

The Historical Quarterly

of the St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

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Charles R. Crogan, Jr.
Editor

THE LITTLE RAILROAD THAT COULD

BY
ANTHONY YOUNG

Woven into the rich fabric of American history and folklore are some of the most famous railroads still operating today. You needn't be a railroad buff to recognize them: the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (established 1895), the Grand Trunk Western (1852), and the Union Pacific (1862) to name just three. Among these great railroads are those created recently by mergers of existing companies, with names like Conrail, Burlington Northern, and CSX. Of the thirteen Class 1 freight carriers operating in the United States, the smallest is the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC).¹

The FEC operates only 783 miles of track between its Jacksonville headquarters and Miami, but in a heavily regulated and unionized industry, it is a model of efficiency and profitability. How has this small railroad, established in 1895, managed to survive and prosper in an industry that has seen countless railroads, both great and small, vanish from the scene?

THE FLAGLER SYSTEM

Railroading has always attracted the thickest-skinned entrepreneurs—captains of industry and empire builders. This was true of even a small railroad like the FEC. Henry Morrison Flagler (1830-1913) was such a man. The partnership he formed with John D. and William Rockefeller to operate a small refinery in Cleveland eventually grew to become the Standard Oil Company of Ohio. He became a multi-millionaire, and by the 1880s was looking for new empires to build.

In the winter of 1883-84 he visited St. Augustine, Florida. He thought the small city charming and the

climate to his liking, but found the accommodations lacking. While considering building a luxury hotel, he became convinced that he could make St. Augustine a travel destination for wealthy Americans. He announced plans to build a hotel to rival anything in Europe, and that was to be the draw.

To get the vast quantities of construction material to the burgeoning city and offer a route to his new hotel, Flagler purchased the bonds to the Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Halifax River Railway. The Ponce de Leon opened in January 1888, the first of many luxury hotels Flagler would build or refurbish in Florida. These became known as the Flagler System Hotels.

Flagler realized that the means of expanding Florida tourism was the railroad, and he began acquiring other lines along the state's east coast. In 1888 the first all-Pullman vestibule train began running between New York and Florida. He built a bridge across the St. Johns River to permit trains to travel directly to St. Augustine; before, passengers traveled to Jacksonville and took a ferry across the river, then traveled by train to St. Augustine.

Pushing farther south, Flagler established resorts in Palm Beach and Miami. In the spring of 1892, he incorporated a new line, the Florida Coast and Gulf Railway. Later that year, he changed the name to the Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Indian River Railway. In 1895 this became the Florida East Coast Railway, and Flagler merged his other railroads under this banner.

With vision some called folly, Flagler set his sights on Key West as the railroad's final destination. This

massive engineering project, called the Key West Extension, was begun in 1904 and completed in 1912 at a cost of tens of millions of dollars and a loss of more than 700 lives due to storms, diseases, and other mishaps. On the inaugural trip from New York to Key West, Flagler rode in his private railway car, "Rambler." Nearly blind, he lived to witness, but not see, his greatest accomplishment. The "railroad that went to sea," as some called it, operated for 23 years, until it was destroyed by a hurricane in 1935.²

Freight as well as passengers were vitally important to the FEC during the 1920s and 1930s. The Atlantic Coast Line Railway and the Seaboard Air Line Railroad were its chief competitors in Florida during this time and in the decades that followed. Forced to file for bankruptcy in the Great Depression year of 1931, the FEC continued to operate in receivership, yet stubbornly refused to go under.

UNION TROUBLE

The FEC's most vexing problems ultimately would come from within, as well as from the government. Between 1950 and 1962, it earned a profit in only one year, 1955. The railroad lost over \$29 million during that time.³ In 1961 the Interstate Commerce Commission awarded trusteeship to Edward Ball, chairman of the board of the FEC, which was now a subsidiary of St. Joe Paper Company, itself a subsidiary of the Alfred I. duPont Estate. As a trustee of the estate, Ball had been buying up the second mortgage bonds of the FEC since 1941. For the next 20 years, he was the railroad's greatest champion and defender. That did not include, however, supporting a bloated payroll. As part of reorganization efforts, he cut the number of employees from 3,300 to 2,200.

Ball conferred closely with two other officers of the company, Raymond W. Wyckoff and Winfred L. Thornton. They soon agreed that to save the railroad, they would have to challenge the unions. In 1962 the FEC refused union wage demands and decided to negotiate directly with its employees. One of the longest and most destructive strikes in American

railroad history, involving five operating unions and 22 non-operating unions (those not running the trains), began on January 23, 1963.

In the first 10 days of the strike, nothing moved on FEC tracks. Ed Ball was resolute: He would not acquiesce to union demands, despite intense pressure from the Kennedy Administration. Company officers made a bold decision. They would operate the railroad with supervisory personnel and employ new workers. The alternative was a return to bankruptcy. On February 3, 1963, the first train with a supervisory crew set out from the Bowden terminal in Jacksonville.

In the months that followed, hundreds of acts of violence and sabotage were committed against the railroad. These included removing rails, damaging switches, and firing gunshots at the locomotive cabs. There were several wrecks and in two instances trains were blown up, but there were no serious injuries or deaths.

No passengers were carried during the strike until the Florida Railroad and Public Utilities Commission (FR&PUC) examined the company's charter and ordered the FEC to reinstate passenger service. On August 2, 1965, passenger trains once again were running between Jacksonville and Miami, but the railroad warned passengers they traveled at their own risk.

Rail travel in general had been declining since the 1950s. The FEC had been losing money for years on its passenger service, and the strike exacerbated the situation. The company petitioned the FR&PUC to end service, and this was granted. The last FEC passenger train ran on July 31, 1968.

The strikes dragged on into the 1970s. Many railroad workers gave up hope of there ever being a settlement and moved on to other jobs, never to return to the industry. The strike by the non-operating unions didn't end until December 1974. The National Mediation Board finally called a halt to the strikes by the operating unions on May 3, 1977.

CUTTING THE FAT

The strike and subsequent operation by supervisory personnel and new hires proved to the FEC just how much featherbedding there had been. The railroad found it could operate with far fewer workers.

The FEC implemented changes that were radical for the industry—changes that would make the railroad profitable. The following work rules were eliminated:

1. The archaic 100-mile-day rule that required three separate five-man crews to move a train from Jacksonville to Miami. The FEC implemented an eight-hour day, plus time-and-a-half for overtime. In the process, they reduced the crew to two operators per train for the entire trip, eliminating 13 nonessential workers.
2. Restrictions on road crews operating within a terminal.
3. Rules preventing yard crews from performing road work, or vice versa.
4. Restrictions fixing the number of men in a yard or train crew.
5. Rules dictating when yard engines (locomotives) could be started.

The FEC also established a single seniority date—the date of hire—for all engine and train employees in both yard and road service, so that an employee could apply for the different positions he was qualified to hold without penalty. This has given employees unprecedented flexibility in planning their careers. In addition, the FEC started an aggressive capital improvement program that today is the model for the industry. In the mid-1960s, the FEC began developing concrete ties, which are now used on all the company's main track from Jacksonville to Miami. This greatly reduces track maintenance and costs. To insure safety and optimal equipment operation, automatic devices installed every 20 miles of track check for loose wheels, overheated journals, and dragging equipment, and verify the presence of the tail-end monitor since cabooses are no longer used. Overhead gantries fitted with photo-beams check for shifted loads every 40 miles. The FEC's outstanding profits come from its ability to quickly load trailers coming off the interstate, usually two to a flatcar; keeping the trains short, usually 20 cars per train, permits quick turnaround and frequent departures held to a strict

timetable. This piggyback service saves wear and tear on customer equipment, reduces driver fatigue, and cuts freight costs to and from Miami. High volume permits the FEC to keep its rates low.

A LESSON TO FOLLOW

Can the FEC's innovations be adopted by other railroads? This has been bandied about for years. Some railroads have adopted aspects of the FEC's operations, but these are exceptions. Others have tried, only to be driven back by the unions. Some industry analysts say the FEC's position is unique. Nevertheless, company officers would be the first to say procedures such as theirs could be implemented, but the industry mind-set precludes it. FEC president W. L. Thornton made his views clear: "The Florida East Coast has demonstrated how much you can do if you allow yourself not to be constrained by the way things have been done. You see all kinds of things done unconventionally on the FEC, at all levels—in the mechanical department, in operations, in the yards. One reason for this is that they brought in 'inexperienced' people instead of embracing the institutionalized verities that were there before them. Conventional wisdom went out the window, where it so often belongs."

Clearly, the FEC's key executives have embraced this view for the past three decades. It would take a similar commitment for other, larger railroads to make comparable changes. In any event, the Florida East Coast Railway will continue to be an innovative leader, an example of what can be done if the will to do so is there.

1. The Interstate Commerce Commission ranks railroads according to size. Rail systems with operating revenues of \$93.5 million or more are categorized Class 1.
2. Pat Parks, *The Railroad That Died at Sea* (Key West, Fla.: The Langley Press, 1968), p. 38.
3. Seth H. Bramson, *Speedway to Sunshine* (Erin, Ontario, Canada: Boston Mills Press, 1984), p. 141.
4. Quoted by Luther S. Miller, editor, *Railway Age*, May 8, 1978.

Mr. Young is a regular contributor to Automobile Quarterly.

ONE OF THE FIRST SNOWBIRDS,

Circa 1902

Captain Robert Hammond was a Boston Sea Captain who came down to Florida during one of his voyages and fell in love with the state.

He purchased fifty acres of land on the Oxbow of the St. Lucie River and built his two-story house from the log pines on the land he cleared. This heart of pine wood is still termite resistant today!

Hammond employed local Danish workmen who lived in White City area to build the house, including a European interior with a grand staircase and an eleven-foot tall fireplace.

The wood for the house was milled at the East Coast Lumber Company in downtown Fort Pierce, which is still located here today.

Hammond employed people year around to maintain the house and property. During the six months he was here, he hired a local person as cook, cleaning woman, and laundress. A man was hired to keep the grass low, using a machete.

Nellie, Hammond's wife, and Mary, his daughter, came down to White City when the house was completed. They brought with them a tutor for Mary and a Baby Grand for her piano lessons.

Captain Hammond invited friends from Boston and Washington D.C., to visit. He entertained lavishly and loved to fish, hunt turkey, deer, and boar. He continued to winter here until his death in 1925. His daughter Mary inherited the house, but lived chiefly in Boston and rented the house out. During the Second World War, she rented out rooms to the military and their dependents. A tiny doorknob on a screen door attests to children being here as well. Mary kept the house until 1951, when she sold it to the Clarence Rowe family, which lived there for fifty years.

The fact that two families each lived there for fifty years shows how much the house was loved. We purchased the house in 2002, and enjoy living in it just as the previous families did.

Kathleen and Bob Colando

5775 Citrus Avenue

White City

THE ST. LUCIE COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

Until a permanent location was secured for the budding museum, Judge William Tye's Arcade Building and Dorothy Binney Putnam's Refrigeration Terminal provided space for storage and display of the many as yet unattached items given to the museum. In the early 1960s, the public's interest in the Museum was illustrated when Fort Pierce Utilities sponsored an exhibit of Spanish Treasure at its facility, with over 11,000 visitors attending.

In June 1968, Museum representatives Bob Gladwin and Addie Emerson negotiated a lease (5 years) with St. Lucie County for the former Mosquito Control Center on Seaway Drive that had been built by the United States Naval Amphibious Training Base during World War II as a Motor Pool site. At the end of the 5-year lease agreement, the building was given to the St. Lucie County Historical Commission for a Museum site. Today, it operates under St. Lucie County Cultural Affairs, having opened September 17, 1968. Its collection has continued to expand and includes a typical turn-of-the-20th century house — the Gardner House — about 100-years-old.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION CELEBRATES 45 YEARS

The St. Lucie County Historical Commission works along with the Historical Society and the Historical Museum in preserving and documenting St. Lucie County history. It was created, according to Florida law, by the St. Lucie County Board of Commissioners for the collecting, recording, and arranging of artifacts pertinent to the County. Chartered on September 3, 1963, the Historical Commission is composed of 15 members. Each Commissioner appoints one member; each historical group appoints one member; the remainder are at-large members. The Commission meets monthly in the St. Lucie County Cultural Affairs meeting room.

Other historical preservation groups include: White City Improvement Club, St. Lucie Village Historical Society, Port St. Lucie Historical Society, and St. Lucie Genealogical Society.

Looking Back

A Brief History of the St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc. 1952-2008

Nov. 18, 1952: Organizational meeting of the society.

Its mission statement reads:

"The purpose and objectives of the Society shall be education, historical research and the study of items and objects of interest and value concerning St. Lucie County and the surrounding areas, and encouragement of interest in historical preservation."

Jan. 1953: Society named.

A committee of two, L. W. Halbe and Dewey Crawford are credited with choosing the name, St. Lucie Historical Society. They opted against St. Lucie County Historical Society, believing the word county would limit the scope of membership.

August 1953 – June 1955: No meetings held.

Patricia Forman speculates the lack of meetings could be attributed to the opening of the new library during this period, keeping the usual volunteers busy with development of the library.

Nov. 25, 1956: Charter Granted.

Circuit Judge A. O. Kanner granted the Society's charter. The charter provided for the Society's concerns for not only the history of St. Lucie County, but also Florida's unique history.

June 12, 1956: Society's Bylaws adopted.

1958 – Present: Regular meetings held.

Monthly dinner meetings featured speakers such as Judge Angus Sumner, Carrie Holmes, and Adelaide Schwarfscwerdt. Topics included development of the F.E.C. Railway, pineapple plantations, Spruce Bluff and the fishing and cattle industries.

June 1968: St. Lucie County Historical Museum opens

Buildings used by the U.S. Naval Amphibious Training Base during World War II at 414 Seaway Drive, became county property at the end of the war. First used by Mosquito Control, it was then designated as the St. Lucie County Historical Museum

1976: Society and Sun Bank join to publish book.

The Society and Sun Bank published Kyle Van Landingham's book, A Pictorial History of St. Lucie County, Florida, 1565-1910.

Dec. 1983: The P. P. Cobb House moved to museum grounds.

Donated to the St. Lucie Historical Commission, the Peter P. Cobb house was moved to museum grounds to serve as an architectural example of 1880s. A year later, it caught fire and burned to the ground.

July 18, 1985: Gardner Family donates Cracker House.

Sept, 21, 1991: Bob Gladwin Memorial Garden dedicated at the Historical Museum.

1994: Society sponsors Lucille Rieley-Right's book, A Portrait of St. Lucie County, Florida.

Funded by Riverside Bank. Now republished in 2007, the expanded second edition features an updated new chapter by Cynthia P. Crankshaw.

Nov. 2002: Society's 50th Anniversary

May 2005: Society Celebrates Charter Members.

July 2, 2005: St. Lucie County Centennial Celebration

The charter members included: Ernestine Collins, Marilla Collins Lacefield, Edith Luke, Olive Dame Peterson and O.C. Peterson.

2006 – 2008: Society Moves Ahead

In this period the Society realized some of its goals by joining with the City of Fort Pierce to restore the Betts Building and with the White City Improvement Club, Inc. to save the Jorgensen House. The Society also republished books by Kyle Van Landingham, Esquire and Lucille Reiley-Rights. Its membership grew to over 400 members.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

- Free admission to the St. Lucie County Historical Museum.
- Free subscription to the Society’s publications. A September – May “Society News” newsletter with details of monthly dinner programs and other community historical events. Fall, winter, spring and summer issues of “The Historical Quarterly” which features in-depth writings on a variety of local historical subjects.
- Invitations to the September – May dinner program meetings.
- Invitations to St. Lucie County Historical Museum exhibition preview receptions.
- 10% discount on all purchases (*except books, maps and photographs*) at the “Pineapple Patch” gift shop of the St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc..

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRESERVING OUR LOCAL HERITAGE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

Membership Application

Name: _____

Spouse’s name: _____

Names & Ages of Minor Children: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Phone: Home: _____ Business: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____

We wish to join the society at the level indicated:

New Renewal Individual (\$15) Family (\$20) Business (\$30)

Yes, I’m interested in volunteer activities.

Please make check payable to:

St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 578, Fort Pierce, Florida 34954-0578

For information call: 772-461-8020

Send a gift membership to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Gift from: _____

Membership is open to any interested person

My employer will match this gift. Employer’s name: _____

Address: _____

A Brief History of Organizations that Shape St. Lucie County History

By Cynthia Putnam Crankshaw

THE ST. LUCIE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

The history of the St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc. is as rich and diverse as the area in which it is located. Its history is a microcosm of Florida's unique story as the first place of European settlement in what is now the United States and reflects the continuing need to discover, learn, and preserve our role in the nation's history.

Ponce de Leon first sighted La Florida in 1513. The first known encounter with the shores of the St. Lucie River came in 1546, and 462 years later, we are still discovering and learning of those unique times.

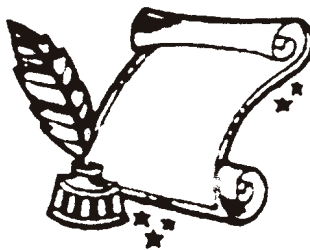
The St. Lucie Historical Society was formed from a small group of interested community members of the St. Lucie County Library Association, Inc. on November 18, 1952, with 61 charter members. Membership was \$1.00 per year. The first meetings were held at the old USO Building located where the Sun Trust Bank's parking lot was on the east side of South Indian River Drive, in downtown Fort Pierce. On November 25, 1955, a charter was granted, and, by June 12, 1956, By-Laws were adopted.

The Mission Statement of the Society is as follows:

The purpose and objective of the Society shall be education, historical research and study of such items and objects of interest and value concerning St. Lucie County and the surrounding areas and encouragement of interest in historical preservation.

Today, the Society has a membership of over 400 with five honorary life members. The general meetings (usually dinner meetings) are held the fourth Thursday of each month in the Fort Pierce Elks Club with programs featuring local history speakers. The fifteen member Board of Directors and Officers meet the third Thursday of the month at the St. Lucie Historical Museum. Members of the Society serve as volunteers, docents, and educational specialists at the Museum and in the community. Also, the Society operates a gift shop, The Pineapple Patch, which moved from the Historical Museum in June of 2007. Inventory is available on line, at monthly dinner meetings, and at several outdoor events - always just a phone call away!!

Desk of the President



The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc., is alive and well and moving forward into the 21st century. I am pleased to report to you that more than 200 members and friends including charter member O.C. Petersen and the Society's

second treasurer, former State

representative and Circuit Judge, the Honorable Rupert J. Smith, attended the Society's 55th Anniversary Pioneer Ball fundraiser at the Pelican Yacht Club on November 17, 2007 at which Kyle VanLandingham, Esquire attended and suffered an attack of writer's cramp from autographing so many copies of the new third edition of his book "Pictorial History of Saint Lucie County 1565-1910" which the Society published. The Society netted \$14,441.13 from the Ball. We enjoyed doing the 55th Anniversary Ball so much that we have prepared a meticulous file for the Society's Board of Directors to read if they ever eat loco weed and decide to put on a 110th Anniversary Ball. I also want to thank my beautiful bride of 36 years, Susan D. (the "D" is for Darling) Culverhouse for all of her work on the Ball and I want to thank Jeannie Carpenter Stark for all of the hours that she volunteered and I want to thank Cynthia Putnam Crankshaw and Nancy Bennett for their selfless devotion to the Society in making the Pioneer Ball a reality and a great success.

I am also delighted to report that we now routinely have over eighty plus members and guests attending our monthly dinner meetings. This is a tribute to the fine officers and members of the Board of Directors who I have the privilege of serving with. They deserve special recognition: Lisa Bell, Nancy Bennett, Deborah Billis, Lorena Bussey, Cynthia Putnam Crankshaw, Joe Crankshaw, John B. Culverhouse, Sue Favorite, Jack Favorite, Harold Holsberg, Maggie Minchew, Marilyn Minnix, Dorran R. Russell and Mike Simone. I also want to give special recognition to the Society's former President, Charles Croghan, for his outstanding service as Editor of this Quarterly and I want to thank T.A. Wyner who together with Lisa Bell are the Co-Chairs of the Society's Historical & Architectural Players and who also Co-Chaired the immensely successful 2nd Annual Santa Lucia Day and I want to thank all of our members for their interest and efforts in the cause of the preservation and celebration of our area's rich history.

Brad Culverhouse, President

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!! ATTENTION !!

I would like to make the Summer 2008 issue of the Historical Quarterly a collection of articles from readers of the Quarterly, or anyone with a historical tale to tell.

Such contributions may be your memories (even of the recent past), a story or remembrance your parents or grandparents told, or a historical "rumor" (e.g., the infiltration of our shores by German spies during world War II). Old letters, also, make wonderful reading. If editing is required, I'll be glad to help you with the task.

Charles Croghan, Jr.
Quarterly Editor