



The Historical Quarterly

of the St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

Spring 2010

Charles R. Croghan, Jr.

Editor

www.stluciehistoricalsociety.org

FLORIDA WILD FLOWERS INTRODUCTION

A CHIEF delight of the flower-hunter in the Florida peninsula is that On each day of the year something of interest may be found. Nature-the most successful alchemist the world has known-works tirelessly here in winter as in summer, transmuting dull earth and air and water into fragrance and color and beauty.

No other part of our country can show so great a variety in its wild flowers, and in no other state are there so many plants of strange habits and remarkable characteristics. More than three thousand species of flowering plants have already been listed as growing in Florida, and this vast number does not include the many cultivated plants. Northern flowers mingle here with the abundant southern flora, and in the country below Miami is a tropical flora, related botanically to the West Indies rather than to the United States.

In variety of size we have the great magnolia, whose perfumed flowers are larger than one's hand, and we have also the tiny wolffia, smallest of known flowering plants, whose entire growth floating in the water is smaller than the head of a common pin.

The great diversity of soils in Florida, often in a limited area, gives rise to a remarkable variety in the flora. From high pineland to marsh, and from sandy shore to swamp, each change in the character of the soil is shown in the different plant associations. In this diversified country are low pinelands where delicate Atamasco lilies spring from the forest floor; dry hills where pink thysanella and velvet-leaved blue lupines grow; hammocks where the great magnolia is at home; swamps where cypress knees take fantastic forms, and where crimson spikes of air plants flame from the tree trunks; streams along whose banks white crinums and wild callas bloom; ocean shores where adventurous flowers open on the sands; lake borers curtained with grape and smilax, and marshes "paynted all with variable flowers."

The abundance of the individual plants of a species is a marked characteristic of many Florida wild flowers: pink and magenta orchids may be gathered by handfuls; blue iris covers acres upon acres in spring; bladderworts bloom in such profusion that the yellow flowers of one species encircle pineland ponds with broad rings of gold; prairies are whitened by a heliotrope; marshes are golden with milkworts, and with the milkworts grow myriad pipeworts, whose small flowering heads are appropriately called immortelles.

From January onward, during an ordinary season, the variety of flowers continually increases. Even the dry scrub supports an interesting flora, and where crumbling limestone breaks through the scanty covering of earth near our southern shores plants grow and bloom where it seems impossible such life can exist.

From the Keys and extreme southern Florida, where the mahogany and other trees of the tropics are found, a subtropical flora extends northward along the coasts, while such typically northern species as the red maple, ash, sumac, Virginia creeper, hickory, willow, partridge berry, and others grow far south in the peninsula, and dogwood and sweet-gum show in florida the autumn coloring that they have in colder states.

Florida marshes in their changing profusion of flowers, and their varied and ever fresh interest, might rival the famed gardens of mythology. In many a marsh from February to May the beautiful yellow and purple flowers of butterworts sway on slender stems above rosettes of insect-catching leaves. While the butterworts are blooming, orange and yellow thimbles of milkworts appear, and a magenta orchid begins to blossom in midwinter. In spring a fragrant pink orchid opens delicately colored flowers; a tall milkwort lifts its clusters of yellow flowers above the lower growth; a sedge spreads conspicuous white bracts, like lilies, above the grasses, and in summer a white orchid sends up its spikes by scores. In the borders of the marsh Osceola's plume displays white racemes of little lilylike flowers, and in autumn a trilisa blooms in royal purple. Beyond the marsh, in open pinelands where green fans of saw palmetto grow in spreading groups beneath the trees, white papaw flowers, escaping in midwinter from brown buds that have imprisoned them, grow larger and still larger; blue lupines match the sky in color; a dwarf clematis changes its nodding flowers of dull violet into feathery gray pinwheels, and in summer a handsome relative of rhododendrons blooms in white.

In contrast to the marshes are the high sandhills and scrub, noted for their rare endemic plants, where a dry selaginella forms miniature gray forests two or three inches high on the sandy stretches between low shrubs, and where a pale Indian pipe rises out of the deep sand.

Ornamental and useful trees and shrubs that have long been prized in famous gardens of other countries abound in Florida. Our palms, magnolias, bay trees, wild olive, hollies, myrtles, and many others are admirable for ornamental planting.

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Yet the abundance of cultivated exotics sometimes diverts attention from the native flora. William Bartram, who spent many years in botanical explorations during the latter part of the eighteenth century, wrote in ecstatic praise of the beauty of Florida's flowers, and Andre Michaux, who visited Florida late in the same century, stopping at the "ruins of New Smyrna," and camping by the St. Johns River, as his Journal records, also traveled many difficult miles to find flowers that the tourist today passes by on well-made roads. But these men had an advantage the modern traveler sometimes lacks-for they saw the flowers.

A point of especial interest in the Florida flora is the abundance of those plants that have the extraordinary habit of catching and devouring small insects; thereby reversing the usual order, since insects only too commonly devour plants. More than twenty species of insect-catching plants are found in Florida. Our butterworts, sundews, bladderworts, and pitcher-plants are all of them insectivorous, and each of these four groups of plants has its own peculiar way of securing its victims. Brigands and highwaymen of the plant world they are, setting their leaves as traps and spreading them as snares for the unwary, while blossoming alluringly in purple and gold.

But botanizing in Florida is not limited to the ground. Air plants and orchids make the swamps and hammocks of southern Florida hanging gardens of beauty. Fastening their strange growth on the trees, and making use of a special diet of atmospheric dust and air and rain, they produce as brilliantly decked spikes of bloom as any of our earth-growing plants. Even on the straight shafts of cabbage palms they grow, one after another on the trunks, as if climbing to the ferns that make their home in the bases of the leaves above, and many a great live oak bears on its spreading branches luxuriant gardens of ferns, air plants, and orchids.

The ferns of Florida are also of remarkable interest. Several grow as epiphytes; one of these, the grass fern, resembles a grass in its narrow leaves, which hang like tufts of grass from the tree trunks; another, the resurrection fern, has the strange habit of appearing to wither and die during dry weather, but revives in fresh greenness with each rain. The golden polypody frequently grows directly below the crowns of cabbage palms, and winds its brightly colored rootstocks among the bases of the leafstalks. The broad leaves of the leather fern, growing in wet soil toward the coast, arc often ten feet tall, and a bracken grows high above one's head. Widely noted are the Florida fern grottoes, where on limestone ledges lacy spleenworts and other tropical ferns of rare beauty grow in regions far from their usual home. Resembling both the ferns and the palms in its leaves is the singular zamia, or coontie, reminiscent of the strange flora of prehistoric ages.

Spring comes to the peninsula before autumn ends. Early spring flowers and belated summer flowers are found together in December, and the cinnamon fern that in northern states sends up its fruiting leaves in spring unrolls them here in autumn. Orchids are gathered in Florida while snow lies deep on northern fields, the yellow jessamine gives its fragrance to midwinter air, and in the warmer parts of the peninsula the magnificent moonflower opens, ghostly white, on winter nights.

From Baker, Mary F. Florida Wildflowers. 1938. pp. 1-5.

Message from the President



As we approach the end of yet another membership year, I wish to thank you for your continued support of the Society. The Society continues to bring affordable monthly dinner meetings that provide good times and informative historical programs. Our 2010 speakers have included former Fort Pierce

Mayor Bill Dannahower, St. Lucie County Administrator Faye Outlaw, and Kathleen Frederick, Director of the A.E. Backus Gallery in Downtown Fort Pierce. The Society also continues to be a force in the community, by hosting the annual Santa Lucia Day in December and with appearances at the annual Party in the Park Festival and Main Street Fort Pierce's annual Sandy Shoes Festival, just to name a few.

I also want to acknowledge Jack Favorite, Society Chaplain and board member, who recently authored his memoirs, entitled Random Thoughts of a Rambling Mind. In his memoirs, he shares some of his great stories and fulfilling experiences. It is a terrific book, and it also makes a great gift!

Again, thank you for your continued support. Please consider giving friends and family members gift memberships, and also buy Jack's book!!

Brad Culverhouse.

Jack Favorite Publishes Memoirs

Xlibris has announced it will publish Jack Favorite's memoirs, with emphasis on his years with the local Fire Department. Random Thoughts of a Rambling Mind is a "treasure of beautiful stories, from ministering in the local department to the most important and most enduring love story in Favorite's life, to his unwavering faith in God and ... warm-hearted affection for family." (Xlibris Press Release)

Jack, now retired after twenty-eight years with the local fire department, lives with his wife Sue in St. Lucie County and is an active member of the St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

The St. Lucie County Regional History Center

414 Seaway Drive
Fort Pierce, Florida 34949
772-462-1795

The St. Lucie County Regional History Center

presents

More than the Mouse:

A History of Tourism in Florida

On exhibit from

March 9th to July 31st, 2010

Explore the Golden Age of Florida tourism from the early days of steam boating and tin-can tourists to the arrival of roadside attractions such as Musa Island and Gatorland. This special exhibit uses retro advertising, postcards, vintage souvenirs, photographs and 19th century travel guides to tell the story of the Sunshine State's most famous industry with an emphasis on **Treasure Coast tourism.**



St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc. Membership Renewal Time!



PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name: _____

Spouse/Partner Name: _____

Names of minor children: _____

Address: _____ # _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

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I/We wish to join the Society at the level indicated:

New Member Renewal

Family (\$20) Individual (\$15) *Small Business (\$50) *Corporate (\$100)

*Business or Corporation Name: _____

Please the types of activities/talents which you would be willing to participate in/contribute to our Society.

- Art Work,
- Article Writing,
- Baking,
- Book Committee,
- Booth Cashier,
- Booth Set-up,
- Children's Activities,
- Computer Work,
- Fund Raising,
- Gift Shop,
- History Fair,
- Lecturing,
- Museum Volunteer
- Oral Histories,
- Photography,
- Publicity,
- Research,
- Sewing,

Benefits of Membership:

Free Admission to the St. Lucie County Historical Museum,

Special preview of visiting exhibit openings,

Subscription to the Historical Quarterly

The Society has the following particular purposes:

Support of the St. Lucie County Historical Museum.

Promote public interest in and study of the history of St. Lucie County and of the East Coast of Florida.

Participate in and support of community events and displays that portray the history of St. Lucie County and the East Coast of Florida.

Publication of or support for the publication of historical subjects of St. Lucie County and the East Coast of Florida.

Society General Meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of the month, from September through May of each year. The Elks Club provides attendees with a meal prior to the General Meeting at a price of \$11 per meal. Reservations must be made for these meals. Meal reservations must be made no later than two days in advance of the General Meeting. To make reservations, call the *Society* phone at 772-461-8020 and leave a message. Dinners begin at 5:30 P.M. and the General Meeting starts at 6:00 P.M.

General Meetings are held at:
The Elks Club
635 South South Fifth Street
Fort Pierce, Florida 34950

The Society is a Florida Corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3). The Society is also classified as a public charity under 509(a)(2).

This issue of the *Quarterly* is
sponsored by

Dr. & Mrs. Charles Croghan



Please visit the website of the **St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.**, for information about our monthly dinner meetings, events, and to purchase books on local history.

www.stluciehistoricalsociety.org



MEMORIES OF FORT PIERCE

June Saine Level

Mom, Dad, and I moved to Ft. Pierce in time for me to start 2nd grade and most of my memories include those of a town bigger than Okeechobee, Stuart or Vero with a yellow brick school on Delaware Ave.

You have seen the park at US 1 and Georgia Avenue. I used to climb the tall Australian pine trees that grew there in the 1940's. If you have ever climbed Australian pines you will remember how limber the branches are. I climbed high enough for the entire tree to bend with the wind but it was important to see the ocean and watch for the Germans who might be invading. Then I could warn the town and be a heroine. Mom never knew this until I was grown and WW II was long over. This was one park that had tennis courts at that time. Other activities we enjoyed were riding bikes as far west as 25th street, south to Marvella and Oleander, north to Orange Ave. and east as far as the Indian River. We skated on 4 wheel skates (making sure we had our skate key) everywhere there were sidewalks. Most of the town still had unpaved streets.

My fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Snow, read from chapter books every day. She would read one chapter a day. One day she began reading from a brand new book, "The Boxcar Children." Certainly I never thought that children would still be reading that book and additional books in the series in 2008. Yes, the stories have been updated. Teachers had to have their own books as there was not a library in the school. That was the year she got us interested in reading the Hardy Boys, Dana Girls, Nancy Drew, Sue Bolton, and Bobbsey Twins series of books. I helped keep the books in order by series. Later I learned that the books were written by several writers sitting in a large room producing those stories according to a formula plan for each series.

During the War very few books were published for children other than the series mentioned above. As an avid reader I found out about the city library located in the Women's Club Building just down the street from the corner of Ave. A and 2nd Street. Across the country Women's Clubs opened libraries in small towns. Miss Betty Austin was our town librarian. She did not like noisy patrons, young or old. Her card catalog drawers did not have a rod at bottom and cards could easily fall out or get displaced so she was the only person who could use them. I spent hours looking for good books and decided that Miss Austin put all the really good books on the bottom two shelves. I thought she

did this because she didn't want those books to get checked out enough to wear out. She really did shelve books by the same authors together, my first lesson in library organization. Aren't citizens fortunate to have all the lovely St. Lucie County Libraries today?

Summer vacations always included two weeks of morning Vacation Bible Schools at the Methodist, 1st Baptist, Presbyterian, and 1st Christian Churches. We soon learned that the songs, activities, snacks, and Bible stories were almost the same at every church. A small group of us attended every session. We got to know each other's mothers as they were the teachers. We also learned that the biggest difference between the churches was the main sanctuary and size. (none were air-conditioned) So much for theology.

Ahhhh Trains! The Florida East Coast Railway trains rumbled several times a day across the tracks in downtown Fort Pierce. Who wanted to get stopped by the trains on the wrong side of the tracks and have to stand in the hot sun for twenty minutes? If a train full of soldiers was passing through it was fun waving at them. One strong memory was when we went to the station to see the train on which Franklin Roosevelt was traveling, hoping he would come out and wave to us. All we saw was a Pullman Porter walking Fala, the president's dog. It seems that most trains stopped in Ft. Pierce to take on water.

The junior and senior high school had all the white kids from the county going to school together for the first time. My 8th grade math teacher, Mr. Hall, had just moved here from New York and his deep voice and large body convinced us that "reading is the most important subject," a mantra suited today for the FCATS! Our new principal, Daniel Westfall, surprised us by leading cheers just like a cheerleader on Friday morning before our first football game. We always played Okeechobee or Clewiston for the first game to assure we would win. (Isn't that what college football teams still do today?) Mr. Westfall got us to paint the windows across the front of the school like church windows for the Christmas season. People in town enjoyed them and drove by to see the lighted windows. Later Mr. Westfall became superintendent of schools for Dade County. Two teachers taught me the most useful classes in my life. Mrs. Rentz taught typing which has been invaluable even though I no longer type 60 WPM. Coach Fred Huff spent his summers teaching driver's education and I still wow my children and grandchildren when I parallel park my car.

St. Lucie County Regional History Center

Brynn Batsche, Education Specialist

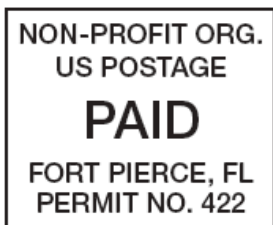
The end of 2009 and beginning of 2010 has brought many exciting changes and partnerships to the newly renamed St. Lucie County Regional History Center.

Meeting one of its biggest special exhibit successes to date, the Center opened "Florida Girls & Boys & their Toys" on July 11, 2009. Summer Family Fun Day kicked off the special exhibit and featured a toy show, bounce houses, crafts, giveaways, face painting, food vendors and lots more for the young and the young at heart. After an extension into 2010, the exhibit was closed on January 31 with a general attendance figure of 6,658 visitors. School children visiting on field trips especially enjoyed viewing antique toys and playing in the hands-on section of the exhibit. The Center's next special exhibit will delve into the history of tourism in Florida, specifically St. Lucie County. The exhibit will feature vintage posters, maps, brochures, postcards, video advertising and all other manner of Floridiana artifacts. The exhibit is set to open on March 2.

The Center also recently unveiled an audio tour system to be used by visitors free of charge. The system created by TourMate Company of Toronto and written by Center staff, allows visitors to select one of three tours including a detailed tour, a basic overview type of tour and a children's tour.

Members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida made a special visit to the History Center on January 22 to explore the museum's permanent Seminole exhibit and provide input for future upgrades to the display. Also in attendance with the tribal members were staff members from the Florida Seminole Tribal museum, the AH-TAH-THI-KI. The museum's staff is working in a partnership with the St. Lucie County Regional History Center to create a plan for better preservation and interpretation of the Center's unique Seminole collection which features rare artifacts such as hair boards made from cypress bark and male Seminole dolls.

ST. LUCIE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
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www.stluciehistoricalsociety.org



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