The Adventures of Charles Pierce in Broward County One Hundred Years Ago

Part II

When Charles Pierce died in 1939, he left a massive manuscript describing his experiences in southeast Florida until the coming of the railroad. In 1970, a summarized version of the period before 1896 was published as Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida. What follows are excerpts from Pierce's manuscript which relate his adventures in what is now Broward County. For further details see "Behind the Scenes" in this issue.

ALONE on the SEA

[1] Made an early start from the [Biscayne] Station landing [on a trip to Lake Worth in the sloop Creole in June of 1884]. The wind was blowing a light breeze from the west and I had to sail seven miles down the Bay to Norris Cut; by the time I sailed out of the inlet the wind changed to southeast, and just before I arrived off the Station it again changed to west and not much of it at that. I landed at the Station for some things I had forgotten. Then, up anchor and on my way again.

Shortly after leaving the Station, squalls began to make up on every hand and the prospects became very dubious. About twelve o'clock a heavy squall came down on me from the east. I was more than a mile from shore. The storm looked so wicked, I rounded up and cast anchor in sixty feet of water, lowered sail, made everything snug in anticipation of a heavy blow, and awaited the onrushing squall. But it pattered out before reaching me. As it cleared up the wind again breezed up from the southwest. I sailed in close to New River inlet; a heavy black thunderstorm commenced to roll up from the northwest. It was big and black and ugly-looking. When I arrived off the inlet, [1] saw that the tide was high and still running in. I sailed up inside the river, dropped anchor under the lee of the west bank, and waited for the oncoming storm. But like the others, it failed to reach me. In an hour's time it had entirely disappeared, and all other squalls vanished. The wind was now blowing a gentle breeze from the west, and the ocean [was] smooth as a pond. I knew it would be easy for me to make Hillsborough [Hillsboro] inlet before dark if that wind kept up, so I hoisted sail and put to sea again. I now had hopes of being able to sail straight to Lake Worth Inlet that night, if the wind held. As it was I would be certain to be near that inlet by daylight in the morning. Yet I was suspicious of the weather; it had not been acting normal all day and I was afraid of a change of wind to the north or northeast before morning.

[1] Arrived off Hillsborough just before sundown, sailed close in and looked at it long and hard. The tide was low and the dark coffee-colored water came pouring out through its crooked channel, and mingled with the clear blue of the ocean. If I went in there I would have to lay at anchor off the inlet until near twelve o'clock that night before the water would be enough on the bar for the Creole to sail in. My better judgment told me to go in and wait until morning before attempting the forty mile run to Lake Worth, and if there had been anyone with me I would have done so. But the place looked so lonesome, wild and dreary, I turned it down and decided to keep on. Besides, if rainy weather came on and I could not go on for a week or more I would have a most uncomfortable time. The Creole was an open boat, and I did not have even a tarpaulin or tent of any kind to protect me from rain. [1] Had a sort of feeling in my bones that the fine weather and fair wind would not hold until I reached Lake Worth Inlet. I feared a northeaster was coming down the coast far to the northwest, yet at this time there was nothing in the appearance of the weather that indicated such conditions on the way. Well [1] knew if a northeast wind should strike me before I reached the lake [1] would be compelled to run her on the beach, and that perhaps would mean the loss of the boat. She was by far too heavy for one man to pull up out of reach of heavy seas that would follow the first wind of a strong northeaster.

[1] Was so worried at the chances I was taking and the prospect before me after passing Hillsborough inlet I could not eat my supper. My appetite had vanished. Passed Boca Raton after dark. The wind continued to blow a fair sailing breeze from the west and no more squalls appeared, tho' I could see an occasional flash of lightning low down on the horizon in the north and northeast. I did not like those indications of a change. They told me now for certain that a northeast was coming. The only question was, would I reach Lake Worth before it hit me. [Pierce reached the Lake Worth area, but not the inlet, before the storm hit, and was forced to reach the Creole at Palm Beach.]

SAILING and SPIRITS

Not long after making his inspection trip by canoe through swamp and glade [described in Part I of this article in the Summer/Fall 1985 issue of Broward Legacy] Mr. [Champ H.] Spencer, superintendent of the Houses of Refuge, realizing that canoe travel along the lower east coast was not suited to his purpose, bought from Commodore Ralph Munroe [an early settler of Coconut Grove on Biscayne Bay] his little sharpie, Skipperee. This sharpie was the first of Mr. Munroe's importations from New
York, and was well suited to Mr. Spencer's work.

The Skipperee was skippered by Joe Jenkins, a Florida boy that had lived most of his young life on Biscayne Bay. [I] Had been home [at the Biscayne House of Refuge] but a few days when Mr. Spencer arrived in this little shallop on one of his inspection trips. When I informed him of my desire to go to Lake Worth with him he said he would be more than glad to land me at Palm Beach, in return for my assistance in sailing the shallop, and of course I was only too glad to accept passage on those terms.

The day we left the Bay was an ideal one for a trip up the coast. There was a light wind from the southeast and the sea [was] very smooth. As the sea was so calm we did not go into New River but sailed up and anchored in front of Lauderdale Station just at dark. Mr. Spencer and Joe went on shore in the shallop. Not having any business with Captain Jack Peacock, keeper of the Station, I remained on board to keep ship.

In about an hour they returned. We hauled the shallop on deck, hoisted sail and anchor, and headed up the coast. [I] Noticed when they came aboard that Joe appeared very much excited and was at a loss to account for it. When he went into the cabin for a drink of water, I asked Mr. Spencer what was the matter with Joe. He said he did not know. "Did Captain Jack give him a drink of any kind?" I asked. "Yes," was his answer, "some kind of liquor that looked like water. I did not accept any so do not know what it was, Joe only took one drink, however, that should not have made him tipsy." "Only one drink," said I. "But how much was there in that one drink?" "About half of a water glass; not enough to make him drunk I should say." "Not enough!" I exclaimed. "That stuff is what they call Augekend (auguidente), a Cuban rum that is almost pure alcohol. You see now that it was enough to make Joe drunk."

Just then Joe returned on deck and insisted on taking the tiller. [He] Said he was going to show us how to sail that sharpie up the coast, he was going to head her for the Gulf Stream and carry sail until the mastheads came together. This was only one of the many wild ideas imparted to us by Joe in the next few minutes, while under the potent influence of that one drink of augerend.

In his present condition it was impossible to say just what he might do, so then I began to figure on some plan to get him to bed, for honestly I would [have] rather had a wild northeaster to buck up the coast than Joe on deck in his drunken frenzy. At last, after telling him a number of times that I was going to take first watch, and that he should get some sleep, so that he could take the tiller at twelve o'clock, he went below and turned in.

When Joe woke up, the sun was rising, and I had sailed the boat all night. Joe had a sheepish grin on when he came on deck and saw me at the tiller. Yes, I had sailed the boat all night, or rather had tried to. The wind had died to a flat calm soon after Joe went below. I had sat there all night holding the tiller and watching the boat drift with current. We were now off Hillsborough inlet, only nine miles from the Lauderdale Station, which was yet in plain sight. For the next two hours there was not a breath of wind and the ocean was quiet and smooth as a pond.

Joe started cooking breakfast, complaining meantime of a very bad headache. I told him it served him good and right. He should have known better than to take such a big drink of that liquid fire. Joe promised that he would never do it again. But I very much doubted that promise would be kept.

About nine o'clock the wind came from the southeast, a fine sailing breeze [and the Skipperee continued on to Lake Worth].

THE GREAT RAIN

In October of that year (1884) occurred the greatest and longest rainfall ever known on the east coast since its earliest settlement. It poured down for eight days and nights, slacking at times for a few minutes, but never stopping; then came down again harder than ever if that were possible. The whole southern part of the state, with the exception of the higher land, was inundated. All hollows on the beach ridge east of Indian Creek were full of water. Our road to the landing on the creek crossed one of these swales; and now it was arm-deep and we were compelled to build a bridge over it in order to reach our boats without almost swimming in crossing this place.

On the night of the eighth day the rain stopped, and the next day came in bright and clear and the sun shone brightly on a rain-soaked Florida. In the afternoon of that day, I was on the east porch [of the Biscayne House of Refuge] looking out to sea. A record had to be kept on the Station Log of all types of vessels passing each day, and every hour or so someone would take a look over the ocean to see what kind of ships might be in sight. Looking up the coast to the northward, I caught the glint of something white about four miles away. At first I thought it was a sea gull, then it looked like striking fish. I was not certain which it was, so I went for the old long spyglass to get a close-up view of that scintillating white. What the spyglass revealed surprised me. The flickering white I had seen was now clearly shown through the glass to be whitecaps or breaking seas at the head of a dark body of water rushing down the coast. In less than an hour it was passing the Station; in the meantime I had called "all hands and the cook" to come and see the strange sight, a dark mass of fresh water, some hundred feet in width rushing along to the south, and with breaking seas overrunning the blue water in front. It was a

"Bay Buisquine" — a view of Biscayne Bay with the Cape Florida lighthouse in the background, c. 1870s.
strange sight and at first we all wondered where it came from. Father (Hannibal D. Pierce) solved the mystery when he said, “It is fresh water from the New River inlet.” Could that be possible? New River was fourteen miles away, yet there was no other solution of the phenomenon. What a mighty volume of water must be coming out of the inlet, and with tremendous velocity, enough to overcome the resistance of wind and sea for so many miles. By night of that day, the entire ocean in sight of the Station was covered with dark coffee-colored fresh water from New River. Not a bit of blue water to be seen in any direction. Biscayne Bay was fresh for nearly a month after the week of rain.

Of course, Mr. Ewan at once took up for his beloved Bay. He said, “Just why do you want to go back to that place? You have had to leave it twice and go other places in order to make a living, so why go back?”

“Mr. Ewan,” said I, “You are looking through the wrong end of the telescope. We have left the lake twice, it is true, tried living in other places, Biscayne Bay is one of them, and we find we cannot live away from dear old Lake Worth. We are going to stay this time, never to leave it again.”

Mr. Ewan saw that I had the best of the argument, and wisely changed the subject.

As Father had to inspect the landing of another shipload of coconuts the latter part of the month, and there was also the Bonito to sail up the coast, it was decided that I should take Mother and Sister and the most of our household goods in the Bon Ton and go ahead to the lake, Father to follow in the Bonito when his work was finished. I felt this arrangement was a great responsibility on my shoulders. Besides the Bon Ton and the best part of all our household goods, the lives of Mother and Sister were in a way in my hands. It was up to me to land them safely on Lake Worth. And, too, the Bon Ton was rather large for one man to handle in stormy weather on a heavy sea. It worried me quite a little as I thought of my trip down the coast in August and what might have happened if I had been there alone; then it might also happen again. I was determined on one point however: I would not put to sea unless I was sure of good weather. Anyway, the season was in our favor now. Northerns and northeasters were the only things I had to look out for. Thunderstorms were not likely to bother us in the winter.

We made everything ready in advance as far as possible, then waited for the right kind of wind and sea. One morning in February [1885], all seemed just right so we rushed the last of our loading. When the last of our goods had been stowed away, sails hoisted and ready to start, I discussed the weather signs with Father. There were a few small squall clouds far inland over the Everglades. I ventured the opinion that the squalls indicated a bit of summer weather and did not mean immediate change of wind, in which case we might expect a continuation of the south wind, then blowing, on the morrow, and that was what interested me most, as I felt certain of making New River that day, or at least before bedtime. Father agreed with me on the question of the weather, so we said “goodbye,” cast off and were on our way. Now a fair wind up the coast meant a head wind down the coast to the inlet, and as the tide was on the flood and against us, we made slow time at the start of our voyage. It was rather late in the afternoon when we sailed out of the inlet and headed out to sea. Making good time now with a fair wind, [we] were not long in passing the Station, where we saw Father and the [J. W.] Matheson who had come to Biscayne Bay in 1884 as caretakers for a proposed coconut plantation] looking at us from the front porch.

At sundown we were yet some distance from New River, where it was my intention to pass the night. I did not intend to do any all-night sailing on this trip up the coast, as I considered it taking too much risk with Mother and Sister as passengers. The wind went down with the sun, and it was long after dark when we arrived off the inlet. There was not any moon and it was rather hard to make out the lay of the land and channels of the inlet in the dim starlight. I found the south channel, however, and sailed in and anchored behind what I thought was the north point of the inlet. I could see quite plainly the dry sandshore. There was not a bit of swell coming in the inlet, and feeling sure our anchorage was a good one, we went to bed. I slept soundly until near sunrise, although my bed was not one of the best. A place had been left on the starboard side of the cabin for Mother’s bed, but the balance of the cabin was full of cargo and there was no place, worthy of the name, for my bed. In a narrow space between chairs and bedstead I placed my blanket. It was so narrow that I could not turn over in there. When I just had to turn on the other side, [I] was forced to back out feet-first to the cockpit and there do the turning. However, on this first night of the voyage I was too tired to move and slept the night through in one position. Waking at daylight I found myself stiff and numb from the cramped position of my sleeping quarters. Crawling out to the cockpit, I stood up to view our situation and weather condition. Was surprised to see that we had not anchored in the river at all, but behind a small sand inlet in the middle of the inlet. Had a big sea come on during the night, we would have been in a bad fix, but good luck was with us, and the ocean was as smooth as a pond.

A cool, fresh west wind was blowing, but I was not going to be fooled into thinking we could make Lake Worth inlet on a west wind in February. It was liable to change into a northerly quarter without a minute’s warning, and I did not propose to take any undue risk. I told Mother we would sail to Hillsborough [Hillsboro Inlet], and there wait for the kind of weather I wanted to make that forty-mile run on the most dangerous part of the coast.

While eating breakfast we saw a rather large schooner come sailing down river and out to sea through the north channel of the inlet. She headed up the coast. I hurriedly got underway and followed.

Lillie Elder Pierce, sister of Charles W. Pierce, taken in 1880 when she was four years old (photo courtesy of Mrs. Robert Powell).

MOVING BACK TO LAKE WORTH

It was about this time [early 1885] that Father decided to resign his position as keeper of Biscayne Station and return to our old home on Hypoluxo Island. I was delighted with this decision, for I had never liked living on the Bay. The principal reason was the lack of good hunting such as I had been used to at Hypoluxo. One day, shortly after Father made known his decision to return to Lake Worth, I was over at Miami, and was talking with Mr. J. W. Ewan [property manager for the Biscayne Bay Company since the 1870s]. I told him how glad I was to leave Biscayne Bay and go back to the Lake to live. “And,” I continued, “The Bay never could compare with the Lake anyway.”
She sailed as fast as we did, and of course we did not haul her before she sailed into the Hillsborough, and came to an anchor a few hundred yards upriver. When we got inside I brought the Bon Ton to a landing just around the south point. This was my regular landing place. There was deep water right up to the shore, and a place not bothered by tide or sea and where one could pass from boat to shore and back again without having to wade or use a small boat.

After making things "snug" aboard the Bon Ton, I went to call on our neighbors on board the schooner, Neff. We had read her name as she swung to the ebb tide.

The captain of the schooner welcomed me as I came alongside in a skiff someone had left there for the use of beach travelers. He introduced himself as Dennis O'Neal [O'Neill] and his companion as Captain Smith. Both schooner and men were from New York and were just cruising about, spending the winter away from ice and snow; at least that is what they told me, but I always had an inkling that they were on a treasure hunt of some kind. The schooner was of about twenty tons register, strongly built and quite able to stand most any kind of a storm on the ocean.

Captain O'Neal [sic] was a lot of company for me during our enforced stay in the Hillsborough inlet. One day he invited me to go with him on an exploring expedition upriver in his rowboat. We went as far as the end of the river, at least we thought it was the end, not being able to see any channel going farther on, so turned back for the boats at the inlet, where we arrived late that afternoon.

Cruising around the inlet one day, I saw a very large alligator laying on the bottom in about six feet of water. I punched at him with the oar, but it was not long enough to give him a good prod, and he would not come to the surface where I could kill him with the shotgun. Then the idea came to me if I had something sharp on the end of a pole, something like a whaler's lance, the alligator could be killed while on the bottom. With this idea in mind I went to overhauling the box of tools on board. I found just what I wanted, a one-inch framing chisel without a handle. Now all I needed was a pole on which to fasten the chisel.

Going up the beach a short distance I found the pole I wanted, a pole readymade of about twelve feet in length. Hurrying back to the boat I fitted the chisel and fastened it with a long throw line, then got in the skiff and went in search of the big alligator, but that ugly reptile, who perhaps had a premonition of coming disaster, had disappeared.

When I saw he could not be found [1] decided any other gator would do to try my killing lance on, and poled the skiff up Cypress Creek, where I was pretty certain to find one. About a quarter of a
mile up the creek I found a six-foot gator in shallow water where the bottom was sandy and I could see him plainly as he tried to hide on the bottom. In less than five minutes I had killed him with my new weapon, proving to my satisfaction it was a good instrument to use on alligators that would not come to the surface to be shot.

One morning a few days later, I crawled, or rather backed out from my cramped sleeping quarters, and standing up to stretch my numb and weary limbs, I saw a calm and tranquil ocean. A gentle breeze was blowing from the southeast, and a cloudless sky. The day for our departure from Hillsborough had arrived. It would have been much better if we could have made an early start, but we had to wait on the tide, which was now low, and there was not water enough to float the Bon Ton over the outer bar. About ten o'clock there appeared to be sufficient depth of water on the bar to float us over, so I at once hoisted sails and started beating against wind and tide out the inlet. Slow work, but at last we sailed beyond the pull of the inlet current and headed for the Gulf Stream where we could have the aid of its three miles an hour current. I kept sailing out until we were about two miles offshore, then headed due north. At this distance from shore on a day like this, the Gulf Stream is something wonderful to look upon. As you look down at it over the side of the boat, it appears to be a dark opaque blue with a tinge of purple. You would be certain you could not see into it more than half an inch, so dark is the color. But, just throw overboard some bright object, such as an empty tin can, and watch it go down, down, down until at last it becomes faint and finally disappears in the vast depth below. This will prove to you as nothing else would how crystal-clear the water of the Gulf Stream is. Its great depth is mostly the cause of its intense blue color. At two miles from shore the Gulf Stream is in no place less than six hundred feet deep, which is enough to make anything look blue. Here could be seen small patches of bright yellow seaweed, in vivid contrast to the deep blue of the stream. And here and there a Portuguese man-of-war, in colors of bright blue and red, sailing gracefully over the waves like a miniature yacht. Every now and then we would flush a small flock of flying fish, looking not unlike a flock of silver wing sandpipers. They would rise from the water, always headed to windward, and I wondered how they knew which way the wind was blowing when they started flying. They would sail off to the southeast for a hundred yards or so, then drop back into the sea and disappear for that time. It is always interesting to watch these little flying fish. They are so graceful in their flight, and look so much like real birds as they glide along over the deep blue of the sea. [The Gulf Stream brought the Bon Ton to Lake Worth inlet later that same day, and the Pierces resettled their old homestead on Hypoluxo Island.]

THE BAREFOOT MAILMAN

On my return to the lake from the west coast [of Florida in August 1885], I found a number of important changes had taken place in my absence. First and foremost of these was the establishment of a mail route from Palm Beach to Miami by way of the ocean beach on foot. This route came to be known as the “Barefoot route,” so named because the mail carrier went barefoot in order to walk at the water’s edge where the sand was firmer, caused by the wash of the sea. This mail route was approximately 68 miles long, 28 miles by small sailboat and rowboat, and forty on foot along the ocean beach. Leaving Palm Beach each Monday, [the mailman would] sail or row his boat to the foot of the lake, there take to the ocean beach and walk five miles to the Orange Grove Station, where he would spend the night. The next day it was twenty-five miles straight walking, with one inlet to cross, to the Fort Lauderdale Station, here spending the night and continuing on next day by rowing his boat four miles down New River to the inlet, there taking to the beach again for another ten miles of soft beach sand to Baker’s haulover at the head of Biscayne Bay. Here the carrier kept another boat of small size, a rowboat fitted with a sail to use when the wind was fair. When the wind was ahead he used the oars to convey him to the post office at Miami, twelve miles down the Bay. Spending the night at Miami, he would leave there next morning on his return trip to Palm Beach, arriving at the latter place Saturday afternoon.

Our next door neighbor, E. R. Bradley, made a bid on this route and was awarded the contract to carry this mail, a round trip each week at $600 per annum. Mr. Bradley and his eldest son, Louie, took turn about in carrying the mail for the next two years. In the early summer of 1887, E. R. Bradley gave up his mail carrying contract on the “Barefoot Route,” then James E. Hamilton...
THE GREAT WINE WRECK

In the fall of 1886 there occurred an incident on the lower east coast that caused considerable excitement and some intoxication, both physical and mental. At this time George Charter was working on Captain Ed Breisford's homestead some two or three miles north of our place. George boarded with us and carried his lunch as it was too far to return at noon. On this particular morning George picked up his dinner pail and departed for his work, going over to the beach in his skiff.

In about half an hour he returned in great excitement. I saw him coming across the lagoon and wondered what was the matter. He was working at the oars like a college racer. The boat was foaming at the bows and squatting at each powerful stroke as George layed down to the oars. Driving the boat upon the shore he jumped out, without stopping to make her fast, started for the house and shouting as he came. "Say," he yelled, and one could have heard him for half a mile, "the beach is covered with casks of wine. Hundreds of them as far as you can see north and south." Then, after leaving his dinner pail [he] rushed back to the beach.

Andrew Garnett happened to be at the house when George reported the wine on the beach. Ed Hamilton was there, of course, for that was the year he and I tried to raise a big crop of tomatoes. So the four of us, Garnett, Hamilton, Father and I got into the Bonito and sailed down around the south end of the island to a trail just south of Charter's house. There we landed and went over to the beach, and what a sight met our gaze when we came out on the shore. One hundred gallon casks of Spanish claret lay strewn along the shore. The sea was smooth, and the casks were still in the water but grounded on the bottom close to the beach, their black sides just out of water, and so close together one could have walked for a mile along this part of the beach without once having to step off of a cask.

On examination we found some of the casks had a vent near the bung and had taken in some salt water, not enough to hurt the flavor, but with so much wine in sight we became very particular. We soon found a cask that did not have a hole in it. This we rolled out of the water and over to the boat and carried home and shared up.

Someone had told the story sometime or other that wine could not be kept in wooden containers in this country on account of the small weevil-like bug that would bore holes into the casks or kegs and thereby let the wine escape. This story was brought to mind by Father telling us we would have to find bottles or jugs and draw the wine into them, otherwise, if it was left in the cask or keg it would be lost.

We were hard pushed to find bottles enough to hold the 100 gallons of wine, but after a day or so of hunting around we managed to do it.

We also found three or four 15 gallon kegs of Malaga, and another kind that was branded "Double Superior," a very sweet mild-tasting wine, but very strong in alcohol. Just why we did not try to save more than one cask I never did understand. We could have rolled the casks up and buried them in the dry sand of the beach ridge where they would have kept in good condition for years. And again we could have sent them to Jacksonville or Key West and obtained good salvage money on a schooner load. No one seemed to think of that, mostly I suppose because it was a foreign wine and duty would have to be paid. Besides the casks were so large and heavy, it was a big job for four men to handle one of them as we found in getting ours home.

It remains a mystery to this day where all this wine came from. We afterwards learned the beach was strewn with casks from Biscayne Bay to Indian River inlet. That it was of Spanish origin there could be no doubt, because of Spanish brands on the heads of the casks, the only part of which we could understand was "16% alcohol." But besides the kegs and casks there was no other wreckage on shore. Nor did we ever hear of any wreck that the wine might have come from.

Inside of a week all the floating casks had disappeared from the coast. [They were] either covered up in the sand or carried out to sea again.

Many amusing stories of the wine wreck were told. It was said that the keeper of the Lauderdale House of Refuge was afflicted with rheumatism and the idea struck him that a wine bath would cure it, so he ended up a cask, staved in the head, off with his clothes and jumped in. The story did not state just what it did for his rheumatism, but there is no doubt if he soaked in the wine long enough, he came out much happier.

The excitement of the wine wreck had not more than cooled a little, when we were notified there would be held at Miami, the first term of Circuit Court of Dade County. Our informant also served notice to a number of the citizens of the lake that they were drawn to serve on the Grand Jury of that Court, and I was one of them. This meant I would have to walk down the beach to Miami, to serve on that jury, and of course, would go in company with the mail carrier in order to have the use of his boats in which to cross the inlets.

When the day arrived to start on my

Lake Worth's pioneer artist, George W. Potter, drew this sketch of a barrel on the beach, reminiscent of the "Great Wine Wreck" (illustration courtesy of Marjorie P. Stewart).
tramp to the county seat, I had the company of Mr. E. Heyser, who was going to attend a court to take his examination for admittance to the bar; George Charter; and Joe Jenkins, fellow jurymen. It was Louise Bradley's trip with the mail. All of our bunch were trained beach walkers, so we did not delay the mail carrier on his regular schedule of arrival and departure.

When we arrived at the Lauderdale Station, Jack Peacock, the keeper, decided to go with us to Miami. He had many amusing tales to tell of the doings at a number of Justice's Courts he had attended on the Bay at various times, and said he wanted to see how a real court would be conducted.

Jack and Louise carried us down New River the next morning in their boats. After walking some distance down the beach beyond the inlet, one of our party began to complain of being thirsty. Louise told him when we came to the seven mile tripod he would have a chance to drink. Louise said his dad had rolled a cask of wine upon the bank at that point. [It] had a wooden plug in the head of the cask and a coconut shell to drink from.

When we arrived at the tripod we found the cask as Louise described. Everyone took a drink, and it certainly tasted good, as all were very thirsty from walking in the hot sun. Joe was not satisfied with taking a moderate amount like the balance of us. He filled the coconut shell twice to the brim and downed it. After resting a few minutes we started on, and the wine Joe drank commenced to work on him. Suddenly he said to me, "You fellows are walking too slow for me. I am going on. Will you see you later." And he was off, taking about five feet at a jump [and] soon out of sight down the beach. When we arrived at the Biscayne Station late that afternoon, we found Joe stretched out on the west porch of the Station, about as sick a man as you ever saw. At least Joe felt that he was.

When the business at the court at Miami had come to a close there was nothing for us but a long tramp up the beach to Lake Worth and home. There was one bright spot in the visit ahead however, and that was the wine cask at the seven mile tripod, seven miles north of our starting point, the Biscayne Station.

Arriving at the wine cask, all hands sat down for a short rest, and a last drink of that good old Spanish claret. That is all but Joe. When he looked at the cask a shudder ran through him. He said he never wanted to look at red wine, never again so long as he lived. Yet I question if his antipathy to red wine was of long duration.

The following week after our return from court, Mr. Bradley carried the mail, and when he came home reported the loss of the wine at the seven mile tripod. When he arrived at the tripod expecting a little refreshment from the cask, it had disappeared. All he found were the marks of the cask in the sand and the tracks of the men that had rolled it to a boat on the sea.

Louise, too, had a sad experience on a later trip. Coming north she found two kegs of Malaga wine north of Hillsborough inlet. He was some late on this particular trip and did not have any spare time to waste in taking care of his find, so he rolled them up to the edge of the grass, dug a hole with his hands, and covered them up to await his return. But in his hurry he forgot to mark the spot where the wine lay buried. Thinking he would not experience any difficulty in again locating the place, he went on his way. When he returned, prepared to take care of the wine [kegs] he could not locate them and never did.

**DISAPPEARANCE OF THE BAREFOOT MAILMAN**

The fall of 1887 was a stormy one. No hurricanes, but squalls and gales accompanied heavy rains. For some two or three weeks it had kept up until all low land was under water, and rivers [were] taxed to their utmost by the flooded condition of the backcountry.

On Sunday, October 1st, the weather cleared up, the wind changed to east wind and bright sunshine. All farming low lands were compelled to rest from such labors until their land dried, or put in their time digging ditches to carry off the surplus water. On the high hammock of Hypoluxo island however, the land was now in ideal condition for planting the winter crop. There was never too much rain for that land, but alas, too frequently not enough. With a shallow soil underlaid by a porous coraline rock that absorbed the moisture, crops planted on it could not stand a long period of dry hot weather.

Having recently purchased the large sharpie Illinois from her builder, Captain U. D. Hendrickson, Father was on his first trip to Titusville with her and I was left at home to take care of the family, plant a crop and run the [Hypoluxo] post office. This looked like a "wrong-end-too" proposition, but Father thought he could build up a boat business better than I, and besides I think he had a hankering for his old trade of sailoring.

On Monday, October 10th, just before noon, Ed Hamilton arrived with the mail from Palm Beach, having rowed from there a distance of ten miles in his small skiff. While waiting for dinner he mentioned to me that he was not feeling well and laughingly called my attention to his medicine chest, a bottle of Perry Davis pain killer and a spoon. I then suggested he lay over and get Louise Bradley to make the trip, to which suggestion he answered, "Oh no, I'll be all right by tomorrow. I am not as bad as that." After dinner I locked the mail sack and handed it to him; he then departed on his way to Miami. He would stop that night at the Orange Grove Station. Steven N. Andrews was the keeper. Hamilton was due back at the Hypoluxo [post] office Saturday noon, but Saturday noon came and no Hamilton. This did not cause me any uneasiness however, I thought as he was not feeling well, he had rested for half a day and would be along Sunday noon or before. About nine o'clock Sunday morning I got into my sailboat and went to the hawler at the foot of the lake to meet him and at the same time save him a two mile walk, which latter fact I had no doubt he would appreciate more particularly if he was not feeling well. I waited there until noon, watching the beach to the south, but no one came in sight. Finally I gave up and returned home much worried about Hamilton. I knew that some untoward event, accident perhaps, had overaken that mail carrier and something had to be done about it. When near my home dock I hailed a sailboat that was passing and asked them if they were going to Palm Beach. On being answered in the affirmative to what could he be sure and see the contractor, George Charter, then living at Palm Beach, and tell him that something had happened to Hamilton, he had not returned, and to start a new mail carrier on the route Monday morning. Monday noon George Charter came with the mail from Palm Beach, and had a new mail carrier. George was much excited over Hamilton's failure to return. They stopped only long enough to exchange mail and hurried on.

Wednesday morning I went to Palm Beach, arrived home about the middle of the afternoon. [I] was met halfway between the landing and house by Mother and Sister. They were both crying and gave me the startling news that Hamilton was no more. The men had found everything Hamilton had with him, even to his underclothes, at Hillsborough inlet, but of Hamilton himself there was no trace; he had vanished off the earth. When Charter returned with the news, the first thing he said was, "Hamilton's gone. Sharks got him, sharks ate him, he tried to swim the inlet and sharks got him." Then he told the details of their search. They spent Monday night at Steve's (Orange Grove House or Station). After supper that night they were sitting in the living room of the Station, talking and speculating as to what could have happened to Hamilton. He might have hurt his foot so that he could not walk or per-
haps he might be sick at the Lauderdale Station. They argued had he hurt his foot or leg that laid him up somewhere on the beach, he would be near death by starvation by this time; he had been gone eight days and only had food enough for one meal when he left the Station.

It was about eight o'clock when they heard a man's voice hailing them from the beach. They rushed out all excitedly thinking it must be Hamilton. As they came from the house they could make out the dark form of a small boat at the water's edge and a man working to get it out of reach of the waves. Running down there they found it was the keeper from Fort Lauderdale Station [Charles Coman]. He had come up the coast in his 14-foot dory. "What is the matter with the mail carrier?" was the first thing he said to them. He told them Hamilton had never reached his place on the down trip, now a week ago. Coman then told them [that] on Monday, the day before Hamilton was due at his Station, a stranger had come walking down the beach from the north. It looks some times that there is such a thing as fate or a predestination that shapes or ends some lives. At any other time under no circumstances would Coman have believed the story this fellow told when asked, "How did you cross Hillsborough inlet?" He said there was a party of hunters at the inlet; they had come down that far with a mule team and wagon, said they had a portable boat and had used it to set him across the inlet. Coman said, "Had the fellow told me he had used the mailman's boat I would have walked up there Tuesday and met Hamilton because I know it was not safe to try swimming the inlet on account of the river's swollen condition caused by recent heavy rains. I had a strong suspicion the fellow was not telling the truth, but it did not occur to me until after the stranger had gone on and Hamilton failed to show up. Today the sea being smooth and a fair wind, I determined to come and see what was the matter."

Off at daylight next morning, the four men hurriedly tramped the beach towards Hillsborough inlet, keeping a sharp lookout meantime for signs of Hamilton. They found no trace until they arrived at the inlet and walked around to the place where the mail carrier kept his boat. Here they found Hamilton's haversack hanging on the limb of a seagrape tree; in the bag was the mail pouch, Hamilton's trousers and shirt and the spoon and bottle of pain killer; near the edge of the water was his underclothes, showing he had discarded them when starting to swim the inlet. Everything he had with him was there, but the man himself was gone. This was the sad story told by the men that had gone in search of Ed Hamilton. To say the little settlement of Hypoluxo was shocked at the news of Hamilton's passing is making it rather mild. He was a splendid young man and everyone was very fond of him; we could not realize that he was no more. That he was dead there could be no question, but the cause of his death, that was what bothered me. The indications were only too plain that on his arrival at the inlet he saw his boat on the other side and, without stopping to think of any danger, he pulled off his underclothes and plunged in to swim it. Those not understanding the situation or Hamilton himself would say, "Why it's plain that he drowned in trying to swim the inlet." Not so; I could not believe that was the cause of his taking off. He was only 33 at the time, strong and active, six feet tall in his stocking feet, and weighed 180, an excellent swimmer and well able to take care of himself on land or in the water.

The inlet where he attempted to swim was not over two hundred feet wide, and far enough from the ocean that the current would not be too strong. Under ordinary circumstances Hamilton could have made it in less than five minutes. No, drowning was out of the question; something must have grabbed him and pulled him under. But what? That was the question no one could answer. I did not take much stock in the shark theory that others seemed to think settled the question of his loss. That there were sharks a plenty along the coast at that time of year, it was true — but seldom did the large and dangerous variety come in that far from the ocean, in the comparatively shallow waters of

The Pierce family and friends, Hypoluxo Island, 1886. Left to right: H.D. Pierce, Margretta M. Pierce, Andrew W. Garnett, James "Ed" Hamilton, Lillie Pierce, Charles W. Pierce. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Gilbert L. Voss.)
the Hillsborough inlet. That I well knew and for that reason did not believe sharks ate Hamilton. Anyway I at once determined that a search of the inlet must be made without delay if possible, in hopes of finding some part of his remains. Did he drown, his body would be found for certain, and if something ate him we might find some of the larger bones, in a careful survey of the inlet. No time was to be lost, so I went to get the assistance of my hunting chum, Louie [Bradley], and his boat, the Ibis. All was arranged in a few minutes, and we would be off in the morning if wind and weather remained fair, for we had to make a trip of 21 miles on the old ocean in a seventeen-foot flat bottom boat.

The next morning the weather was perfect for this venturous trip; Louie arrived shortly after breakfast, with the Ibis. I got on board along with my camping outfit, an important part of which was my 45-60 Winchester and a good supply of cartridges. We sailed to the foot of the lake, and there we launched the Ibis over the old Indian haulover, where Seminole Indians hauled their canoes, from time immemorial, to the sea. We were fortunate in having a gentle northeast wind and a smooth sea.

We arrived at Hillsborough about three o'clock in the afternoon, made camp on the south point at a place where the mailman used to keep his boat. The stake was still there that he fastened the boat's painter to, but the boat had disappeared. Evidently the tramp had been careless in making her fast and it had gone adrift some place upriver. I told Louie to take the Ibis and prowl around upriver awhile and I would walk down the beach to the south for a mile or more, for if Hamilton had drowned his body would come on shore somewhere down the beach. No trace, however, did I find, absolutely nothing. But there was one thing that caused me to take notice and that was the numerous tracks of alligators from small ones to whoopers that must have been made by gators nine and ten feet long. These alligators had been carried outside the inlet by the swift ebb tide that they were unable to swim against, had swam to shore and then crawled over the beach to the river. The long south point of the river was all cut up with their tracks. Behind this south side of the inlet was a long, narrow and shallow lagoon, that in ordinary times contained very little water and was in no place more than two feet deep. But at this time, owing to the flooded backcountry pouring its surplus through the Hillsborough, it was deep enough to hide any number of alligators, even of the largest size. When we sailed into the inlet that afternoon, I called Louie's attention to the great number of alligators in the place, ten times, yes, a hundred times more than I had ever seen there before. The place was actually swarming with them. We only gave them a passing notice at first, for our minds were solely taken up with thoughts of Hamilton.

Now seeing all these tracks brought my mind on the alligators and their presence in such unusual numbers around the inlet. That they played a sinister part in Hamilton's disappearance I now had not the least doubt. Many times I had visited this inlet in the past few years and had never seen more than one or two gators around there at a time; now they could be seen everywhere within the inlet, their black ugly heads on the surface of the dark water wherever one might look. As this new thought struck me I turned back towards camp and walked up along the east shore of the lagoon. When about halfway to camp I stopped to scrutinize an object across the lagoon that was at the water's edge on the other side. Had been standing there a minute or so when a black knobby head of a huge alligator rose to the surface a few yards from me and came as close to me as the depth of the water would permit. I stepped back a few steps until I was sure he could not reach me with a sweep of his tail, and we looked at each other for about a minute. "You are certainly an ugly looking customer," I said, "and I wish I had my rifle." But the rifle had been left at camp, for I knew there would not be any use for it on the beach. I started towards camp, and Mr. Gator kept right along with me. That gator had a baleful gleam in his cold eye that I did not like; he appeared to have a hankering for a taste of human flesh and, the thought flashed through me, " maybe this is the very reptile that pulled Hamilton under." Then I started on a run for camp and the Winchester. Picking up the rifle on the jump, I turned and ran back at top speed to "fix" that gator. He must have understood that things were looking bad for him when I ran away, for when I got back the gator was gone. There were plenty more farther offshore, their heads could be seen on the surface of the river in every direction, but I failed to recognize my recent ugly friend among them. Louie returned about this time and not a thing to report. His search, like mine, had been fruitless, "not a trace."

We made a thorough search the next morning of the creeks and bays near the inlet, but not a trace of Hamilton could be found, nor was there any ever found. We were compelled to return home without having found a single trace of our lost friend, and the actual facts of his taking off will ever remain a mystery.

Some years later we heard that a cruising party spending a few days in the Hillsborough found part of the jawbone of a man that had a gold filled tooth sticking in it. They found it on the west side of the same lagoon where I met the too-friendly alligator. None of his friends, however, could remember if Hamilton had any filled teeth. There is no question in my mind that an alligator was the cause of the whole sad business. There was not a shark in sight any place around the inlet while we were there.

After Hamilton's untimely death a new contract had to be made and in the meantime the department in Washington decided to make a change in the connecting mail routes. This was done by extending the route from Jupiter to Palm Beach, on to Hypoluxo. And the Palm Beach-Miami route [was] shortened ten miles, by making Hypoluxo the north end of the Miami route. This arrangement made it much easier on the mail carrier on the barefoot route, and a saving of at least a half a day's time.

Andrew Garnett [another Hypoluxo settler] came to me one day and said that he had a big alligator that he thought the crowd on the route at the same rate Hamilton had taken it, and that was $600 per annum. But [he] hesitated to make his bid unless I would agree to help him out on the job. Said he did not expect me to make every other trip with him in turn, but to be ready to take his place in case of sickness, or if other business claimed his attention for a week or two, and to share with him the expense of boats. We had to have a skiff at Hillsborough and New River and a combined sail and row boat on Biscayne Bay. To all of this I agreed. Garnett made his bid and was awarded the contract.

A MYSTERY AT LAUDERDALE STATION

In October 1898 [1888], just a year after Hamilton's death at Hillsborough inlet, I left Hypoluxo with the mail for Miami. Following the usual custom of the carrier on this route, I started immediately after dinner, walking down the beach to the Orange Grove House of Refuge, a distance of seven miles, where I spent the night, going on next day to the Fort Lauderdale Station, a long weary tramp of 25 miles in the soft sand of the ocean beach. The only break in the monotony of this long tramp was the stop at Boca Raton lake for lunch, and the crossing of the Hillsborough inlet. From Fort Lauderdale to Miami, a distance of 26 miles was more varied, as sixteen miles was by boat, four miles on New River, and twelve miles on the Bay. But the ten miles of walking from New River inlet to the head of the Bay was the very worst beach on the coast. The entire trip to Miami was made without delay or incident of note, except I came near capsizing the little sailboat in the middle of the Bay.
On awaking next morning in Miami, the first thing that attracted my attention was the howling of the wind and the sound of rain coming down in torrents. Going to the window I saw the storm was from the southeast; a fair wind up the bay it was true, but as the wind was blowing "great guns" and raining "pitchforks," as the old saying goes, the prospect for my 26-mile trip to Fort Lauderdale Station looked rather bad. After breakfast I loafed around Brickell's store and wished the rain would let up. Getting a late start meant a late arrival, and I did not fancy the idea of making my way up New River in the night. More especially did I object to following the narrow footpath from the river to the beach, a quarter of a mile, in the dark, through beach hammock infested with rattlesnakes. The storm continued with unabated fury until near noon. We found out some days later that we were on the outside edge of a hurricane passing to the western Gulf of Mexico. About eleven o'clock the rain stopped and, although the wind kept up hard as ever, I started. There was too much wind for any kind of a sail on that little boat. I simply stuck an oar in the mast step and stood up in the stern with a steering oar in my hands. The oar and my back was all the sail needed to send that boat flying up the turbulent waters of Biscayne Bay. I made good time to Baker's haulover, where I left the boat and took to the beach.

Having started so late, I now saw that it would be long after dark when I arrived at the Station, my stopping place for the night. [1] had now determined not to make the trip up the river in the boat but would leave her near the inlet after crossing and walk up the beach, thereby escaping the walk through the path in the night which now promised to be one of the blackest kind.

When near the seven mile tripod (these tripods had been erected by the U.S. Coast Survey a few years previous) I saw a man coming down the beach rapidly toward me, and I wondered, "Who the dickens could it be?" We almost never meet anyone on this mail route, so seldom indeed one might say "never." And I was not a little excited as I neared him, wondering who it could be and what he was doing on the beach. When near enough to recognize him, was surprised to see it was Charlie Coman, the keeper of the Lauderdale Station. "Hey! What's up?" I called out. "And where in the dickens are you going at this time of day?"

"You brought me a letter on your down trip day before yesterday," was his answer, "that I forgot to open and see what was in it, in fact never noticed it until this morning, and what was in that letter is the cause of this trip to Miami."

"Then why didn't you start earlier and meet me at Baker's Haulover?" I asked, "Couldn't," was his answer, "wind and rain was too hard. Started as soon as it let up and here I am." "Aw, come on back with me and make your trip tomorrow," I pleaded. But no, said he just had to see the County Clerk that day; his business would not admit another day's delay. "I am coming right back," he added, "and will be with you sometime before morning; you will find the house key under the south end of the west step." With these words he turned and swung off rapidly down the beach. "Well," thought I, "here is a pretty kettle of fish. I have got to spend the best part of the night in that old Station all by my lonesome," and I did not like the prospect before me, not a little bit. I slowed my pace for now I was not in a hurry to get there. All at once the thought struck me, "I forgot to ask him where I might find a match when I get in the house." I did not have any with me. "Now won't I have a sweet time," thought I, "hunting matches in that big house and it as black as midnight."

The sun was setting when I arrived at New River inlet. The tide was low, and the river was pouring out a volume of turbid water from the Everglades. In crossing the inlet I found that it would be impossible to make more than a mile an hour against it; that would mean I would not reach the Station before ten that night. [1] did not mind arriving late under the circumstances, but wished to avoid that four hours of hard and steady rowing, and that narrow trail through the woods from the landing to the beach, so when I rowed up past the inlet a safe distance, [1] landed on the north side, made fast the boat's painter to a tree, and then pushed my way on to the north side, made fast the boat's painter to a tree, and then pushed my way through the beach hammock to the open sand of the beach.

It was by this time quite dark; I plodded along thinking hard of my situation. Then I recalled how a few years before, Flora Bradley, my chum Louise's ten year old sister, had died at this Station a few hours after my arrival there on a hunting trip, and the loss of my friend Hamilton only the year before. It was nine miles beyond where he lost his life, it is true, but he used to stop overnight twice a week at this house. All those gloomy thoughts did not tend to make me feel cheerful or at ease as I approached the Station at some time near eight o'clock that night. The old Station house looked shadowy, vague, and ghastly in the intense darkness of the stormy night.

Going up on the porch by way of the front steps I walked to the west steps and found the key where Coman said it would be. Unlocking the door to the living room, which was near the middle of the house, I boldly entered and started my search for matches. The house was so dark I could not see my hand before my face. I had to depend on feeling my way with hands stretched before me. First I felt...
all over the living room table, no matches there, then I felt my way to the dining room and made a careful feeling search of that room; on the table, on top of the kitchen safe, on the window sills, still nothing I touched felt like a box of matches. Then I continued my search in the kitchen where I thought most certainly I would find them; on the kitchen table, the sink, and the mantlepiece over the stove, but without success, so I then made my way to the bedroom which was on the south side of the building and felt all over that room, still nothing doing. By this time I was getting discouraged and felt like giving up my search for the pesky matches, but if I did not find them [1] would have to go to bed without my supper. This did not appeal to me at all, for in spite of my nervousness I was now very hungry. Therefore determined to make one more careful search of the entire house before giving up and going to bed without anything to eat. And you may believe that all this time spent in this black and silent house, a silence broken now and then by the moan of the wind around the corners of the building and the nearby sound of the surf on the beach, did not tend to quiet my highly strung nerves.

On my second search of the kitchen my fingers rested on a box of matches the first time I felt along the mantle-piece. How I failed to find them the first time was more than I could say. My heart jumped with relief when I struck a match and saw my way back to the living room where I found the lamp and lost no time in lighting it, glancing at the little clock on the table as I did so; it was ten minutes past eight o'clock. I then went to the kitchen and started a fire in the stove, put the kettle on to heat water for tea, set the table, then having washed the south supper, but the tea, went to the living room and sat down to read a little while waiting for the water to get hot. As I sat down again [1] looked at the clock to see how long I had been getting my supper underway; I was astonished to see the clock hands at seven thirty. [I] rubbed my eyes and looked again; there was no doubt about it, the clock said, "seven thirty." "How could I have made such a mistake when I looked at the clock before?" was the question I asked myself. I was certain it was ten minutes after eight then, and now only seven thirty. "But I know it is later than that," I said aloud, and pulling out my watch it said eight thirty, just an hour's difference. Well, I did not know what to think about it. Then I set the clock to the time of my watch, still wondering how I could have made such a foolish mistake the first time I looked at it. My appetite demanded my attention, so I returned to the kitchen where I found the kettle boiling merrily, made the tea and sat down to my much belated supper, and as I ate my mind kept turning to the clock, and I wondered how I could have made the mistake of an hour when looking at it the first time. When I had finished eating, cleared the table and carried the dishes to the kitchen, and again put on the kettle to heat water to wash them, as it would take a few minutes for the water to heat, I went back to the living room to take another look at that clock and see if it was going along as it should, for in spite of indications I still had a feeling that I had not made any mistake when I looked at it the first time. To my amazement that clock again stood at seven thirty. A nervous chill ran up and down my back, and the hair of the back of my head commenced to raise when I saw this clock for the second time within an hour was "cutting up didoes." I might have been mistaken the first time this happened, but now there was no mistake for I had set the clock to the correct time which was eight thirty, and now again it was at seven thirty. I looked at my watch; the time was nine o'clock. I picked up the clock and again set it at the correct time of nine, then put it back on the table and stood there and watched it for at least five minutes to see how it was acting; it went right along like any well-behaved clock would.

[I] returned to the kitchen to wash the supper dishes, my mind meantime in a turmoil. I even considered for a time that I would leave the Station right then and spend the night walking up the beach, but I soon gave up this idea for I was very tired after a long and most strenuous day and was badly in need of rest, tho' how I was going to rest under the circumstances was more than I could see. Besides, Coman would not know what to think if I was not there when he returned. "No," I said to myself, "I'll stick it out until Coman's return, but I do not expect to sleep any after all the doings of that pesky clock." By the time I had come to this conclusion, all the dishes had been washed and put away, and all work in the dining room and kitchen finished. I then started back to the living room thinking I would sit down and watch the clock for a spell and try to figure out what had caused its hands to change every time I left the room. When I came in sight of that clock what I saw made the hair on the back of my head stand right on end, and my heart seemed to skip a beat or two, for the hands of that clock were again for the third time at seven thirty.

To say that I was plain scared now was putting it rather mild. Consider my situation if you will, and then say you would not have been more than nervous, 25 miles from the nearest white man on the north, and twenty miles on the south, and in both cases a deep river intersecting the beach between [you] and them. And too, the house had been securely locked when Coman left. [I] had locked the door when I entered and commenced to hunt for the matches, and it had remained locked so there was no chance for anyone to have entered the house and monkeyed with the clock to fool me. Absolutely out of the question, for I know positively there was no one nearer to me than the two keepers of their respective Stations, 20 and 25 miles away. The inexplicable incident had a look of the supernatural, for how else could the queer actions of the clock be explained.

I was positive, yet I knew no human hands but mine had touched the clock since my arrival at eight o'clock that night, yet every time I left it alone in the room, it went back to seven thirty. Grabbing up the crazy thing I again for the third time that night set it at the correct time, which I found by looking at my watch to be nine fifteen; then sat down and never took my eyes from the face of that clock until twelve midnight. It went right along like any good clock should. At midnight, tho' still nervous and rather shaky [1] was so tired I determined to lie down and rest while waiting for Coman's return. [I] just knew I could not sleep a wink after all the excitement I had been subjected to through the queer actions of the little nickel clock. I went into the bedroom and carefully examined the doors, making sure they were securely locked; then caught sight of Coman's shotgun standing in a corner. It was a Winchester repeater of the old lever type; picking it up [1] found the magazine full of loaded shells. For some reason I felt better, more secure, the minute I had the loaded gun in my hands. I knew no other human being besides myself was in that home, and just what use the gun would be to me under the present circumstances was more than I could say, yet I felt ready to take care of myself against anything when I had a loaded Winchester in my hands.

Throwing the gun into the hollow of my left arm I lay down on Coman's bed for a little rest and was almost instantly fast asleep, the sound sleep of utter exhaustion. About three hours later I was aroused by a heavy "boom, boom, boom," coming from the porch outside. The sudden awakening from a sound sleep startled me and in my half awake dazed condition [1] did not recognize the sound; at one bound I landed in the middle of the room, the Winchester in my hands ready for business. Now fully awake, I called out, "Who is that?"

"Me, Coman," was the answer, "come and let me in."
[1] certainly felt relieved when I heard his voice; it was the heavy tread of his bare feet on the porch floor that had awakened me. Lighting the lamp, I went and unlocked the outside door. "What in the dickens is the matter with this clock of yours?" were the words I greeted him with as he came into the room."

"Why nothing that I know of," was his answer. "It has always kept good time, why do you ask such a question?"

I then told him about the queer doings of that clock, of its persistently going back to seven thirty every time I left it alone in the room the first part of the night.

"It seems to be going along all right now," he remarked, looking at the clock as he spoke, I told him that it had since nine fifteen, at which time I sat and watched it until twelve. Coman was somewhat puzzled by my story and could not offer any possible explanation. After talking it over for some minutes Coman suggested we go to bed and get a little sleep before morning, a suggestion I was only too glad to follow for I needed more rest than I had been getting so far this eventful night; there was a twenty-five mile walk ahead of me after breakfast.

Walking into the living room next morning, in the bright light of a rising sun, it did not seem possible all the queer doings of the clock the night before, yet it happened beyond any question or doubt and is still to this day, many years later, a deep mystery.

For many trips after this incident just related, I carried the U. S. Mail from Hypoluxo to Miami, stopping one night, of course, each way, at this same Lauderdale Station. The little old clock kept right on keeping good time as Coman said. Never again did it say seven thirty except at the proper time. What was the explanation? There is none; it simply happened as I have related and that is all I can tell, all there is to say about it.

A spiritualist would tell you that Hamilton's spirit was trying to convey to me, through the medium of the clock, the exact hour of his death. That he lost his life at seven thirty in the evening is possible. He should have arrived at the Hillsborough inlet not later than two o'clock in the afternoon under ordinary circumstances, but he had told me the day before he had started on this ill-fated trip from the Orange Grove Station that he was not feeling well, and it is quite possible that on arriving at Boca Raton lake where he would eat his lunch he had decided to rest until the cool of the afternoon, in which case he might have arrived at the inlet near seven o'clock or later. And did a gator catch him it would have been more likely after dark than in the bright light of afternoon. But just how it happened or when we will never know, unless we take the little clock's word, which was twice repeated — seven thirty.

**TRAVELING THE BAREFOOT ROUTE**

On another trip with the mail when I came on the beach at Hypoluxo, I saw pieces of wreckage just washed up by the sea. It was stream thick all the way to Biscayne Bay. I found a life buoy marked, "Str. State of Texas." So that was the ship all this cabin wreckage came from.

Some weeks later I saw in a newspaper an account of the steamer, State of Texas, in a hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico. The account said she had lost a part of her cabin, carried away by the heavy seas. Then I wondered what the beach would look like if she had lost all of her cabin, when only a part of it covered the coast for near sixty miles. And it was that same fall [1887] we lost our New River boat, the Mabel H. This boat was one we had made especially for use in the rapid current of New River. She was 20 feet long and only 18 inches wide in the widest part of the bottom, [a] double-ender with wide flaring sides made of cypress and a spruce bottom. We used three foot spruce oars on oar-rigger oar locks. Andrew [Garnett] had let a new fellow carry the mail for a round trip. When he arrived at New River inlet on his return from Miami, the tide was running out strong, so he crossed over and tied the boat to a bush on the north point only a short distance from the inlet. A very heavy storm came on the next day, and of course there was a heavy sea. This sea washed away near a quarter of a mile of the north point, taking the Mabel H with it. All we ever found of her was one oar. What became of her we never knew.

At the time this mail route was in operation there was a standing joke most everyone liked to tell to the newcomers, that is they thought it a joke until they had to go as a foot passenger with the mail carrier. This so-called joke was the charge of $5 for a passenger on this walking mail route.

That it was not all plain sailing when it came to collecting "fare" from our passengers on the "barefoot route," and the reason for charging $5, the following story of my experiences will illustrate.

Just as I was about ready to start on my trip with the mail for Miami, a man named Bostwick came along and asked if he might go down the beach with me. I said, "Yes, if you will pay the usual fare of $5 you can go with me."

"What!" he exclaimed, "Are you going to charge me five dollars just for the privilege of walking with you?"

"No," I answered, "You have a right to walk on the beach when and where you choose at no cost at all. I have nothing to do with that. I am charging you for the time you will cause me to lose waiting for you to rest when you get tired, and you will get tired and want to rest many times before we reach Miami. Besides I will ferry you across the Hillsborough inlet in the boat we have there for the purpose, and I will also have to take you four miles down New River in another of our boats and set you across the inlet there. Then 12 miles down Biscayne Bay, in another boat we have there. Now all these boats cost quite a sum when we bought them, and it takes more money to keep them in condition for our use. Then again if wind and tide should be against us, that combined row of sixteen miles with a head wind and tide is worth something. Besides the boat is much harder to pull with a weight of a man sitting in the stern. Would prefer to be alone in the boat when wind and tide is strong ahead."

When I had finished explaining the matter, he said I guessed the charge was fair enough after all, but it did not matter in his case, he had to go anyway. I told him further that we made it a rule to collect five dollars in advance, to make sure we did not have all the work of transporting our passengers for nothing in case they should refuse to pay when we arrived at our destination. This brought on more talk.

He said that when making this trip to the lake from the Bay, he had not expected to pay out much money, and had taken only a small amount along for the expenses of the trip. Now he was broke until he reached Miami, where he had left the balance of his cash. That I would have to trust him until we arrived there.

At first I refused to do this for I did not like the way he talked. His voice and manner did not ring true, but he begged so hard that at last I gave in and said, "All right, but you had better have the money ready when we get there, or before I start back."

The first part of the trip that afternoon was only seven miles and he managed that all right. Having plenty of time on this short part of the trip I walked slow, and my passenger kept up with me without stopping to rest which was a wonder. But on going to bed that night he complained of feeling tired.

On the next day, the first stretch to Hillsborough inlet, where I planned to eat our lunch, was sixteen miles. I had to stop to let Bostwick rest four times, with about half an hour for each rest. This made me two hours late in arriving at the Hillsborough. We were
in fact an hour late when we reached Boca Raton, and ate our lunch there, six miles short of what I had figured on.

When we arrived and crossed the inlet at Hilesborough, I was becoming impatient at the delay this fellow was causing, so after we had landed on the south shore of the inlet I told him I was going straight to the Station at Lauderdale, there were no more inlets before we reached New River, and he could take as much time as he chose in getting there, so long as he made it in time to go on with me the next morning. With that parting shot I pulled out and had soon left him out of sight astern. We had finished supper at the Station when Bostwick came plodding in.

The next morning the wind was blowing hard from the south, straight up New River, and the tide was on the full flood. I labored hard at the oars for near two hours before we arrived at the inlet. Bostwick in the meantime was making it easy, reclining on the stern seat smoking his pipe and talking while I worked to make headway against wind and tide.

The ten mile walk from New River to Baker's haulover at the head of Biscayne Bay is the worst of the route, due to the soft and somewhat hilly nature of the beach. On this ten miles I had to stop twice and wait for my passenger to rest. This continual stopping and starting tired me more than steady walking at my usual gait.

When we arrived at the haulover and started down the bay in the boat, we again found the tide coming in hard against us and a strong wind blowing with it. Of course, Bostwick sat in the stern of the boat and rested, all of that 12 miles to Miami. He would not take a turn at the oars; he was paying his fare.

When we landed at Miami, Mr. Bostwick started off without saying a word about pay. I stopped him and asked, "What about it?" He said he would meet me in the morning before I left and pay me then. And 'altho' I waited for him next morning more than an hour, he did not show up. In fact, I did not see or hear of Mr. Bostwick again for three years, and then he was broke as usual and could not pay me.

Such experiences as this made us afraid to trust any stranger. It makes me angry even after all those years whenever I think about that fellow and the way he beat me out of his fare. It is quite evident he never intended to pay me anything, nor to assist with the rowing of the boat. He simply sat in the stern, taking his ease like a wealthy tourist, while I, his boatman, rowed him 16 miles against wind and tide.

This mail route was kept up for a number of years later, changing carriers as they became tired of this ceaseless walking six days a week throughout the year. There were a number of men [who] tried it for a spell after Garnett and I gave it up. One of these was Uncle Ned Pent, a queer old fellow from the Bay.

Henry John Burkhardt [who settled at Hillsboro Inlet in 1891] was the last of the carriers, when the route was discontinued and the mail sent to Miami over a new route through the woods by hack line from Lantana.

FACING THE ELEMENTS

After three years of continuous use of my old brass comet [which Pierce played in the Tropical Band of Palm Beach, of which he was leader] it commenced to show signs of wear. With leaky pistons it was difficult to produce clear tones. Then I began to consider the chances of buying a new one. [I] mentioned the fact one day to Henry John Burkhardt, who at that time was mail carrier on the "Barefoot Route" to Miami. He asked how much a new comet would cost. "I can get an E Flat for $27. That will be plenty good enough for me," was my answer.

Without further remarks he plunged his hand into his pocket and, hauling out a roll of bills, handed me $27. I refused it because I thought he was making a

Loan to me. "I don't want to take it, Henry John. I do not know at this time when I can return it. Earning money with a sailboat is rather uncertain, so you had better not loan it to me now."

He insisted that I accept it, that it was not a loan but a gift to the band, and that I was to consider the $27 his donation. [1] I was always ready to accept anything for the band, and when he put it in those words I gave in and thanked him warmly in the name of the band. The $27 was used in purchasing a Carl Fisher E Flat cornet. It was a fine little instrument, all engraved, silver-plated and gold in bell, and there was a marked improvement in the band music when this cornet was used.

Only a month or so after receiving the cornet [c. 1889], I went on a trip to Key West, in the Illinois, and had as companions Guy Bradley and my cousin Walter Moore. There were two reasons for making this trip. Father had raised a large crop of Bermuda onions, had supplied all the stores on the lake and Indian River, and had a large surplus on hand that would be sure to spoil if he attempted to carry them through the summer, so we loaded sixty crates into the Illinois to take to Key West for sale in that town. Then too, although late in the season, we expected to kill a few plum birds that would help pay the expenses of the trip.

We had two Winchester repeating shotguns, two Winchester rifles and a single-shot rifle, for our hunting. I also carried my violin and new cornet.

The first untoward event happened on our first day out, when we were five miles north of New River inlet, and that was our encounter with a huge waterspout. In the earlier part of the day the wind had been light and baffling, but late in the afternoon, about the time we were passing the Hillsborough inlet, the wind came down stiff from the northeast. It looked like a regular old northeaster, and I at once determined to run in New River. Suddenly, a little off the port bow, I saw a whip of white water that I thought was a striking fish, but before I could turn my head there was a big white cone of spray started up and thrashed into smoke-like mist by a violent whirlwind. Then a big black funnel-shaped cloud commenced reaching down towards the whirling spray on the sea. "A waterspout!" I yelled, and hauling in on the fore sheet I cast off the halyard and let the foresail come down by the run, and told the boys to hurry and lash the sail down with an end of the anchor cables. When Walter started forward, I noticed he was wearing shoes. I made him stop and take them off and throw them in the cabin. While the boys were lashing down the foresail I jibed the mainsail and headed for the shore. The waterspout was not less than a quarter of a mile from us, and the northeaster was gone. We were in the partial calm on the outside edge of the whirlwind tornado that created the spout, which by this time had made contact with the sea and was fully developed into a waterspout of large size. We lay to, close in shore, for a few minutes, when suddenly, to our delight, the spout broke and vanished.

Then the northeaster struck us again in full force. Under ordinary circumstances we would have reefed the sails, but now only too anxious to get in New River, we cracked on all sail and went foaming down the coast to "save our bones from Davy Jones," and waterspouts.

[We] sailed into the calm waters of New River at sundown and anchored for the night. At dinner that day we had cooked a large kettle of stew, leaving about half of it to be warmed up for supper. After making things snug on deck for the night, I went below to start fire under our kettle of stew and found one of Walter's shoes calmly reposing and partly submerged in our stew. We immediately made different arrangements for supper, which Guy and I attended to while Walter cleaned his shoe.

The wind slackened some during the night, and although the waves were rolling high in the morning, we put to sea after breakfast and made an uneventful trip to Biscayne Bay.

"A Rough Passage" (from "Camping and Cruising in Florida," by James Hemshall).
POLITICS IN OLD DADE COUNTY

Although Florida was readmitted to the union in June 1868, nothing much appears to have been done about organizing a county government in Dade County prior to the year of 1872, a condition brought about or caused by its almost complete isolation from the rest of the civilized world. Its only communication was by small sailboat down a rather dangerous coast 175 miles to Key West. Or, if someone wished to travel north from Miami, he would have to walk up the ocean beach a distance of 80 miles to Jupiter lighthouse, and there wait for weeks or perhaps months before he would have an opportunity to continue his voyage up Indian River.

The political situation of the county did not extend as far north as Lake Worth until the state and county election in 1874. At election time in 1872 Lake Worth had only one inhabitant, therefore the politicians of Miami, then extremely few in number, were not interested in obtaining the vote from that section. But in the fall of 1874 word leaked out in Miami that now there were ten or twelve people living on that lake, and a man was dispatched on foot up the beach to establish a voting precinct and name an election board.

The home of H. D. Pierce on Hypoluxo Island, a house then covered roof and sides with palmetto leaves, was the polling place selected, with Charlie Moore, W. M. Butler, H. D. Pierce and W. H. Moore as inspectors of election.

When election day arrived, the inspectors were on hand to conduct the election, but besides them only one voter came to cast his ballot. This one voter was an old cracker known as Dr. Talbot, who had been living with the Butler family on the island for some weeks. Three other men living on the lake, it appeared, were not interested enough in the election to come and vote. These men were Jesse Malden, Wm. Lainheart [Lanehart] and H. [Hiram] F. Hammon [who settled west of Pompano about 1906 and founded the settlement of Hammondville]. It is possible they had not heard of the election, or perhaps they supposed they were not qualified to vote in that election. They were most certainly better qualified than old Doc Talbot, who had not lived on the lake more than two months at the most.

Time of residence in county or state did not mean anything then. The mere fact that they were there ready to cast ballot was enough to entitle them to vote and no questions [were] asked.

Mr. Pierce's old palmetto hat sitting on a homemade table was the ballot box. Ballots were cut from a sheet of writing paper, and the name of the candidate written in with pencil. When the entire five ballots had been cast, they were then shaken up, drawn out and counted. William Butler was clerk of the board. They did not wait for sundown to close the polls. What was the use of all that formality? There was no one else to vote. They had not opened the polls until eleven o'clock, thinking perhaps the other three men up the lake might come. But at eleven o'clock, after a careful survey of the lake and no sails in sight, the business of the election was started and finished within an hour.

The ballots and returns of the election were enclosed in an old used envelope and handed to W. H. Moore to convey to the County Seat, there to be canvassed by the county commissioners. Mr. Moore did not carry the ballot box to Miami, for the very good reason Mr. Pierce had great need of it. It was the only hat he possessed.

Mr. Moore made the trip to Miami in his little sloop Nellie, hauling her over to the ocean on the old Indian handover at the foot of the lake. When darkness overtook him, he was about two miles north of New River inlet. And not caring to risk entering the inlet, where he was unacquainted with, after dark, he beached his boat, and after hauling her up out of reach of the waves, made camp for the night.

On awakening in the morning he found the wind and sea favorable for the continuance of his voyage down the coast, so he started to prepare coffee for his morning meal. And preparing coffee was no little job. The only kind of coffee obtainable on the coast at that time was the green coffee bean. This had to be roasted and then ground in a hand mill. Every settler had his coffee mill, but as the Pierce family had only one mill, Mr. Moore had to make different arrangements to reduce his coffee beans sufficiently to produce the desired cup of coffee. This he did by enclosing the coffee beans in a canvas bag and pounding it with a hatchet.

He was pounding his coffee on the forward deck of his boat and thereby creating quite a noise, when a man appeared on top of the beach ridge to the westward of his camp. Walking up to Mr. Moore, and after the usual "Good morning," [he] said, "I heard a pounding over this way and as I could not account for it in any other way [I] supposed it was made by a steamer aground, tho' I could not make out why there were no masts in sight. So I came to investigate the mystery."

He said his name was Brown, and that he had a shack on the west bank of the river and was raising hogs. This was the only white inhabitant of New River, and later on [he] became known

Will H. Moore, uncle of Charles W. Pierce and early southeast Florida settler (photo courtesy of Dr. Gilbert L. Voss).
as "Pig Brown." This is to distinguish him from other Browns then living on the east coast.

In the election of 1876 there were two candidates for the legislature from Dade County. The man from Biscayne Bay was educated and well-qualified to serve his county, but he had the misfortune to have served as lieutenant governor of the state under carpet-bag rule in the reconstruction days following the Civil War. I suppose he came out as an independent, for the only organized party in the county was Democratic. The Democrats met in convention in Miami and nominated "Pig Brown," the lonely hermit of New River, to oppose the man from Biscayne Bay.

It was said that Mr. Brown was the most surprising man in the county when informed of his nomination and later of his election. Some of the defeated candidate's friends made up this little verse:

_Brown perhaps may rue the day,_
_That gave his old Gleason's seat,_
_For Gleason still sits there and_ _Pound away, and prove_ _He can't be beat._

Mr. Brown went to Tallahassee, and it is supposed took his seat in the Legislature and drew his pay. If he did anything more we never heard of it. He disposed of his property and departed from the banks of New River, never to return.

When Dade County was organized as a real county, along about 1871 or '72, they had to have, of course, a clerk of the court and a sheriff as well as a justice of the peace. Tho' just what use they had for these peace officers no one knew, yet they were entitled to them, and they were appointed in due course.

Now previous to the appointing of the county officers, perfect harmony prevailed among the settlers of the Bay. In most cases they lived so far apart there was little chance for interference in their daily avocations, and there was no need or use for a sheriff, or a justice court. But after appointing these officers of the law, there came a change in the peace of the settlers on Biscayne Bay.

In the election of 1888, James Wood Davidson, a resident of Palm Beach, was elected county representative in the legislature. Very different was this man from "Pig" Brown of New River. Mr. Davidson had a fine personality and was highly educated. [He] was a representative to be proud of, and the citizens of the lake were jubilant over the result of the election, as Mr. Davidson got the vote of every man on the lake and at Jupiter and the Saint Lucie River section, and it was also noticed that the north end of the county had outvoted the Biscayne Bay section by a large majority.

This set the leading Democrats of the lake to thinking. These men were: E. N. Dimick, George W. Lainhart, George W. Potter and Allen E. Heyser. [They] reasoned why not call for a change in the county seat in the next election two years hence, and move it to some place on the lake, possibly right at Palm Beach? But on investigation [they] found they could not get the vote of the entire upper end of the county, and had to have it in order to carry the election, unless they agreed to locate the court house at Juno, a newly established post office at the north end of the lake, and the lake end of the Jupiter and Lake Worth railroad, then under construction.

If the court house was built at Juno, the people of the upper end of the county could reach it as quickly and as easy as the people of the lake, so the agreement was made. The question of the removal of the county seat came up at the next election, and the north end of the county won the fight by a large majority.

In this election, A. F. Quimby was elected county clerk; Allen E. Heyser, county judge; George W. Potter, county surveyor; and George W. Lainhart [sic], county commissioner, all Lake Worth men. A. F. Quimby [was] to succeed T. W. Faulkner of Miami; George Lainhart [sic] to have James W. Porter's place on the board of county commissioners on January 1st, 1889.

There had been considerable hard feeling in evidence between the north and south ends of the county in this election, and the fellows designated to go to Miami for the records fully expected trouble when they arrived there, so three husky young men were selected to take the election returns to Miami and to assist in removing the more important records for transportation to Juno.

D. E. (Ned) Brown, Patrick Lennon and a young man from New Jersey were the three huskies. Allen E. Heyser, county judge elect, and Quimby, the clerk elect, made up the rest of the party that accompanied Commissioner Porter on that walk down the beach to Miami to canvass the vote and remove the records, Patrick Lennon, an Irishman exiled from Great Britain because of his fighting proclivities, was asked to be one of the party because they thought he would be very useful if the Miami men started a row along the way.

They had a stormy time at that meeting of the county commissioners when the vote of the county was canvassed and the result made known. A number of the Miami men openly declared they would not let the records leave Miami, that they would use force if necessary to keep them there. And then the argument "waxed hot and furious," but confined entirely to mere words at that time. E. L. White, county commissioner from the Bay country, took the floor. He said, "Gentlemen, I am opposed to moving the records just as much as anyone, and I certainly hate to see them go, but Lake Worth and the north end of the county have won in a fair fight by an honest vote of the majority of the citizens of the county. We have got to take our medicine, however much we dislike it, and let the records go."

When Commissioner White finished his little speech, there was a prolonged howl of dissent, followed by cries of "Never!" "Not on your life!" and various other expressions of anger and disagreement. This state of affairs kept up until late in the afternoon, when the larger and more turbulent part of the crowd, many of whom lived some distance up or down the Bay, departed. They promised to return bright and early next morning, well-armed and well-heeled, to take care of the situation, and prevent the Lake Worth men from removing the records.

They believed they would be perfectly safe in waiting until the morrow to settle the question. They were sailors enough to know the sea was far too rough for any of the Bay boats to venture upon it, and there was no other way, or so they thought, to make away with the records before the next day.

One man was heard to remark to the ill-tempered and disgruntled crowd that he had a big jug of "Dutch courage" at home. [He] said he would bring it next day and soon have his party in fighting trim.

After all the agitators had departed, the Lake Worth men and a few of the cool-headed Miami men agreed to meet again immediately after supper and hold a "Council of War" at the clerk's office, on what was best to do and when to do it.

The fact that the Lake Worth men, expecting trouble, had come well-armed, and it was plainly in evidence at the time, no doubt acted as [a] deterrent on the turbulent men of the Bay that afternoon. But now they had declared they would be on hand in the morning, prepared to "Hold the fort." In other words [to] prevent the removal of the records. So whatever was done would have to be done that night under the cover of darkness.

By eight o'clock they had again assembled at the Clerk's office, located in the first floor of the old courthouse building of Old Fort Dallas. After a few preliminary remarks by first one and then another on the rather awkward situation confronting them, A. F. Quimby arose and said, "Just before I went to supper, I overheard two Miami fellows telling one another what they were going to use in the morning. They said McC. was
going to bring enough whiskey for the crowd, and after getting well fixed they would do up that Lake Worth bunch in a hurry. Of course they did not see me, or if they did they thought I was one of their own crowd. I made a sneak and without waiting to consult you fellows, for after what I had heard I did not think there was any time to lose, I went upriver and borrowed a big Indian canoe. It is large enough to carry the most important of the records and three men. I have the canoe at the dock now and, 'By the Great Horn Spoon!' I am for loading the records into that canoe and starting for New River at once, by way of the Glades. I know the way and can take her through without a hitch. Faulkner will have to remain here in charge of the office equipment that we will have to leave behind until a boat can be sent from the lake for it. Pat had better go with me to help push the canoe, and Jim Porter to handle the artillery in case our flight is discovered and they overtake us before we reach the Fort Lauderdale Station."

"If we can get to the Lauderdale Station we can stand them off there until they get tired or help comes from the lake. Meantime you fellows that are walking back can take word to Palm Beach, and tell Cap Dimick to hurry a boat to New River to pick us up or raise the siege, as the case may be. Now, 'By the Eternal King!' don't you think my plan is the only way out of this mess?"

When all had agreed that Quimby's plan was the best and should be carried out without delay, Quimby again said, "There is one more thing I want to call your attention to, and it is a situation that I am just a little bit afraid of. In going up the Bay, we will have to keep near the west shore in order to reach bottom with our poles. Some of these fellows might see us passing and open fire on us. In that case we would have to surrender our records or get killed."

Then a young man named Fred Morse spoke up and said, "I can eliminate Friend Quimby's fears on that score by towing the canoe to the head of the Bay with my sharpie. There they can enter Snake Creek, whose headwaters are the Everglades, and without fear of molestation too, for no one lives on that creek but a few Indians."

Fred Morse was from Boston, Mass., and had been living on the Bay for five or four years, not long enough however, to go wild as many of the residents seemed to have done that day. Mr. Morse's offer was quickly accepted with many thanks and other expressions of satisfaction from the much coveted men. Fred arrived at 5 o'clock. It was [a very dark night with a stormy and overcast sky, so there was small danger of anyone seeing them at work carrying the most important of the records and loading them into the canoe, which was taken in tow by Mr. Morse's sharpie, Amy. And away they went up the Bay at a good rate of speed before a fresh southeast wind, on their first leg of the flight away from the bad men of Miami.

They arrived at the mouth of Snake Creek at midnight without any untoward event occurring on the sail up the Bay. Here, Quimby, Porter and Pat Lennon crawled on board the canoe, and after saying "Good night" to Fred Morse, and again thanking him for his assistance, headed the canoe up the dark channel of the creek. At midnight on a cloudy moonless night, it was black both above and below, but Quimby knew every inch of the channel. He had been this way many times before, as he now told his companions in answer to a question from one of them. "But, Holy Mother of Smokes!" he exclaimed, "I never was through here before when I expected to be chased by an armed mob. No sir! This is the first time that has ever happened and I hope it is the last. But I am telling you now, if they are after us they will never catch up with us this side of New River."

Then for some time thereafter no word was spoken by the little band of history makers. Each man was too busily engaged plying his paddle — for they now had to use paddles. In this part of the creek the water was too deep for poling, and [the men] had no breath to spare for conversation, as they endeavored to make good time against the swift current.

When the Amy sailed away from Miami that night, the three men that had brought the election returns from Lake Worth stood on the old stone dock and watched the sharpie until she disappeared in the blackness of the night to the northward. Then they crossed over the river and obtained lodging for the night at Brickell's [a trading post].

The next morning they hired a man to take them over the Bay to the House of Refuge located near the north end of Indian Creek. Here they started on their long tramp up the beach to Lake Worth and home.

After all the excitement at Miami the day before, they found this walk up the lonely beach rather monotonous and undoubtedly very tiresome. They expected to arrive at the Lauderdale Station in time for supper, and if they kept moving at a brisk pace they might get there by five o'clock. In the meantime they talked about the exciting events of the day before and wondered, "How were the things in the office with the precious records coming along, and would they see them that night at the Fort Lauderdale Station?"

Through the balance of the night the three men in the canoe kept driving up Snake Creek. Once or twice Pat paused in his paddling to suggest to Quimby that they should keep farther away from the south side of the creek. "Why?" asked Quimby, in answer to Pat's question.

"Why, some of those fellows might have seen us sailing up the Bay and come up through the woods to head us off as we pass up this creek. They might be laying in ambush on one of these hammock points ready to shoot us down as we pass," said Pat rather nervously.

"Well, Pat, you may be a fighting Irishman, but you certainly do not know this country. 'Why! By the Eternal King! It would be as much as a man's life is worth to find his way through these woods on a night like this. Besides we are miles away from the last settler to the north on the Bay, and they never could overtake us by way of the woods, not even in broad daylight and with six hours' start."

Quimby's explanation appeared to quiet Pat's fears for the time being, and the speed of the canoe, which had diminished during the conversation, again picked up as they settled to the job in hand once more.

They made good time, however, despite the swift current and the intense darkness of the tortuous channel of the creek so well named. Many times the question had been asked, "Why is it named Snake Creek?" Some said because of its crookedness, while old settlers contended it was named Snake Creek by the first white man that found and explored it, he having seen an enormous snake on its northern bank.

The water shallowed in the upper reaches of the creek. Then Quimby laid aside his paddle and resumed the long pole. By a vigorous use of it, in addition to the paddling of Porter and Pat, he greatly increased their speed.

Daylight was breaking in the far east over the ocean miles behind them when they passed out into the Glades. Turning to the northward through a small, very narrow channel, they passed into the real Glades that extended north to New River. A myriad of small green islands dotted this inundated country as far as the eye could reach to the south, west and north, interspersed here and there with long reaches of tall brown sawgrass, all growing in water about two feet deep that was in many places crystal clear with a firm sandy bottom.

Here they paused just long enough to eat a hasty cold lunch. And in the meantime Pat kept a sharp lookout on the back track. Pat put on the paddles were laid aside and the pole used exclusively, the men taking turn about at the pushing job. By this means the canoe kept
moving ahead rapidly without tiring anyone to any great extent.

When the headwaters of New River were reached, their progress was much more rapid, for they were now aided by a swift current carrying them toward the coast. At three o'clock they arrived at their destination by canoe.

From here they had to carry the heavy records up the beach about half a mile to the Station. The keeper of the Station was surprised to see the three men coming along loaded down with big books. He joined in and helped with the work, so by four o'clock everything was safely housed in the Station.

Some fifteen minutes or so was then spent in giving the keeper a history of their adventures, and the hazards they had encountered since leaving his place on their mission to Miami to remove the County Seat. Then one of them happened to look to the south down the beach and saw three men coming up the shore at a rapid walk.

To their excited想象 they were sure they could recognize in the oncoming men some of the more turbulent men they had encountered at Miami the day before, and they just knew it was some of them coming to take the records and return them to Miami.

Now they quickly decided to fight it out to the bitter end in defense of the hard-earned records, so they hurriedly carried them to the attic of the Station. There Porter, Quimby and Pat stationed themselves at the head of the stairs, ready to repel the attack they expected within a few minutes.

Quimby armed himself with a piece of iron pipe, a crossbar belonging to one of the sleeping cots furnished by the Government for the use of ship-wrecked sailors. Pat produced his shooting iron but stood back a little out of range of anyone coming up the stairway. Porter took his stand at the head of the stairs, saying as he did so, “I can shoot as well with my left as my right and, by doggies!, no man shall come up here as long as I have a cartridge left, or can pull a trigger.”

They were even in numbers now. That was an advantage over their former situation in Miami. Their location now made it impossible for more than one to attack them at the same time, unless they squared up in single file, in which case one well-directed bullet might drop all three.

The keeper, of course, was not expected to take any part in the anticipated scrimmage. It was nothing to him one way or the other unless fighting started inside the house. Then of course he would be duty bound to stop it if he could.

The men in the attic were kept in suspense but a few moments. Soon was heard the pounding of bare feet on the porch floor as the three men came around to the west door of the living room which, as usual, was open and was the main entrance to the Station.

First they heard the keeper talking to the new arrivals in a sharp quick tone, and a few quiet words in answer that were immediately followed by a shout of laughter from the keeper. Then he called to the men in the attic, “It’s all right fellows. Put up your guns and come down. These are your own men on their way home. The fellows you left behind at Miami last night.”

Well, even after all their preparations for a big fight, it was a great relief to know it was a false alarm, and there would not be a battle to preserve the records. Hastily putting aside the guns and other implements of strife, they came down from the attic, with broad grins on their faces to greet their companions, and then demanded that Keeper [Charles] Coman make for all hands a big pot of strong coffee to brace up their shattered nerves.

In their excitement over the events of the past day and night, they never thought to ask on their arrival at the Station if their friends had passed on up the beach ahead of them. So much had happened since the day before, and they had such a strain of nervous excitement and hard work, it seemed to them that days had passed since they left Miami. Had they stopped to think for one minute, they would have known their companions left in Miami only the night before could not arrive at

Dock along the southeast Florida coast, probably at Lake Worth, drawn by George W. Potter (illustration courtesy of Marjorie P. Stewart).

Fort Lauderdale before late that day. And in that case they would be certain to meet there. They forgot all these facts, so intent were they in bringing the records through safely.

Their companions reported there had been no particular excitement around Miami before they left that morning. Ned Brown said he had heard one fellow using some pretty strong language in telling another how the Lake Worth men had got the best of them, and run off with the most important records some time in the night.

That night after supper, they talked the matter over for some time, and at last it was decided that as there was now very little danger of anyone following them from Miami, Quimby would remain at the Station to guard the records until a boat could be sent from Lake Worth for them. The rest would go on up the beach in the morning, and would have a boat coming down the coast for Quimby and his records on the first fair wind and sea.

Next morning, as the homeward-bound men were about to depart on their long tramp of thirty miles up the beach to Lake Worth, Quimby said to Porter, “Say Jim! I think you had better leave one of your guns with me. Holy Mother of Smoke! What would I do if a bunch of them fellows came from Miami after the records and me without a gun?”

At this point Coman joined in the conversation by telling Quimby he had a good breechloading shotgun he would let him use if attacked. That settled the controversy, and the beach
tramps departed for home.

A boat was sent in due time from the lake to New River for Quimby and the records. And later the Heron, with George Potter in command and Ben Potter and Fred S. Dewey as shipmates, made the run to Miami and removed the balance of the clerk's office equipment and Clerk T. W. Faulkner, who would remain in charge of the office until January 1st. All was landed in due time at Juno, the new County Seat of Dade.

Al Fields' little house at Juno was used to house the clerk and his outfit until a court house could be built to take care of the rapidly increasing county business.

The new court house was built the following summer. It was a large two-story frame building. The Clerk's, County Judge and the Sheriff's office were on the ground floor. The upper floor was one large room the full size of the building. This was the court room, and was frequently used for dances when the people of Jupiter and the Lake would combine to have a good time.

In the election that moved the county seat, George W. Lainhart was elected commissioner to succeed James W. Porter, Mr. Porter having refused to run for reelection. A man named Church, then living near Juno, was elected sheriff. Lake Worth now had not only the county seat, but all of the county officers, except one lone little county commissioner from Miami. And that little fellow was E. L. White, little in stature only. He was a smart man and had a great big head on his shoulders. He was largely identified with the early builders of Dade County.

THE LANTANA-LEMON CITY ROAD

The first road on the lower east [coast] of Florida created by white men was the old Military Trail, starting at Saint Augustine [should be Fort] and ending at Fort Dallas on Biscayne Bay. It was made by United States soldiers during the Seminole wars from 1836 to 1840 [1842] to connect the various military posts along the coast. That section passing through the counties of Brevard and Dade was not a road properly speaking, but a mere blazed trail through the swamps and flat woods on the backcountry of the coast, coming into Fort Capron and Fort Pierce on Indian River, then back again to head the Saint Lucie River. Then fording the north and south fork of the Loxahatchee [Loxahatchee River] [it] came in to the eastward to Fort Jupiter located on the south bank of the Loxahatchee River about a mile west of Jupiter inlet. Leaving Fort Jupiter it bore away to the southwest and south through a trackless wilderness of swamp and glade to Fort Lauderdale on New River. Here they had to have a ferry, for New River was far too deep to ford and they could not go around its head for that was the Everglades.

Leaving Fort Lauderdale this old trail went through rocky pine woods for some distance and then again bore away to the westward to ford Big and Little Snake creeks, Arch Creek and Little River. Then turning again a little to the east of south to end at Fort Dallas on the north bank of the Miami River, the end of a long, long trail.

The first known man-made roads or trails along the east coast were the haulovers made and used by the Indians hundreds of years before the coming of white men. They were four in number. One was near the head of Indian River that connected Mosquito lagoon, the next one near the head of Lake Worth, where a south bound Indian would haul his canoe from the swamp and creek that connected with the Loxahatchee River and Indian Rivers into Lake Worth.

At the south end of the lake was a third haulover; here the Indians hauled their canoes from lake to ocean if south bound, and coasting along shore for five miles they arrived at the fourth and last haulover located near a small grove of wild sour oranges. Here they again hauled their canoes back to the swamp that connected with Hillsborough, New River, the Everglades and Biscayne Bay.

When the first settlers arrived on Lake Worth in 1872 and '73 there was plenty of evidence that the lake had been landlocked and fresh water over a period of many years, and its overflow found an outlet through the swamp to the south into the Hillsborough river, and at one time through Boca Raton inlet, to the sea.

A few years ago I was a witness in a land hearing of a case between the State of Florida and the United States. I was much interested in the story told by another witness of an account he had read in an old book giving a history of the military occupation of Florida during the Seminole war of 1836 to 1840.

The story was of an officer and a detail of men sent from Fort Lauderdale to have a talk with an Indian chief of a village located on a big freshwater lake some miles up the coast to the northward. This officer related how they had made their way towards the big freshwater lake without much difficulty until they passed the Orange Grove haulover. From there on, the distance to the big lake was only five miles, it took them five days of extremely hard work to reach the lake. Many years later this big freshwater lake was named Lake Worth, and the Orange Grove haulover is now Delray Beach.

In the first fifteen years of the actual settlement of the lower east coast, no thought was given to the subject of roads as a means of transportation in the county. What need was there for roads when everyone traveled by small sailboat, rowboat or walked the ocean beach? River, Lake and Ocean were their highways when traveling by boat. When a boat was not available, or the
sea too rough they made their journey up or down the soft sandy ocean beach on foot.

Before the moving of the county seat to Juno, the county officials living on Biscayne Bay never gave a thought to the idea of a road connecting the Bay with the Lake. They were at that time in the majority, and lived within easy distance of the court house. They were satisfied for conditions to remain as they were. As for the Lake Worth fellows, let them walk if they wished to hold a county office; and the Lake Worth men walked to their post of duty at the county seat, taking it as a matter of course and one of the requisites of a county job.

But after the moving of the county seat to Juno, and following two or three pilgrimages of the Bay men to the county seat, there arose a mighty howl from the citizens of the south end of the country for better transportation facilities between the two sections. They demanded a road of some kind should be made between the Bay and Lake. Many new settlers had moved into the Biscayne Bay country, and they did not take kindly to beach walking as a means of reaching the county seat when they had business at the court house.

About a year after the new court house was completed [i.e., about 1890] I was in Palm Beach; going into the office of the Coconut Grove hotel I saw George Lainhart there talking with Cap [E. N.] Dimick [owner of the hotel]. When Mr. Lainhart saw me he said, "Come here Charlie; I have something to tell you." When I had taken a seat near him he continued, "At the commissioners' meeting yesterday we appointed a board of road commissioners, consisting of four men, one for each district. I appointed you on this board. Your district extends from Juno south to the Hillsborough inlet. The other members of the board are Jimmy Kingsley from Jupiter, Peter Merritt from Lemon City and a man named Thompson from Coconut Grove. Your work will be to put a road through from Juno to Lemon City."

"Just why did you appoint me on that board? I do not know a thing about road making or bridge building."

"We want the road put through as soon as possible and located along the best route at the least expense. We know that no one in the county knows the country through which this road will have to pass except you, I mean, of course, the country from the south end of the lake to the bay. That was our reason for appointing you on this board," said Mr. Lainhart in answer to my question.

Mr. Lainhart then said the other three had been notified of their appointment and that we would attend and organize at the next commissioners' meeting which would be on the first Tuesday of the following month.

"The people of the bay country," Mr. Lainhart continued, "are clamoring for a road to the county seat, and a more certain transportation than that afforded by sailboat on the ocean or walking on the beach. When Miami was the county seat, and we had to do the beach tramping, the people down there were not interested in a road to the lake; now, however, the situation has a different aspect to those fellows and we have got to put a road through to the Bay before they will be satisfied."

On the day before the commissioners' meeting I sailed up the lake to Palm Beach in the afternoon, intending to spend the night there and go on to Juno in the morning. This was a regular custom for the Juno-bound. They would spend the night at the Coconut Grove hotel, and go on to Juno on the Steamer Lake Worth in the morning.

Going into the hotel office that evening I found a number of Juno-bound men there, and among them my brother road commissioners from the Bay, Peter Merritt and Mr. Thompson. The next morning we went on to Juno, where a small room on the ground floor was allotted to us for our office.

We then proceeded to organize our board, and at once bumped into a number of difficulties. In the first place, not one of us had any experience in work of this kind and did not know how to begin. I was about twenty years younger than the youngest of the other three men, yet they depended on me to tell them what to do, and when I informed them we would have to have a chairman they promptly elected me to that position without giving me a chance to say a word of objection. It was three against one, and I had to submit.

Then I informed them that nominations for a secretary were in order. This was another "poser" for that primitive board of road commissioners. Not one of them would agree to even try to do the work. Each in turn, when I asked the question, said it was quite impossible for him to do it. They gave all manner of excuses, but the principle one was they were too nervous to write. They would not change their decision — I had to do the secretary work too.

Well, I had a rather hard time with my "Board," a hard time keeping them on the subject for which we had organized, that of building or putting a road through to Lemon City on Biscayne Bay. Every few minutes something would happen that would remind Jimmy Kingsley of something that happened when he was with Sherman in the Civil War. After we would have to listen to a long story from him about his war experiences. Then Peter Merritt, who was a bridge builder by trade, would com- mence to talk of bridges and their construction. I had to continually remind him that the road would have to be made before we could build the bridges. Mr. Thompson never said anything unless asked a question. He appeared to think that as there was no roads or bridges to build in his district, there was not any need of him saying anything.

Time came for adjournment before we had made any great headway in our road business. There had been so many stories of bridge building and war adventures they had taken a good part of our time. But we had made a start and would be ready to show results at our next meeting. The commissioners had informed us they wanted a road platted and surveyed from Juno to Lemon City. We were now ready to attend to that at our next meeting.

At our second meeting the following morning we advertised for bids for a survey and plat of a road from Juno to Lemon City. This was the first advertisement I had ever written, and I had to have some instructions on the wording of it. My board could not tell me or even suggest anything. I then went to George Lainhart, who gave me the information I needed.

It was at this meeting that Peter Merritt got in his bridge work. He resisted that we write our specifications for the bridges that would have to be built over Hillsborough River, Cypress Creek, Middle River, Big and Little Snake Creeks and Little River. Peter dictated and I wrote it down. It was in this part of our work that Peter Merritt was of the greatest help to us. He certainly knew his bridges. We decided that New River was too wide and deep for the county to bridge, so we planned a ferry for that river as the most feasible at that time. The county did not have a very large amount in the road fund. It would take about all there was to put the road through and build such bridges as we had to have.

When we arrived at Juno for our third meeting we found two bids on the road survey waiting for our decision. The first bid opened was from George Potter, who was at that time county surveyor. Mr. Potter offered to survey and plat the road from Juno to the Hillsborough River, which was only about half the distance from Juno to Lemon City, for $400. The other bid was from E. L. White; his offer was $350 for the entire distance from Lemon City to Juno. These were the only bids received, and they left us no chance for argument or discussion. As E. L. White's bid was at a rate less than half asked by George Potter, we awarded him the contract, and considered it reasonable enough when the kind of country he had to make his survey, or his way, through
and the various difficulties he would be forced to overcome, was taken into consideration. He would have to haul his camp outfit with horses and wagon through swamps and jungle, and six creeks and rivers to cross the best way he could. All of them [were] too deep to ford at the point where the road would go. It was a big job and no one knew it as well as I.

Mr. White completed his survey in good time and delivered a plat of same to the board of road commissioners at Juno. Then the county commissioners informed us we would have to inspect the survey before accepting it. As the entire road was in Peter Merritt’s and my districts the work of inspection fell to us two. I was to go over the survey from Juno to the Hillsborough, a distance of 37 miles through all kinds of scrub, pine woods and jungle, but no streams to cross. Peter Merritt had about the same distance to travel, but also had five creeks and rivers to negotiate in some manner. Truly I had the best of the deal for once, tho it could not be considered a pleasure trip at its best.

When talking over this inspection business with the county commissioners it occurred to me that the survey from Juno to Lantana and the inspection thereof was entirely unnecessary as boats could make that part of the trip quicker and much easier than horse and wagon through soft sand. When I brought this to the attention of the commissioners they agreed that I was right, and I was then instructed to inspect the survey from Lantana to Hillsborough only.

When the report of the inspection was received by the county commissioners that the survey was O.K. all the way to Lamon City, they said the board of road commissioners had served its purpose and then disbanded it.

Then the county advertised for bids on the clearing and grubbing the road and for building the bridges over the various streams and a ferry boat at New River. The work went on without delay and in a comparatively short time the road was open to travel.

Peter Merritt was the successful bidder on the bridge work, and when they were finished he went to Juno for his pay. I met him there and he told me with a whimsical grin that he had to build those bridges according to the identical and same specifications that he dictated to me while on the board of road commissioners.

When the road was finished [in 1892], the Post Office Department was notified that there was now a better route open from Lantana to Lamon City. They discontinued the old barefoot route down the beach and called for bids to carry the mail over the new road from Lantana to Lamon City three times a week by hack. Guy Metcalf, who was then publishing the Tropical Sun, a weekly newspaper at Juno, was the successful bidder. He put on two hacks and established a halfway camp at New River (now Fort Lauderdale). He secured the services of a young man from Melbourne, Florida, to operate this camp. His name was Frank Stranahan.

The camp was composed of a number of large tents with boards floors and sides. They were put up in a wide circle and at night a large campfire was started in the center of this circle to light this small city of tents. It was a romantic looking place on a dark night with a big fire burning, whose light was reflected back by the white tents backed by immense oak trees all covered with a heavy drapery of Spanish moss.

Frank Stranahan was the only resident at this camp during its first year. He was general manager, cook, dishwasher, chambermaid and entertainer for the guests of the camp when there were any, and that was very seldom in the summer time, and not so frequent either in the tourist season. Of course, he had the two hack drivers in camp every other night. But on the off-nights he was entirely alone. His nearest neighbor was the keeper of the House of Refuge on the ocean beach, more than two miles distant by boat.

It took the hack from Lantana 14 hours to make the trip to New River, while due to less mileage the Lemon City hack would arrive at the camp in about seven hours. Here they exchanged mail and passengers and returned to their starting place the next day. This seems at first like a long time to cover a few miles, but when one considers the soft sand road, so soft the mules never went faster than a slow walk, it was not so bad. And the people of Biscayne Bay thought it a great improvement on walking on the ocean beach 60 or 70 miles.

WRECKING

It was in the month of May while the road commissioners were still on the job that a party of men from Biscayne Bay came up the beach with the mail carrier, Henry John Burkhardt. They were jurymen, Biscayne Bay’s contingent to the circuit court at Juno.

They brought very important and exciting information, which was [that] the beach from the Bay to the Lake was strewn with sacks of flour and boxes of cheese, and at Boca Raton a large cask of lard. While the flour and cheese would be a valuable addition to our household supplies, the lard had a commercial value of about $25, and could be readily sold on the lake at any time, so I made haste to organize a wrecking party to salvage the flour and cheese and more particularly the cask of lard.

When informed of the wreckage on the beach, Louie Bradley and Andrew Garnett were eager to go as crew of the Illinois on the proposed wrecking trip. We landed at Brelsford’s store in Palm Beach, to lay in stores for the trip. Here I obtained all of the empty flour barrels they had, nine of them, and a large scoop to transfer the flour from the sacks to the barrels. All of these preparations occupied us until late in the afternoon, and it was dark when we arrived at the inlet where we anchored for the night.

Underway early next morning, we sailed outside. There was a light east wind and a smooth sea, so we sailed close along shore to the southward, keeping a sharp eye for wrecked goods. We sighted the first sack of flour near the south end of the lake, came to, close to the beach, lowered the foresail and let go the anchor, paying out cable until the stern of the Illinois was close to the beach. Then Louie and Andrew jumped overboard and waded to shore. [They] pulled the sack of flour into the water and floated it alongside, then we parbuckled it on deck. Cutting the sack open from end to end we found it wet only about an inch deep; the balance of the flour was as dry as it was before leaving the ship. Quickly transferring the dry flour into a barrel, we up sail and anchor and continued on our way down the coast.

Sacks of flour became so numerous as

Frank Stranahan drew this layout of his overnight camp on New River on Jan. 31, 1893, shortly after his arrival to operate the ferry for the Bay Biscayne Stage Line (illustration courtesy of the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society).
we sailed along the coast, we soon had our nine barrels full, but this work also delayed us to such an extent that it was well along in the afternoon when we came in plain sight of Boca Raton. And there we saw a schooner at anchor near the beach, and close to the place where we had been told we would find the cask of land.

I now told the boys our cask of land was a goner for certain, the schooner was taking it on board. She got underway shortly after we sighted her, and as she passed us close aboard we saw it was the schooner Monseur, Captain Fred Hoag, from Indian River. They had our cask of land on deck.

We were greatly disappointed in losing the land as it was the main object of our cruise, but now that it was gone, determined to keep on as far as Biscayne Bay and pick up everything we could find worth the taking. It was late when we passed Boca Raton. The wind freshened and we came to the seas picked up, so we did not look for anything more on the beach, but headed for New River inlet where we would spend the night.

Next morning Bill Pent, of Lemon City, hailed us from shore, and asked if we were going to the Bay, and if so would we take him with us. Louie went after him with the small boat. He said he had come up from the Bay the day before, had a lot of cheese piled up along the beach, and if we would pick it up on our way he would give us two-thirds of it.

To this we readily agreed and were glad of the chance to get some cheese, for we had not found any so far.

The sea was still smooth enough to work along close in, and we picked up 18 boxes of cheese, mostly Edam and some Swiss. We also picked up a case of canned asparagus and a case of Fellows Compound Syrup of Hypophosphites.

We landed Bill Pent and six boxes of cheese at Lemon City next morning, then sailed up to Baker’s haulover, where we found another box of Edam cheese and a lot of Coats O.N.T. white thread. The water had swelled the thread and busted the end of every spool and it was in a tangled mess. We carried off about a bushel of it and decided to let the women folks at home untangle it.

A lot of portable knocked-down houses, or at least complete material for such had been thrown overboard from the stranded steamer on Foy [Fowey] Rock reef, from whence had come all of the wrecked plunder, and the crew of the Illinois cast longing eyes at the bundles of fine clear white pine lumber used in those houses that had been carried upon the grass, high beyond the reach of the waves, there to be sold by the U.S. Marshal, the salvagers to get the benefit of the profit on the auction sale of the wrecked goods.

No watch over the salvaged stuff had been placed, and it looked to us that we might have as much of this lumber as we could use providing no one saw us doing it. Of course this was a regular hi-jacking project, but the word “Hi-jacking” was then unknown. We simply called it taking something we needed without asking anyone for it.

The wind had been coming from the west after dark for the past two nights and the sea very smooth. I proposed we sail out of Norris Cut at sundown, and when the wind shifted after dark we would land and take on board some of that fine white pine lumber and sail away for home. When daylight came we would be out of sight up the coast, and no one would know what became of the lumber.

With full intention of carrying out this plan we sailed at sundown but fate intended we should not commit robbery on the high seas. No sooner were we outside than the wind freshened from the southeast, and the sea picked up enough to prevent our landing on the beach, so we were forced to run for harbor in New River. We did pick up, however, about a ton of brown wrapping paper afloat in the sea. We thought this might be used to wrap tomatoes when shipping them to market.

It was some time after dark when we sailed into New River, and we kept on up the river to the Station landing, as the indications were for stormy weather the following day. After breakfast the next morning we went to visit Den- ny O’Neill[1], the keeper of the Station, and found there all of the Biscayne men that had been attending court at Juno. The weather being much too stormy for them to proceed on their tramp down the beach, they remained at the House of Refuge. On the second day of inclement weather Denny called me to one side and said, “Charlie, have you any extra grub on your boat, and can [you] let me have some? These fellows have nearly eaten me out of house and home; there’s not enough to last another day.”

“Sure,” I replied, “we have any amount of flour and cheese. We can let you have all you can use, but that is all. This trip having extended much longer than we expected, we are out of nearly everything else.”

We went on board and came back with a sack of flour and two Swiss cheese. Denny said this would be ample if the weather cleared that night so the crowd could go on in the morning.

The beach walkers informed us the Indians had hauled out of water quite a lot of 2x4 between the Station and the Hillsborough inlet, and as we could not see just what use an Indian could make of all this timber, we determined to pick it up. The next morning the weather moderated. The Biscayne crowd departed for Miami, and we sailed for Hillsborough, picking up every stick of 2x4 along the way, and went into Hillsborough for the night.

There still was plenty of room for cargo in the Illinois hold, and when we turned out next morning we could see quite a number of 4x9 planks lodged in the mangroves inside the river, so we commenced to gather them in, and by the time we had picked up all we could find, had a full load.

The morning we put to sea from Hillsborough, the wind was very light from the southwest. We headed northeast for the Gulf Stream. We sailed out about two miles, out of soundings, and then discovered there was a strong current setting us to the southward. We did not anchor; the water was too deep and the wind was too light to stem the current. When the wind did come at last we were far to the south, and did not arrive off the inlet we had left in the early morning until 12 o’clock noon.

We continued on up the coast, and arrived off Lake Worth inlet some time in the small hours of the morning. Too dark to venture with a loaded boat, we anchored and waited for daylight. It was high water at 1:30 that day when we entered the inlet, but we ran hard aground on the inside flats, and were unable to get off before the tide dropped. We were forced to wait until next high tide, and that would be about one o’clock in the morning. I told the boys as I had not had any sleep the night before, I was afraid I would not awake at high tide, and we did not have an alarm clock. We had a passenger that had asked passage with us to the lake; he had come along while we were in the Hillsborough. He now said he could wake at any hour in the night. I could go to sleep and he would call me at two o’clock if I wanted him to. I said that would be fine, and went to bed fully expecting he would call me at the time indicated, as he had said he would.

Some time in the night I awoke; no one had called. The night was perfectly calm and the only sounds to be heard were the rippling of the tide against the boat’s sides and the heavy breathing of my sleeping companions. I crawled out on deck to have a look. The tide was full high, and the Illinois was afloat and tugging at her cable. Going in the cabin I routed Louie out of bed to help and soon had the boat floating in the deep water of the lake, and then went back to my bunk and finished my sleep.

The alarm passenger never awoke until the morning sun was shining brightly over lake and ocean. I did not fail to remind him of his broken promise
and of where he would have been until two o'clock that afternoon if my subconscious self had not aroused me at the exact time needed for our purpose.

ROUGH SEAS AND WILD COUNTRY

Trolling lines were over the side soon as we were well out at sea [on a return voyage to Hypoluxo from Key West in February 1893], and it was not long before we had four or five kingfish trailing over the stern to keep them fresh.

All of a sudden Harry [Chestnut, a visitor from Fredericton, New Brunswick] called out, "Look back there behind us! A big shark, and what a queer looking head he has."

Looking back I saw a good sized hammerhead shark following in our wake. "He smells the blood of the kingfish you are trailing behind us," I told them, "Get out the shark line and bait it with half a king and you will catch him."

The shark hook was baited as directed and the line slowly slackened back to the shark, who took it without mincing matters at all. Then the boys were in for a hard pull for a few minutes.

But an eight foot hammerhead was no match for Harry and Will [Chestnut, Harry’s brother, also from Fredericton, New Brunswick] when they settled down to business of pulling him in. Soon they had the shark close under stern. Then, after they emptied a .32 Smith and Wesson into his head, he gave up and was hauled upon the weather deck.

We went into New River and sailed up to the Station landing, where we anchored and ate an early supper, after which Will and I went to the Station and spent the night with Denny O’Neill[1]. Harry remained on board to keep ship.

When we returned to the boat next morning Harry had a story to tell us. [He] said he baited the shark hook and had thrown it out before going to bed. He was awakened sometime during the night by the Oriole going around and around like a button on a door. Something big had hold of his shark line, but by the time he got out of the cockpit to take a hand in the business, the thing, whatever it was, had broken loose and was gone. We told Harry he had been dreaming, had a nightmare caused by the excitement of catching a shark in the Gulf Stream. But he insisted he had been wide awake and his story was true.

Wind and sea was too rough for outside sailing that day, so we remained at anchor. After dinner we went again to the Station for another visit with the Keeper Dennis O’Neill[1]. We were all sitting on the west porch, talking, when a stranger came walking in from up the beach. He introduced himself as John Coman. I at once asked him if he was any relation to Charlie Coman, a former keeper of this Station. He said yes, Charlie was his brother and was the cause of his tramp down the beach to the Fort Lauderdale Station.

Charlie Coman had come to Florida to spend a two weeks vacation in January. I had met and talked with him at Fort Pierce, when he was buying his camping outfit for a cruise up the Saint Lucie River. Mr. Coman said their last letter from Charlie was dated January 17. Since that time no word came from him, and becoming alarmed for his safety, Mr. John Coman had left Chicago and come to Indian River looking for some tidings of his brother. But beyond the fact that Charlie had been at the store at Fort Pierce on the 17th of January buying supplies and returned on another trip up the Saint Lucie River, no word or trace of him could be found.

Knowing Charlie had been a keeper of the Fort Lauderdale Station a year or so before, he thought it possible he might be there or somewhere nearby, and as there was no other transportation available had walked down the beach from Lake Worth. Charlie, however, had not come to Lauderdale or New River, so Mr. John Coman, on learning that we were on our way to Lake Worth, asked for passage with us, which we readily agreed to give him if he was willing to wait with us for a smooth sea and a fair wind.

The next morning the wind was blowing a gentle breeze from the west and, of course, the sea was smooth. Underway immediately after an early breakfast, we sailed down to the inlet and put to sea. All that day the wind was light and we made rather slow time up the coast. So slow indeed that by four o’clock in the afternoon we were only off Hypoluxo, sixteen miles from Lake Worth inlet, and I did not like the looks of the weather at this time. There was a steady dark brown mass of clouds moving up in the north; that meant a norther was coming down the coast, and if it hit us before we reached Lake Worth inlet we would be compelled to turn and run back down the coast for shelter in some inlet. And this might mean we would have to run all the way back to Biscayne Bay. It would depend on the force of the wind and the sea.

We had caught some kingfish and Will was taking particular pains with one of them. When I asked why he was doing it, he answered, "I am saving this one for Cap Dimick’s breakfast tomorrow morning. I want him to have some nice fish for his breakfast."

"Do you think Cap Dimick will ever see that fish?" I asked.

"Sure, why not?" he answered. "Well," said I, "from the looks of the weather up there to the north I am afraid we will not see Lake Worth for some days yet. I may be wrong and I hope I am, but I don’t like the looks of those clouds away up there to the north."

Will looked in the direction I was pointing and laughed, "Aww, they don’t mean anything. Cap’s sure to have this fish for his breakfast tomorrow morning," said he and kept on fixing the fish.

A few minutes later the wind suddenly changed into the north and commenced to blow a brisk breeze. In only a few minutes it was too much for all sail. I told Harry to take in the jib and lower the mainsail part way, we would have to put in a reef. When the reef was in I hailed on the wind, heading to the northeast. It was my intention to hold on for a spell and, if the wind did not blow any harder or the sea pick up, to keep on beating up the coast. We had the Gulf Stream with us and if the sea remained smooth would be able to make Lake Worth inlet by midnight. But the sea did pick up in a hurry. We had not sailed a quarter of a mile when the ocean was covered with breaking whitecaps, and the wind kept increasing.

Without saying a word to anyone, I reached for the mainsheet and eased it off, at the same time jammed the tiller hard up. The Oriole fell off until she headed south down the coast, and we were now running for harbor, going back the way we had just come.

When Will saw the change in the boat’s course he never uttered a sound. He looked to the north with a longing gaze, then at the bow of the boat; then he muttered a word I had never heard him use before. "D-n," he growled, and made a dive for his bunk in the cabin and there remained without speaking until we were safe at anchor inside the Hillsborough inlet at eight o’clock that night.

Harry came back aft, after Will had made his dive for his bunk, and asked me where I expected to fetch up. I told him I hoped to make Hillsborough inlet before the turn of the tide. If we did not reach there until the tide was running out we would have to keep on down the coast for New River or the Bay.

Hillsborough was now 21 miles away, and we had three hours in which to make it before the turn of the tide. That meant we would have [to] keep up a speed of seven miles an hour. We would make it all right if the wind held, and there was not much danger of it going down. It was more apt to increase but that would not cause us any trouble if the sea did not get too high; if that happened we might have to run all the way back to Biscayne Bay.

For the next two hours the wind and sea did not pick up and I now had high hopes of getting into Hillsborough before the turn of the tide. But it was some job keeping the boat on her course after dark. I did not have a compass of...
any sort, and there were no stars to be seen. The sky was overcast with dense black clouds, and it was now spitting rain. The only thing there was to assist my steering was the dim outline of the shore right abeam. Sometimes the shore appeared to get almost in front of us and again it would show up off the starboard quarter, which meant I was steering wildly, but it could not be helped when there was nothing to steer by.

Later on I sailed in quite close to the beach and made a better job of keeping her on our course to the south. When we passed Boca Raton rocks I could just make them out in the darkness of the stormy night. Now only six miles from Hillsborough, I looked at my watch and saw that we had a little better than an hour in which to make. The wind was still blowing a good breeze and the sea was not quite as rough as it had been. I now told Harry we were going to make Hillsborough all right, and we did. At exactly eight o'clock we sailed into Hillsborough inlet. The tide was just on the turn as we came to anchor inside under the lee of the north shore.

When the anchor was down and the sails furled Will came crawling out from his bunk and started supper. We had fried kingfish and of course we had potatoes.

This was the first and only time that I ever saw Will Chestnut in what Harry called a "funk." It was bitter disappointment to him when we had to turn back; it was to all of us but it could not be helped under existing circumstances.

Here we were, after sailing all day and part of the night, only nine miles up the coast from our starting place that morning when we sailed so gaily out to sea with high hopes of arriving at Palm Beach that night. This was the first time in all of my coastwise sailing that I had to run back down the coast; yet I felt a great deal of satisfaction when I thought of how well I sailed the Oriole through the inlet without once touching bottom in one of the blackest nights. Only a thorough knowledge of the place enabled me to do this, and it was not the first time I had sailed through this inlet on a night so dark one could hardly see the entrance into the river.

We all enjoyed our supper, eating fish that had been intended for Cap Dimick's breakfast in Palm Beach. My bunk felt extremely good to me that night for I was very tired. With the exception of half an hour that Harry was at the tiller while I ate lunch, I had been sailing the boat about thirteen hours. And the last four hours were the hardest of all, running down the coast before a norther and the night so dark we could not see where we were going.

Next morning came in clear and cool with a fresh northeast wind blowing and in consequence too much sea for the Oriole. While Will was cooking breakfast, Harry and I pulled up anchor and poled the Oriole over to and behind the inside south point of the inlet. Here the bank was steep and deep water right up to the shore where we lay alongside the bank and used a plank for a gangplank, thus enabling us to go on shore at any time without using a canoe.

The following morning while Will was cooking breakfast, I stepped on shore and was walking along the south side of the inlet, when all at once to my astonishment there appeared on the north bank of the inlet, coming out of the bushes of the beach hammock, two bird dogs, thoroughbred pointers I thought, and where did they come from? At first I was so surprised I just stood and stared at them, then I called to them. They looked at me for a minute or so, then trotted up along the shore and disappeared behind the bank of beach

Camp scene at Narrows Cut, December 28, 1881, sketched by George W. Potter (illustration courtesy of Marjorie P. Stewart).
sand on the north point. As the dogs disappeared over the bank, Will called all hands to breakfast. I hurried back all hands, my mind full of wonder and considerable excitement about the dogs and how they got there. Bird dogs were very uncommon on the lower east coast at that time. The first bird dog brought to Lake Worth was one imported by Captain Ed Brelsford [an early Palm Beach area settler], and was the only one I had ever seen in all Dade county, and that dog had died some years before. Besides, how did these dogs get to Hillsborough Inlet? There were only two ways for them to arrive there, that was certain, down the ocean beach or by boat on the sea; yet we had seen no signs of man or boat since we had arrived at this inlet.

When I explained all this to the boys while at breakfast they did not appear to see anything strange in the incident, but that was because they did not understand the situation as well as I.

We had just about finished our breakfast when a rifle shot rang out suddenly and startled us from our meal. It was fired from the hammock on the north side of the inlet, and we distinctly heard the whine of the bullet as it passed close to and a little above our heads to the eastward of the boat. Harry jumped to his feet and yelled at the top of his voice, "Look out where you are shooting! There are people over here."

It was a quiet morning, the wind had not yet commenced to blow hard, and there was no question but the man that fired the shot heard what he said, but there was no response to his hail. All was silent in the hammock from whence it came.

Hurriedly finishing my breakfast, I got out my 45-60 Winchester. Looking to see if the magazine was full, I then got into one of the canoes and picked up the paddle to shove off when Harry said, "Where are you going, Cap?"

"I am going over there to see if I can find the fellow that fired that shot," was my answer, "and trail those dogs if I can."

Landing on the north shore, I at once found the tracks of the dogs and followed them out on the beach. They went up the beach for a short distance, then turned up into the hammock; here I lost the trail on account of many dead leaves and hard ground. Then [I] beat back and forth from beach to river and river to beach throughout the entire length of the hammock without finding a trace of man or dogs.

On arriving at the north end of the hammock I came out on the top of the ridge. From here on the growth was low saw palmetto; a man could not hide in it without sitting down or crawling on his hands and knees. There was nothing to indicate a man or dogs were anywhere about. From here to Boca Raton, a distance of six miles, the entire beach was in plain view and there was nothing in sight that was alive in that direction. I walked some distance up the beach looking for tracks, thinking they might have come out on the beach and again returned to the jungle of the beach ridge, but there was nothing to be found.

After a few minutes of sharp inspection of the ridge from beach to river I gave up the search and started back to the boat. I watched the beach very carefully on my return, looking for tracks of man or dogs, but, beyond the tracks that I had followed into the hammock there was nothing. "They must have left by boat going up the river," I thought, "and in such case the boat will be some place upriver; I shall find out if such is the case."

Returning to the Oriole with the report of my failure to find anything at all of man or dogs, I asked Harry if he would waddle me upriver in search of the supposed boat that I now thought must be there; at the same time telling him if man and dog were in a boat we would be sure to find it. "For," said I, "at this time of year there is no possible way for a boat to leave or enter this river except by way of the inlet from or to the ocean."

As Harry brought the canoe alongside, he suggested that I take his shotgun. "I might have a chance to kill some birds that are good to eat and at the same time give us a change from a fish diet," he said.

We went up to the end of navigation on the main river and into many of the small side streams; there was not a boat or sign of where one had been. No man, no dogs and nothing to indicate they had ever been there. It was an inexplicable incident, a mystery that has never been solved.

On my return to Hypoluxo, which was my home, I made it my business to see Steve Andrews, the keeper of the Orange Grove House of Refuge, which was that same the only house or habitation of any kind between Hypoluxo on the north and Fort Lauderdale House of Refuge on the south. Mr. Andrews said in answer to my questions, "No one has passed here going down the beach except Mr. Coman for nearly two weeks, and no one with dogs or without had passed going north in the same time."

So that was that, but did not explain the mystery in any degree. Some might say it might have been an Indian, but that was out of the question. Besides, Indians do not have bird dogs. And again an Indian would have come in a canoe on the beach, and would have showed himself when Harry hailed after the shot. No, it was not an Indian; of that I am certain. It must have been a white man that was either crazy or in hiding from his fellow men, as it was evident he effectually evaded me while I was searching the hammock, and I have no doubt that he saw me at the time.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived on board of the Oriole and hungry enough to eat fish without potatoes. As Will set out the food for our lunch he said, "You did not bring back much game after using up a whole box of shells. I'll bet Cap missed every other shot."

"No sir! Cap never missed a shot, but some of the things he killed we did not bring back as we did not think you would care to cook them. A six foot alligator was one that we left where it was killed, and some [of] the birds fell back in the swamp where we did not care to go after them," Harry answered.

That night Mr. Coman said he thought he had better start up the beach in the morning if the weather was just such that we could not go outside. [He] said his business in Chicago needed his attention and he had wasted so much time he felt he must be getting back. A little later I told Will what Mr. Coman had said about leaving. As we were turning in for the night Will said to Mr. Coman, "Well, Mr. Coman, I hear you are going to 'Pound the porshay' (portage) in the morning."

Mr. Coman looked at Will, then turning to me said, "What in the world does he mean?" I had to laugh as I answered his question. "He means that you are going to walk up the beach tomorrow. Pound the porshay is a Canadian woods term for tramping from one place to another."

"Well," said Will, after I had made my explanation, "I think that you had better wait another day. That's a long walk and if anything should happen to your feet, or you should sprain your ankle, you would sure be in the Mulligatony."

Again Mr. Coman turned to me saying, "There he goes again! It's as if these fellows get the best of me with their woods jargon. What does he mean this time?"

"He means that if you should hurt your feet so that you could not walk you would be in the soup, or in other words in a bad fix."

But Mr. Coman decided he had better take the risk rather than stay on here on such an uncertainty as a change of the weather.

The next morning came in fine, calm and clear. A light wind was blowing from the southwest and the sea was very smooth. I told Mr. Coman that he could give up his long tramp up the beach. We would sail for Lake Worth as soon as the tide was up enough to float us over the outer bar of the inlet; that would not be
until around midday as the tide was now on the first half of the ebb.

Canoes were hauled on board and lashed down and everything was stowed away in its place below. Then the rigging was gone over to see that all was tight and in shipshape for our last long run at sea. At least we hoped it would be our last for this trip. Then we waited for the tide to turn, and while waiting ate an early lunch.

Before lunch time the wind had shifted to south southeast and was blowing a stiff breeze, but the sea did not pick up much although it now looked as if we were in for some rough water before reaching Lake Worth inlet.

About half an hour after lunch the tide had swelled and started running in. We put a single reef in the mainsail and started out. The wind was dead ahead, but as the tide had just started running in, it did not interfere with our progress to any extent. We were soon on the ocean deep and easing sheet for a run before the freshening wind. We ran northeast until about two miles off shore then kept away on our course due north.

Reprinted by permission of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County

A map of settlements in Dade County, which then stretched from St. Lucie Inlet to the upper Keys, appeared on every issue of the "Miami Metropolis" in the late 1890s and early 1900s.