto Park Plantation, a 30 acre estate on both sides of the street and Royal Palm Road from a cluster of four large Royal Palms on the east side of the canal facing the street.

* * * * *

The Boca Raton Board of Trade was organized in 1915 with ten members and seven directors. During the next five years it was very active and among its accomplishments was a telephone line from Delray, the members paying for the extension, a new school building, a bridge over the East Coast Canal. Roads were also extended back to the farm sections.

The Utility Club was formed in 1916 by several young women of Boca Raton and through their efforts Australian pines were planted on both sides of Palmetto Park Road, from the Dixie Highway to the Intracoastal canal. This club also received a donation of land and started a cemetery. The cemetery was south of the site of the Boca Raton Club and was later moved to its present location on Sunset Hill.

A small wooden building just east of the old railroad station on Palmetto Park Road served as a post office and commissary where a few staple groceries might be purchased. The first grocery store was built west of the railroad on the old Dixie Highway. It was opened in 1915.

It was decided that a new school was necessary and in 1916 bonds were voted to build it. The site for the new building comprised three acres where the

present school now stands. Some of the voters thought a 50 foot lot was sufficient and that it was extravagant to buy three acres, even though it only cost \$300. Also there was opposition to a \$20,000.00 bond issue required to raise funds for the new building. The school district at that time extended from the beach to Lake Okeechobee and there was little tax burden on the Boca Raton property owners.

Boca Raton in 1916 had the distinction of being the only town in the State to vote Republican, giving Warren G. Harding 24 votes to Jimmy Cox's 23. President Harding visited Boca Raton aboard his yacht during his first term in office.

In 1916 the citizens of Palm Beach County which at that time extended from Colohatchee to Stuart, voted a million dollar bond issue to replace the old Dixie Highway and build a 24 foot highway throughout the county. The highway at that time was nine feet wide, filled with holes and lacking a good surface. Many citizens thought the taxes required to pay off these bonds would impose a great burden and there was much criticism over the past construction of County Roads. A meeting was held and the Palm Beach County Citizens Highway Commission was formed. The object of this commission was to see that the new road was built in accordance with the engineer's specifications.

Each work day one member of the commission was on duty and checked every move of the contractor who was building the road. If the rock delivered was not up to specifications and the road was not being built in accordance with the details furnished by the County Engineer, his office was contacted at once and the work had to be done over until approved by the engineer. This assured the people of Palm Beach County a first class highway throughout the entire section.

The Boca Raton Water and Light Co. was organized in 1917 among the property owners and a water plant was erected on Boca Raton Road and mains extended to the ocean front homes.

Palmetto Park Road was resurfaced and a road from the canal to the ocean was dedicated and cleared. A drawbridge was built over the Inland Waterway.

* * * * *

In 1916 Boca Raton took many prizes at the State Fair in Jacksonville. Among the first prizes were those for squash, peppers, green beans, cucumbers, bananas and coconuts.

During the early days Long's packing house, near the railroad, was used for all community purposes, elections, political rallies, Board of Trade meetings, dances and other social affairs.

Gasoline was sent by boat from Miami and delivered at the canal bank in 50 gallon drums. Kerosene was also sent from Miami in drums. Gasoline was delivered at \$4.50 a drum and Kerosene at \$3.50. Kerosene was largely used for lighting and cooking.

The outbreak of World War 1 seriously curtailed farming operations as winter vegetables were considered luxuries by the Government, and shipping facilities were hampered to a large extent. The Florida East Coast Railroad at that time was a single track line and most of the freight trains coming south were hauling sugar mill machinery to Key West to be sent by ferry to Cuba. Food supplies were scarce and butter was made from coconuts. The coconuts were

shucked, the meat removed and ground in the meat grinder. Hot water was poured over the ground meat and the oil that came to the surface was skimmed off and churned to make butter. The result was a very tasty and satisfactory substitute for butter.

In February, 1917, a severe freeze visited South Florida and all crops in this vicinity and many of the fruit trees were destroyed. A 7½ acre banana plantation in Boca Raton (the largest ever attempted in South Florida) was ruined.

Shortly after the end of World War One the ocean boulevard (U.S. A1A) was extended from Delray Beach to Boca Raton. Three elections were necessary to form this Special Road and Bridge District to finance the extension of the road from Delray to Boca Raton, as the voters of Delray had no desire to have the road extended beyond Delray. Due to their strong opposition it was necessary to form a district extending to the south city limits of Delray, then cross the canal and connect with the terminus of the boulevard from Palm Beach, leaving Delray proper entirely out of the district created, so that their vote was not required to support the bond issue.

* * * * *

Boca Raton, in earlier years, offered a large variety of tropical trees and rare plants. It was a real beauty spot divinely planned. The tall palmettos Royal palms, coconut palms and rubber trees growing on the east side of the waterway gave the scene a weird attractiveness. Much of the growth between the ocean and the inland waterway was of West Indian origin. The massive oaks scattered through the jungle were covered with air plants, native orchids, resurrection ferns and Spanish moss. They were real aerial gardens. Among the profuse growth were coco plums, both white and purple, magnolia bay, lancewood, gumbo limbo, paradise trees, native rubber and many other interesting plants. Near the ocean the sea grapes and seven year apple trees grew. It was said that the fruit of the seven year apple tree took seven years to ripen. Many of the coconut palms were grown from nuts washed ashore and picked up on the beach.

12 Families in Boca Raton In Year of '23
Delray Beach News, 13 August 1953

In 1923, a traveler from the north aboard a Miami bound Florida East Coast train may have idly wondered why the train was stopping in what looked like the middle of a wilderness. A glance from a car window showed him one lone building with the name "Boca Raton" above a larger sign indicating the building was Long's Packing House.

Boca Raton's population consisted of approximately 12 families. Truck farmers were predominant, with a sprinkling of professional people and businessmen. The main store in the community was a commissary owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Young. Morris Stokes and Tony Brenks were proprietors of a small grocery store which served the needs of farmers in the surrounding country and dwellers in the small community.

.. The early settlers of the community did not lack entertainment. Dances were held at Long's Packing House at frequent intervals. Long's also served as a public meeting place and for any other occasion which required a large building.

OLD COLONY PLANTATION

George A. Long
Boca Ratone, Palm Beach County, Florida

April 27th 1920

Mr. George H. Howard
Bouchville, N.Y.

Dear Sir,

Yours of 23rd received this morning I have sent blank deeds, with the names of your sons, and description of the fives each was to have to Capt. Rickards, for him to have executed, instructing him to have abstract made, and to deposit deeds and abstract in Farmers Bank & Trust Co. at W. Palm Beach. Was glad to hear from you and that you had interested your sons in that land which I believe can be made very attractive.

The Contractors have finished all the grading and are now laying rock on road to ocean. Chase, Hemenways, Nortons, Stokes, Schneider, Thomas and Brown today, Ritter with them; so that Bocaratone is getting its summer population alright.

* * * * *

I am thinking seriously of getting up a stock Company to build a hotel on ocean, arranging to bond the Corporation after incorporated, for enough to build the hotel. If we build on the ocean, at same time to include a water and light system, originating on this side of Canal; then at same time letting the town take over the water and lights, and in the mean time charging for use of them by any others.

Would you go into such a scheme and to what extent? Some thing like that must be done if we wish this place to grow. Will say good-bye for this time from

Yours Very Truly,

(Geo. A. Long)

From Newspaper Notices, Feb. 26, 1929.

George A. Long was born at Boston, Mass., June 19, 1854, son of George Washington and Mary Elizabeth (Nash) Long. His preparatory studies for college were at the Epes Sargent Dixwell's Private School, Boston; he entered Harvard and graduated with the class of 1876. He was married in 1892 to Kate Hare of Baltimore, Maryland, who survives him, as do four children, Mrs. Charles C. Blake, Jr., of Miami, Florida; Mrs. A. W. Deyo, Boca Raton, George A. Long, of Stuart, Fla.; and Vinton Long of Boca Raton.

After leaving college, Mr. Long engaged in the civil engineering business, working in the office of E. W. Bowditch of Boston, until 1879. A prolonged illness made it necessary to give up this work, and in September, 1881, he came south. Mr. Long lived for a while at Interlachen, Putnam County, Fla.; while there he entered into the citrus growing business, did extensive engineering for the Florida Southern Railway Company, also surveyed large portions of territory in the northern part of Florida and along through the central and western sections for numerous Bonding companies. While living at Interlachen he was elected as alderman of the town, also was given the position of county surveyor for Putnam County.

Mr. Long was associated in many engineering projects with Captain Rickards, and it was through this friendship that led Mr. Long to ultimately make his home in Boca Raton, coming to make Captain Rickards, who had built the first home here on the canal, a visit, which was in May, 1901. He was soon given the position of local representative for the Florida East Coast Land Dept. and was appointed postmaster in 1908. In the year 1919 he was elected County Commissioner for the Fourth Commissioner District Palm Beach County, for a two year term, his efficiency as commissioner was so marked that he was also re-elected for the second term. While county commissioner, it was through his untiring efforts that the Ocean Boulevard became a reality along the coast from Boca Raton north; it was during his term of office that the Traylor Road was built, from the Dixie highway west, which proved to be a boon to the farmers in this locality from the Range Line to the Dixie.

Upon the incorporation of the Town of Boca Raton, Mr. Long was given the honor of being chosen its first mayor, being elected in June 1924 for a one year term.

Virginia Snyder, News Staff Writer,
Boca Raton News, February 27, 1972

Alex Hughes, the 87 year old man, the first resident of Pearl City, still lives at 1100 N. Dixie Highway, where he built a two room house shortly after arriving here in 1914.

He has added to the house and put a fence around it, but he still farms some of the same land he has worked on for 58 years. His hours are shorter now, however. He works only five hours a day, maintaining the mangoes and amaryllis on a plot of land along Old Dixie, just south of S.E. 3rd Street. This is a part of the Chesebro farm that encompassed a large tract of land from the Hillsboro Canal to a line north of Camino Real, bounded by Old Dixie on the west and the Intracoastal on the east. In addition, the Chesebro family owned land on the ocean, including the site of the present Cabana Club on South A1A.

When Hughes came to Boca Raton, there were a few white people - less than a dozen - and perhaps one-half dozen Japanese and an equal number of Bahamians in "Yamato" (north Boca Raton), where the pineapple plantations were located.

The spry old man ticked the names off on his fingers, pronouncing the Japanese names as well as he did those of the whites.

"The white people lived in south Boca and the Japanese and Bahamians lived in Yamato," he explained. "Here in Pearl City there was only palmettoes, spruce pines and mosquitoes until I built my house."

Hughes worked on the extensive farmlands owned by the Chesebro family until they sold it to the Mizner Development Co. in 1925 for a hotel and club.

* * * * *

When Hughes first moved here, there were two or three other blacks living in the area of Boca Raton and within a few years there were children of school age who had no place to go to school, since they were not allowed to attend the white school.

"I decided to try to do something about this," he explained, "so I went to the Board of Public Instruction in West Palm Beach. They told me that if I could find eight children, they would provide a teacher.

"I came right on back and mustered up eight children and they sent a teacher down, Miss Robinson, who still lives in West Palm Beach.

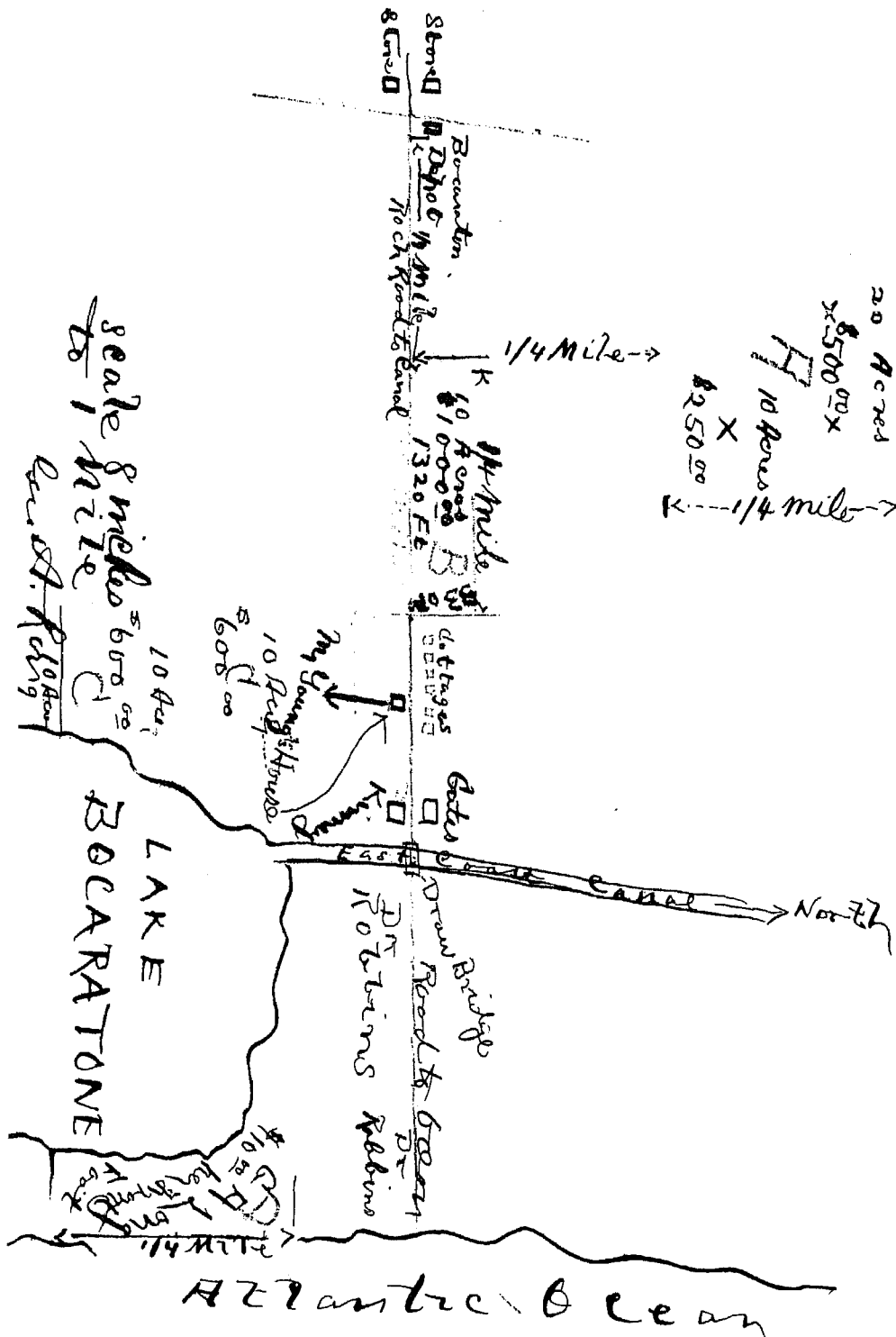
"They gave us a school, too - moved an old white school over here and gave it to us. That was in 1923."

* * * * *

The black community here also needed a church, Hughes felt, so he founded the Macadonia Methodist Episcopal Church and helped build the original wooden structure. However, before the church was built, he conducted "Sabbath School" in one room of his house. "Then we built a brush arbor, and held services there," he explained. "In 1924, we got our church."

Hughes then proceeded to help the Baptists build a church - Ebenezer Baptist Church on N.E. 12th St.

Land for both churches was donated by George A. Long who developed Pearl City as a subdivision for blacks, Hughes said.



**Nancy Taylor, The Miami News
Where a Japanese Town Blossomed and Faded**

Boca Raton - Where Joseph Saki wanted to plant tomatoes, industry will eventually grow. This describes what is left of Yamato - merely a memory, and that rather vague.

In 1913, Saki, reputed prince in the royal family of Japan, founded an all-Japanese community two miles north of what is now a wealthy resort town. That year Yamato . . . boasted 20 Japanese families. A year later, Saki died and shortly after the colony disbanded.

"Some went north. One went to Ft. Lauderdale," says Shobi Kamikama, the only Japanese who remained in Boca Raton.

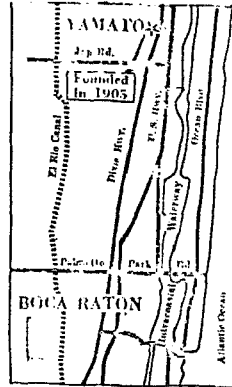
* * * * *

Kamikama came here in 1914, after ten years in New York. "My father had a friend who had Japanese newspaper there. We came there first, then I heard about Japanese community in Florida. I came and like the weather, so I didn't go back."

He acquired first three acres of land, and eventually 220 acres.

* * * * *

Saki, according to Gates, acquired the land for his farming community from the FEC railroad in the early days of East Coast development. Now the area has been zoned for industry.



**Tim Pallesen, Herald Staff Writer Lost Colony
The Miami Herald, November 26, 1972**

Shiboh Kamikama still lives only a few hundred yards from where, 60 years ago, several dozen hard-working and somewhat lonely Japanese farmers would gather in a packing shed on Saturday night to socialize after their week's work in the fields.

Their home was Yamato - a cluster of two-story frame houses, a general store owned by a white man named Montgomery, and some packing houses where pineapples and tomatoes were taken before being shipped north on Henry Flagler's railroad. As many as 75 Japanese farmers and their families may have lived there once.

Yamato is gone now. Only three of its withered settlers who speak slowly through tired lips of the colony named "large, peaceful country" remain.

* * * * *

Housed in a tiny, poorly sealed old trailer on 150 acres west of Delray Beach is George Morikami. * * * * *

"When I came, we used mules and horses. And then we could only farm here and there in high spots. It took my first three years to pay back the \$150.00 it cost for me to come to this country." Morikami's passage from Japan to the United States was paid by Flagler's agents, he says. Morikami will talk for hours about Yamato. The words are warm as he tells of friends like the Kamiyas, the Yoshidas, the Kobayashis and Shiboh Kamikama. The words are cold as he tells of the Cuban pineapple growers who sold more cheaply to northern markets than could the Japanese.

And when the land boom came in 1924, with big farmers and their trucks, our people thought it was a good time to quit. Some went back to the old country, or to the big cities up North."

**The Changing Face of Palmetto Park Road,
Boca Raton News, June 24, 1965**

At one time it looked like Palmetto Park road was going to be a residential street, but that was years ago.

The first wooden house built on the then beach road was for Mr. and Mrs. Charles Raulerson in 1914.

Then in 1915, Mr. and Mrs. Harley Gates moved into a house built for them by Harris Brothers. They called it the Casa Rosa. The Raulerson house no longer stands, but the Casa Rosa still dominates Palmetto Park road just west of the Intracoastal.

The original Casa Rosa was an old time bungalow when the Gates family lived there. Then they sold it to a man named Jennings, who built the present tower on the house.

It was sold the third time to a family by the name of Willingham. Now the house stands vacant. It's not officially for sale, according to real estate people, but then you never know . . .

Two other houses, one named after the state of Texas, the other after Indiana, also were built in 1915. "Back in those days, there were no numbers on the houses," according to John LaMont. "You just described the house to your friends when you invited them to visit you."

Even back then business came to Palmetto Park road; but, ironically, it was west of the railroad tracks. Tony Brenk had the first general store in Boca Raton on what is now West Palmetto Park road and Northwest First avenue in 1918.

The beginning of the change of Palmetto Park road was in 1921 when the first business building was erected on the corner of Northeast First avenue and the Palmetto Park road.

BOCA RATON NEWS, JUNE 20, 1965

Finally Palmetto Park Road was resurfaced in 1917, a bridge was built over the waterway and a road from the bridge to the ocean was dedicated and cleared. The first bridge was a cantilevered bridge just big enough for one-way traffic, according to John LaMont . . .

BOCA RATON 1915 1950
A personal Memoir written by Harriette A. Gates, Pioneer

When I first came to Boca Raton it was a day in June and it was "rare". Boca Raton was rare, I mean! I think there were about ten white families. Good neighbors all. A nine foot rock road spanned the traffic space between Palm Beach and Miami. That, and the FEC Railroad brought all comers to the land of sunshine in those days. Lots later when the Streamliners came into being, I used to run to the sidewalk to see where the cow was mooing, the whistle sounded so strange at first. In those days you either went north or south unless you took to the sand. That early road was always full of pot-holes which the rains kept constantly working at. Usually a right front wheel would go into one, then with precision timing the left back wheel would strike another. We used to make weekly shopping trips to West Palm Beach to get Chase and Sanborn coffee and other things the tiny commissary at Boca Raton did not have, and by the time we got home we needed the coffee for a stimulant and a week or so to recuperate.

We had our Board of Trade which met up in an old packing house. Women hadn't swung the gavel much at that time. I stayed home, and mostly in the clothes closet on Board of Trade nights. The Ashley Gang was rampant and I was a green Yankee, just down, and did not know that I should have brought with me "the spirit of the Wild West". Those men of the Board of Trade were tried and true. All wanted all to share the good to come to Boca Raton. Right then the tiny acorn was straining to become the mighty oak. We did not know it. Naive?

Coverage, such a common term today could have meant just that when applied to women's clothes. Coverage, neck to ankles, and bathing suits were about as long and needed briefing. What a pity we did not know about our short, shorts and halters we wear today to beat the heat. At sight of such attire any one of us would have fallen in a dead faint -- then. There was no bridge across the canal and to go bathing we had to take a boat across the canal and a palmetto path the rest of the distance, about four blocks. So, bathing beauties and tricky bathing suits yet to come, we were happy as we were.

July Issue, Telephone Directory, 1924.

(Call Long Distance for the following Subscribers)

Brenk J A, store, Boca Ratone, Fla.	2030
Eubank E E, Deerfield	2004
Everglades Drainage District, Deerfield	2014
Hillsboro Lighthouse, Deerfield	2012
Kamiya H T, r, Yamato, Fla.	2022
Kobayashi O S, Yamato, Fla.	2007
Long Geo A, r, Boca Ratone, Fla.	2005

F. H. Chesebro, pioneer of Boca Raton concludes his letter to Judge Chillingworth stating his opposition to incorporation of Boca Raton with:

'The "city" is growing at the rate of one family a year - hardly that. Boca Raton has been a flag station on the R.R. for 28 years and is a flag station yet.'

The following accounts of the Ashley Gang, excluding the headlines, are direct from Hix C. Stuart's **THE NOTORIOUS ASHLEY GANG**, published in 1928. Mr. Stuart lived in the same area as the Ashley family, and knew John Ashley and Sheriff Baker personally.
Mr. Stuart writes:

Many and varied have been the stories of the escapades and law infractions of that group of bandits and outlaws commonly known to society and the police as the "Ashley Gang." While most of the exploits of the gang are matters of public record many uncorroborated tales have been narrated from time to time adding luster to the unquestioned indelible trail of crime left to posterity by John Ashley, super-bandit, and his accomplices.

ASHLEY GANG STRIKES THE STUART BANK!!

"On February 23, 1915, the gang suddenly appeared in Stuart and in a few minutes had staged a well executed raid on the Stuart Bank. This robbery was most costly to John Ashley, for in some unknown manner he was accidentally shot by Kid Lowe, the bullet lodging in his right jaw and destroying the sight of his left eye. Ashley's wound was directly responsible for his apprehension, for, realizing his need of medical treatment he failed to seek the safety of the impenetrable everglades and was quickly overtaken by Sheriff Baker and a posse in the woods about twelve miles southwest of Stuart."

p. 13

"On June 2, 1915, Ashley's brother Bob made a daring attempt to free his brother and was killed only after shooting down the jailer, Wilber W. Hendrickson, in cold blood, and mortally wounded Police Officer Robert Riblett, of the Miami police force, in a pistol duel . . .

On the afternoon of the attempt made by Bob, a note was thrown into the jail yard threatening the sheriff with death. Several days later a second letter came to him in the mail. It read:"

"Mr. Dan Hardie, high sheriff of Dade County. Dear Sir we were in your city at the time one of our gang young Bob Ashley was brutally shot to death by your offices and now your town can expect to feel the result of it any hour. and if John Ashley is not fairly delt with and given a fair trial and turned loose simply for the life of a g-- d-- Seninloe indian we expect to shoot up the hole g--d-- town regardless to what results might be we expect to make our aperance at an early date signed Ashely gang.

Kid Lowe, arizona kid ike mitchell and others name not mentione."

"Ashley languished in jail until November, 1916, when his lawyers succeeded in having the charge of murder nolle prossed. He was then returned to W. Palm Beach to stand trial for the robbery of the Stuart Bank but pleaded guilty and was sentenced to seventeen and one-half years in the State Penitentiary.

Ashley was received at the State penitentiary at Raiford on Nov. 23, 1916, and his conduct there was such that he was sent to a road camp on March 31st of 1918. This was apparently what he had been striving for, as he had been in the camp but three months when he escaped with Tom Maddox, notorious bank robber.

Ashley was a fugitive for almost three years following his escape from the road camp and during this period his activities seemed to have centered on rum-running.

It was while delivering a machine load of contraband liquor at Wauchula that Ashley was apprehended. He submitted to arrest and offered no resistance. Ashley was immediately returned to the penitentiary at Raiford. This was in June, 1921."

pp. 20-21

STUART BANK HIT AGAIN BY ASHLEY GANG!!

"It was in September of 1924 that the Stuart Bank was visited for the second time by the Ashley gang, and this time it was the eighteen year old nephew of John Ashley who directed the hold up. Capitalizing his frail build, Hanford (Mobley) disguised as a woman, entered the bank.

... Young Mobley wore a black skirt, white shirtwaist and a large black hat, which a veil was draped partly concealing his features. To complete the disguise the boy wore ladies' shoes and stockings and carried a handbag.

... The employees were forced to lie down on the floor and Mobley entered the vault as one of his accomplices came in the bank and emptied the cash drawers ... The motor of the car in which the gang had driven up had been left running and they had driven from sight in a few minutes."

pp. 28-29

ASHLEY ESCAPES!

"... The manner in which Ashley got away was never known. He simply disappeared from the prison and was soon heard of from in his old haunts."

p. 34

"WE GOT IT ALL!" SHOUTS GANG AFTER POMPANO BANK HEIST

"... They drove south to Deerfield, about eighteen miles distant, and then turned west to the woods outside the town. Here they stopped and drank considerable gin and after eating some sandwiches practiced target shooting. After shooting for some time they carefully cleaned and oiled their guns and told the negro they intended to rob the bank at Pompano but that he would find his car a few miles from there after it was over. Before leaving they tied the darkey to a pine tree and John Ashley handed him a rifle bullet, telling the negro to give it to Sheriff Baker and to tell the sheriff they would meet him in the everglades."

pp. 35-36

SWEETHEART AIDS ASHLEY GANG CRIMES!!

"Laura Upthegrove, self styled "Queen of the Everglades" ... An Amazon in appearance, she would appear suddenly, direct the delivery of a load of bootleg, and melt again into the 'glades until another sortie was necessary. Always armed with a .38 caliber revolver, which she carried belted and strapped to her hip, Laura's rare appearances in public were dramatic. Ever on the alert for the approach of the "law", Laura's warnings saved the gang from capture many times. In an unlighted car she would drive through the woods, following a blazed trail known only to Ashley's followers and sound the alarm when capture seemed imminent."

p. 22

SHERIFF BOB BAKER VOWS TO BRING ASHLEY GANG TO JUSTICE!!!

"Upon receipt of the bullet left with the negro at Pompano and hearing the message given by Ashley to seek him in the everglades, Sheriff Bob Baker determined to break up the gang and bring them to justice. Sheriff Baker started a relentless pursuit of the bandits, which is best told in his own words. Baker said:

"This bunch of desperadoes cost me many thousands of dollars and many restless nights, but after they sent me the message with the bullet I was determined to get them if they stayed in my jurisdiction, and I left no stone unturned from then on to bring about their capture. I had deputies working night and day searching for them in the woods; they found a still and other camps that they had been using from time to time in various secret places in the swamps."

p. 38

"... I sent eight deputies there at three o'clock in the morning, that they might get near enough to the still and camp to capture all there at daylight.

At daylight they could hear several men and a woman talking in the camp, but could see no one.

When the smoke had cleared away Fred Baker was dead, and Joe Ashley was dead (falling dead across his gun). Albert Miller and Joe Ashley had slept in a tent only a few feet from the large copper still ...

There was a large tree right near the bed where John Ashley had been sleeping with Laura Upthegrove, and he jumped down into a little ditch and up behind this tree and was shooting with a Winchester rifle from there. I am sure he is the one who killed Fred Baker ... Laura Upthegrove was hit by several buckshot in her body; she was screaming terribly, and when she screamed the deputies ceased firing. John Ashley escaped without being injured."

(p. 40)

"When I got the information that they were going to Jacksonville I decided that it was the best chance I had to capture them ... I decided to attempt the capture at the Sebastian River bridge, twenty eight miles above Fort Pierce.

... I called my deputies ... secured a strange automobile for them to travel in and instructed them to proceed to Fort Pierce, call upon Sheriff Merritt for assistance in making the capture. Sheriff Merritt agreed to go with the deputies, taking his deputies, Wiggins and Smith. They blocked the bridge with a chain and a red light, and the deputies were stationed on each side of

the road at the approach . . . We had a good description of the car the bandits were traveling in, and the men were only stationed there a short while before the bandits' car appeared. When the car stopped the six deputies came up from behind and covered them, made them put up their hands and reached in the car . . . The deputies thought they had gotten all of the weapons and ordered them to get out of the car. . . . they intended to line them up and search their persons thoroughly and one of the deputies spoke of getting the handcuffs, and John Ashley mumbled something to his pals and snatched another gun out, and then the deputies fired. As the result, John Ashley, Ray Lynn, Hanford Mobley and John Clarence Middleton were killed instantly."

pp. 44-46

"And what of Laura Upthegrove -- erstwhile "Queen of the Everglades", and confidante of Florida's most notorious bandit?

It seems that Laura peddled liquids more potent than gasoline for it was during an argument arising out of the purchase of a pint of liquor that she dramatically brought her life to a close.

Baffled in her effort to get the gun and frenzied to the point of madness, Laura snatched a bottle of disinfectant from the sink and drank it, sinking to the floor . . . And at odds with the law to the last - Laura passed away in less than ten minutes after drinking the poison. The death of the Queen of the Florida Everglades brought to a dramatic close one of the most picturesque careers in the history of the State -- a history in which the flashing of guns and speeding of bullets was not unknown, and in which twelve men were shot to death before law and order came into its own."

(pp. 79-80)

In case of Fire, Call Fire Department. For Police Assistance, Call Police

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ISSUE



1924

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