"Skipper" John Harvey Grant was born in London, England, in 1862. His father was a Scot and his mother a native of Chester, England. The eldest of eight children, he grew up in the United Kingdom, living in England, Scotland and Ireland. He attended Albert College in Dublin, Ireland, and learned seamanship during holidays on a sailing vessel owned by the father of one of his classmates.

The family immigrated to America when John was nineteen years old, by sailing vessel, landing first in Boston. Seeking a better climate, they came to Jacksonville, Florida, where they settled. John took to the sea. Upon reaching his majority, he became a naturalized American citizen.

One holiday, he and two other young chaps decided to adventure on their own down the East Coast of Florida in a small sailboat. They might even make it on to California, they dreamed. There is gold there!

On reaching Jupiter, they struck camp on the north side of the river near the inlet. The story goes that every evening the boys brought out their musical instruments and had a private concert. "Grandma Carlin," a great homemaker who was not yet "Grandma," lived on the South side of Jupiter River with her large brood. She heard the boys and one evening sent over to them a pot of baked beans and a loaf of homemade bread. That did it! John settled for life on the Southeast Coast of Florida.

He joined the life saving crew, bought land in Jupiter and started homesteading at Sugden (now Hobe Sound). In 1892, he was a County Commissioner from his district of old "giant" Dade County, and at one time, when Juno was County seat of Dade County, he was the County Treasurer.

In 1896, he married Ola Kyle, a stepdaughter of Fred Cabot, a contractor who built roads, railroad right-of-ways and canals.
Following the accidental death of his wife's stepfather eleven days after his marriage, John helped his mother-in-law complete the East Coast Canal contract which Mr. Cabot had held within the district.

In 1898, the family moved to Jupiter Island where John had purchased a home. The property ran from Ocean to Sound as all the old places once did. No telephones nor near neighbors.

Travel was by boat. Trading was done in Jupiter, six miles away, or by mail order. Sailboats and rowboats were used. Hobe Sound had one of the earliest Yacht Clubs on the East Coast of Florida and John was very interested in that and took his turn at being Commodore. Later, the motor launches replaced the picturesque, but slow sailboats.

In 1901, the family moved over to the mainland for better living quarters and water supply.

In those days, specialists were rare. People built their own houses and boats. John tried his hand at both. He classified himself on the voting register as "pineapple grower," but had many occupations. He had yearly sharecroppers on his land; ran a small fish and oyster house; engaged in contracting, supplying road materials and wood for the woodburning railroad. He owned a grocery store, built a few boats, sold real estate, ran survey lines and became local superintendent for the Indian River Association, an English Company with headquarters in Jacksonville which owned large acreage in the vicinity and all over Florida.

This company developed Hobe Sound and Jupiter Island. It was one of the earliest developments on the East Coast of Florida with golf course, hotels, roads, electric power plant and water.

"Chief" or "Big Kid," as John was called by the crewmen working at various points over the large territory, found that the arrival of the auto was a real help to him. He could now drive the car through the flatwoods, along hard stretches of land and over the narrow rough roads, thus, saving much time and physical strength. Autos changed greatly the manner of living.

John served as a school trustee and a county commissioner of newly created (1909) Palm Beach County, in which Hobe Sound was now located. He belonged to Rotary which met each week in West Palm Beach and trips to Stuart and West Palm Beach were now frequent. He was also able to attend Masonic meetings and even joined West Palm Beach Elks.

During World War I, Skipper organized a Home Guard unit. Young men from Jupiter to Stuart belonged. All of these boys finally joined the armed forces leaving their Capt. at home to "Keep the home fires burning." In 1934, Skipper was selected as an Honorary Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for his outstanding service to Nation.

In the 20's, his health began to fail. He developed a heart condition and moved to Fort Lauderdale to be near Dr. Leavitt of Pompano. After a prolonged rest, he rented the boat yard from Bird King — the one on the South side of New River across from the end of Brickell Avenue (now S.W. 1st Avenue). This he operated for a number of years, then bought land and built a yard further up the river. He also bought a home at 619 E. Broward Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, where the family lived.

Skipper organized a Sea Scout Ship "Companion," and enjoyed the association greatly. He was a Rotarian and a very active member of the Episcopal Church.

When the harbor was started, it was a dream come true for him. A seaport for Broward County was to be a reality. He was on the first Pilot Commission, was the first licensed pilot and finally became the first Harbor Master at Port Everglades. He loved the sea and ships. He continued as Harbor Master until his last illness.

He "slipped his cable;" as he would have expressed it, January 18, 1936.

Skipper was a short stockily built man with a ruddy complexion. His hair started graying in his early twenties. He always wore a short mustache and had a clean scrubbed look about him.

In his youth, he was very strong and agile. Boxing was one of his favorite sports. He was well educated, read a lot, could quote poetry or the Bible at the drop of a hat and they say he had one of the most lurid swearing vocabularies to be found on the Eastern Seaboard. But this was never used before ladies . . . one didn't in the old days.

He was a man of great vitality with a hearty manner and sometimes a startling gruffness. He adhered to a code of old fashioned courtesy, was always ready for a bit of fun, enjoyed games and a good joke. He had a somewhat short temper and was impatient to some degree. He was an openhanded, warmhearted person who befriended many. His collection of entertaining stories and anecdotes was vast. His was a colorful personality.

At his death, he left his wife, three daughters, one sister and two grandchildren besides many beloved friends. He had served his adopted country, which he loved, well and long, and as a result, the "Gold Coast" of Florida is a better place for all of us.

OLA MAY OLDHAM, L.I., F.S.U. (then F.S.C.W.), Broward County's only woman Circuit Court Clerk (retired), is a native of Jupiter, Florida, and a long-time resident of Fort Lauderdale (1922), where she had visited frequently beginning in 1912. Having graduated from Palm Beach County Public Schools, she returned with her Teacher's Certificate to teach for several years in the public schools and; for a brief period, operated a private kindergarten in that County. She served as a Deputy Clerk under every Circuit Clerk in Broward's history, except Ted Cabot, her first cousin; she declined to serve because of personal feelings concerning nepotism in government.
“Skipper” Grant, arm akimbo — a typical stance aboard Sea Scout Ship “Companion.”

Courtesy Ola May Oldham