

BREVARD COUNTY
A History to 1955

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nication, supplies, and northbound produce that funneled through Titusville.

After 1855, the county gradually lost the bulk of its less populated western and southern territories that once included today's St. Lucie, Okeechobee, Martin, Indian River, parts of Highlands, Palm Beach and Polk Counties. But these were given up without much concern. Separated by prairies, marshes and rivers, the last western Brevardians struggled to organize Osceola County in 1887. The split narrowed the county and it has since been limited to the Indian River, the original heart of old Brevard County.

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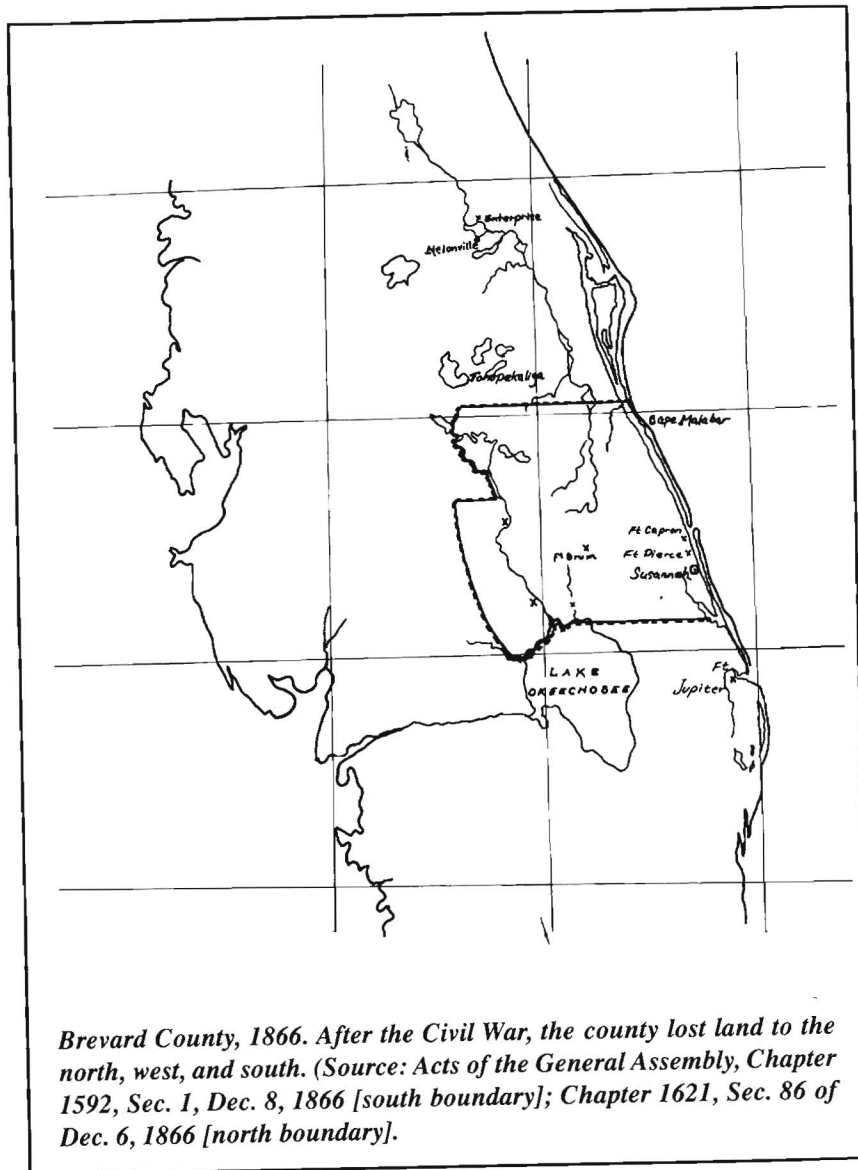
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A WILDERNESS INVADED (1865-1879)

As Breckinridge and other Confederate leaders were either fleeing through Florida or facing Federal prisons, Union soldiers entered the state and established military rule. Although Florida was not the scene of many major battles (the battle of Olustee in 1864 was the only major engagement of the war), the state was neglected and bankrupt.¹ A major concern of the Federal government was the general condition and safety of nearly four million former slaves throughout the south.² These newly enfranchised U.S. citizens began to receive aid and education under the Freed men's Bureau, a newly created Federal agency.

General Oliver O. Howard, who favored the idea of relocating freedmen to homesteads in Florida, Mississippi and Arkansas, was chosen to head this new organization. Colonel George F. Thompson was appointed inspector for the Bureau's south Florida branch on December 3, 1865. Although some historians have portrayed Thompson as being primarily concerned with establishing a Negro Colony in Florida, he toured the peninsula to determine the needs of the Negroes, the attitude of the Southerners toward the new Union, and the potential for northern investments, especially agricultural opportunities.³

When Thompson arrived in Florida he was introduced to William Henry Gleason, who had been appointed as a "special agent" of the Bureau by Assistant Commissioner T.W. Osborne. Gleason accompanied Thompson during the next several months and was later praised by him for his superior intelligence and devotion to the work of the Bureau.



Brevard County, 1866. After the Civil War, the county lost land to the north, west, and south. (Source: Acts of the General Assembly, Chapter 1592, Sec. 1, Dec. 8, 1866 [south boundary]; Chapter 1621, Sec. 86 of Dec. 6, 1866 [north boundary].)

In his journal, Thompson provided some insight into conditions in south Florida, including Brevard County, during late 1865 and early 1866. The two men began their tour at Tampa in mid-December. In the country below Tampa Bay, they met cattle herders employed by Jacob Summerlin, one of the most successful

cattlemen in Florida. Thompson estimated that in the region near the Kissimmee River, which was then Brevard County, there were “150,000 cattle worth perhaps \$900,000.”⁴ Next, the pair sailed to Cape Sable and noted the lemon and orange groves, perhaps offsprings of the Dummett grove, they passed. The men lingered in southern Dade County for almost three weeks.

Continuing north along the east coast, they sailed past Dummett’s place to see the famous grove. Dummett may not have been too impressed with Thompson’s subsequent report. He wrote that “the grove upon the East Coast...reported to be the most flourishing and valuable in the state...is owned by an old man by the name of Dummett, who, in addition to the raising of oranges has tested the experiment of miscegenation, the results of which may be seen running about his place, with complexions of a color midway between charcoal and chalk.”⁵

William Gleason liked what he saw in south Florida and returned with his family in July of 1866. The thirty-seven year old Gleason was a former legislator in Wisconsin and continued to hold political ambitions after his arrival in Dade County. Not long after he unloaded his schooner in July, northern Dade County was expanded from its old northern line near Hillsboro Inlet to present-day Stuart. The change transferred about 70 miles of Brevard County coast to the jurisdiction of Dade County.⁶

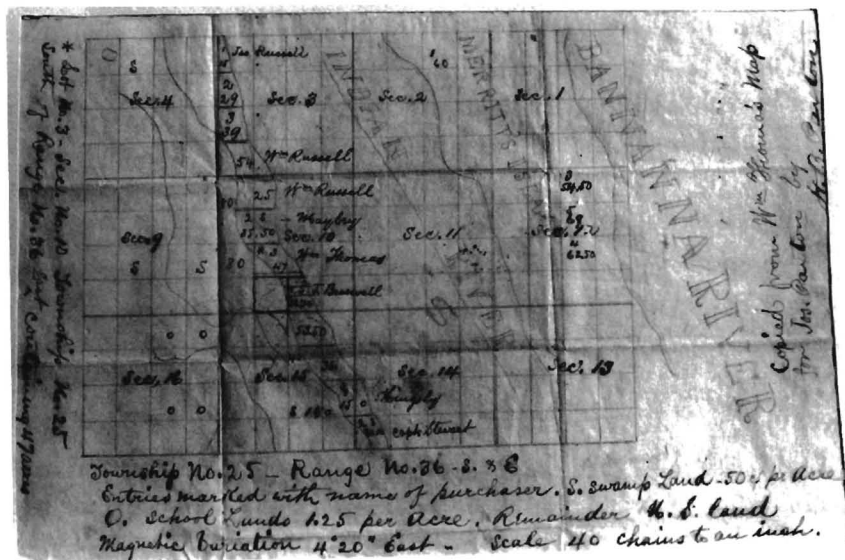
About the same time that Gleason was settling along the shores of Key Biscayne, others were beginning to settle the shores of the Indian River. The Homestead Act of 1862 replaced the old Armed Occupation Act and gave settlers 160 acres if they could prove occupancy for five years. Following the Civil War, many came seeking the peace of the lagoon, as well as the agricultural and fishing opportunities on the shores of what was then Volusia and Brevard County.

In 1867, a battle-weary soldier of fortune sailed along the northern lagoon seeking a secure spot to retire. Originally from New Jersey, Henry Theodore Titus had had every opportunity to

become a professional soldier. His father, Theodore Titus, had secured him a place in the United States Military Academy at West Point, but could not keep him there.

Young Henry sought more immediate adventures in the expanding western territories, where he grew to be a man of commanding stature. In the words of his daughter, Minnie Titus Ensey, he was "very handsome, with dark brown eyes and hair, standing well over six feet in height and weighing 250 pounds." Titus worked for a short time as a Texas cowhand and then prospected for silver in Arizona. Titus County, Texas was named after a relative that he may have visited during his western adventures. In 1852, he married Mary Evelina Hopkins, the daughter of a successful Georgia businessman, but marriage did nothing to hinder his venturesome spirit.

In 1856 he became involved in a bloody crusade in Kansas. Although Titus owned no slaves, he became a major opponent of

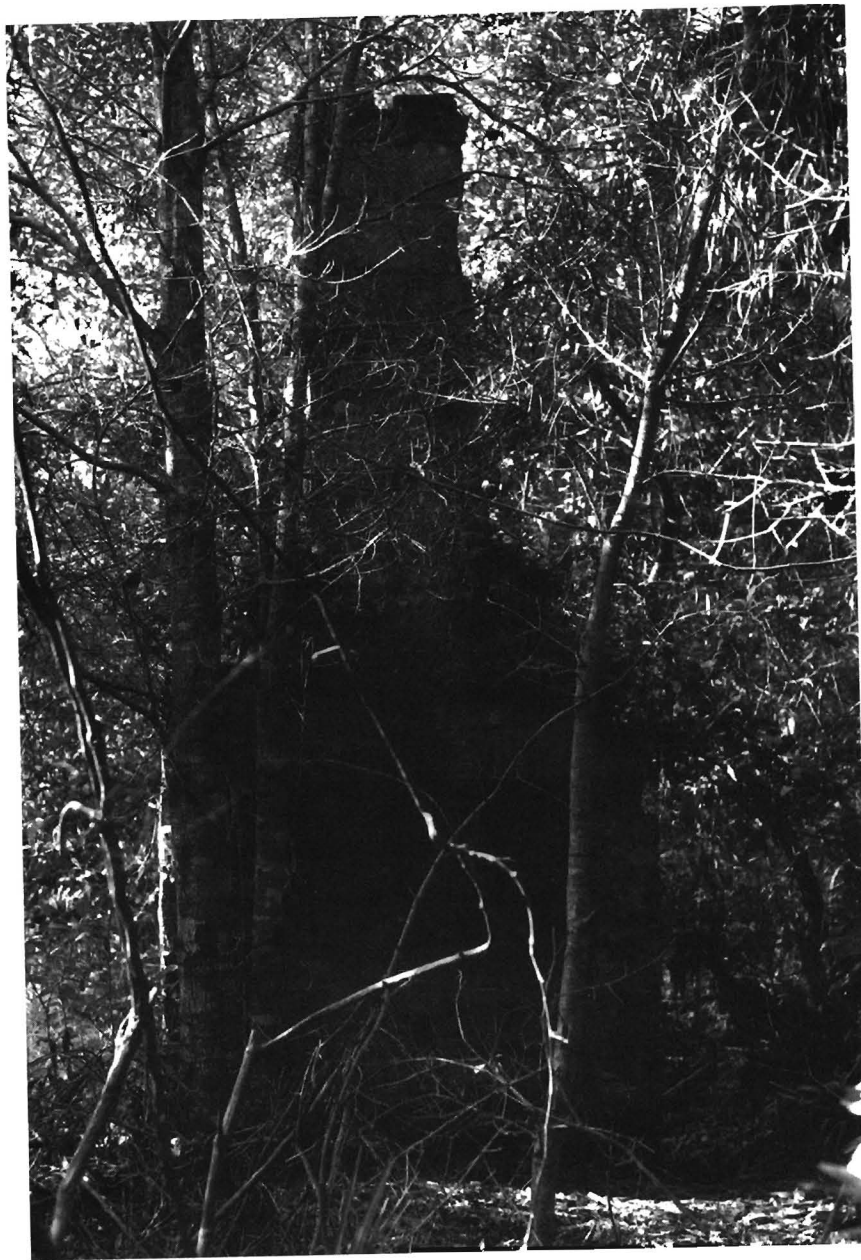


the noted abolitionist, John Brown of Harper's Ferry fame, and led a small group of proslavery men in raids against Brown's camp. When abolitionists attacked and burned his small log house, known as Fort Titus, he was seriously wounded, taken prisoner by Federal troops, and put in the custody of Captain Samuel Walker in Lawrence. While awaiting trial, a bloodthirsty lynch mob led by Brown clamored around the jail cell, demanding that Titus be turned over to them.⁷ It was no comfort to Titus that only Walker stood between him and Brown's mob, since Titus had previously offered a \$500 reward for his death. Walker, however, remained level-headed and negotiated an exchange—Titus and his men for a group of imprisoned abolitionists. Titus expressed his "thanks" in a letter to the *Missouri Republican*, dated October 9, 1856:

It is true that a robber, incendiary, and horse thief, who is called Captain Walker, was in command of his fellow thieves at the cowardly and disgraceful assault upon my house. It is true that he and his party robbed me of money, to the amount of \$12,000, burned my house...[and] although I told them that they shot me in three places, sacked my house, and [I] asked him not to burn it...He replied, "God d__n you, and God d__n your house" ..and when it was in flames, he took me, dripping with blood from my own wounds, pitched me into an uncovered wagon, and dragged me through the blazing sun to their great den of thieves Lawrence."

Upon reading this letter, Captain Walker quickly wrote a response and had it printed in the *Missouri Democrat* on October 25, 1856:

"...When Col. Titus's house was attacked, it was with the full determination of taking his life information having been first received that Mrs. Titus had gone to the States. After some firing, in which both parties suffered, Col. Titus's party surrendered. Col. Titus was found concealed in a closet; he was brought out, and seeing me, he appealed to me for pro-



Chimney from Dummett Homestead. An impressive, well-built chimney is all that remains of the home of Douglas Dummett, founder of the Indian River citrus industry.

tection. Although he had less right to appeal to me for protection — as he had offered \$500 for my head prior to this — than any other man in the crowd, still he did so. I could not see any man, wounded and bloody as he was, appeal to me under such circumstances without aiding him, if I could. I took Col. Titus under my charge at an imminent risk to myself...He was tried by a Committee appointed for the purpose, and after a careful investigation into his previous conduct, he was sentenced to die, and he knows that it was through my earnest efforts in his favor that his life was spared...So much for the relations between Col. Titus and myself...”

After a brief recovery, Titus moved on to other adventures. Later in 1856, he became involved in the bizarre conquest of Nicaragua by William Walker, a Tennessean, who became the dictator of that country in 1856. No thanks were due Titus. The “border ruffian,” as he was now called, was assigned the task of taking an important castillo. Titus commanded a superior force and soon had the enemy surrounded. When he demanded the castillo’s surrender, the enemy commander replied that he could not do so without the permission of his commanding officer, who was at a nearby fort. Titus who still carried the lead from his Kansas wounds was not eager to charge the fortress. He agreed to a twenty-four-hour truce. It was a critical mistake. Titus “earned the right to be remembered historically as a military imbecile,” because the Nicaraguans reinforced the fort with men and arms during the truce. Titus was left with retreat as his only viable option.⁸

Titus, now famous as Colonel Titus, remained in Latin America until shortly before his employer, William Walker, was executed in 1860. He returned to Jacksonville and became active in the family business during the Civil War. His father-in-law, Edward Hopkins, was a brigadier general and Colonel Titus spent his time serving the Confederate cause by supplying the south with provisions from the family business, the Florida Provisions Company.

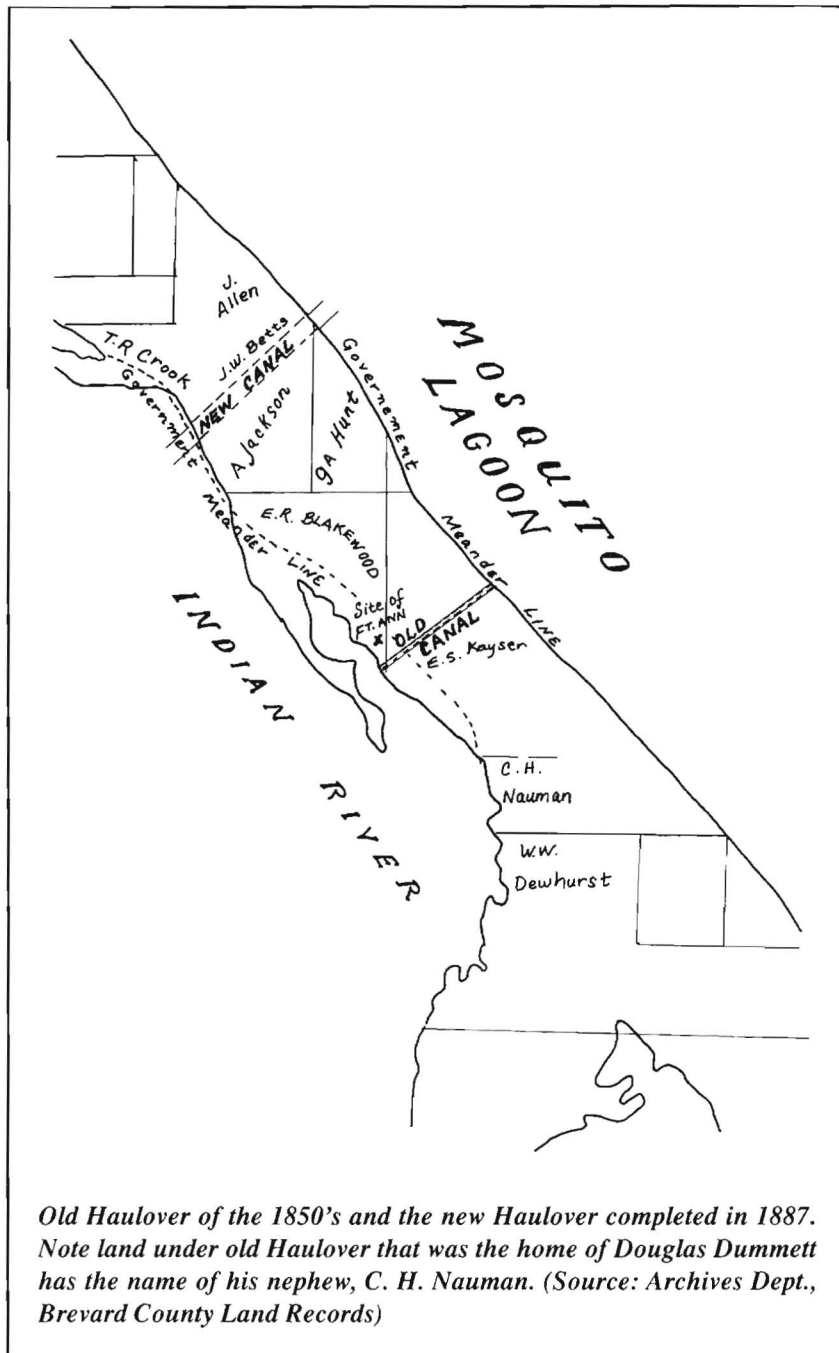


Old Haulover Canal. This trench was once a link in an intracoastal waterway that admitted many of the early settlers.

After the war, a friend told Titus about the ample opportunities in fish, oyster, and green turtle canning around the Indian River Inlet. Titus formed the Indian River Preserving Company, loaded a paddle steamer with his wife, four children, and all the equipment necessary to begin a canning business on the Indian River, and set out to conquer this new frontier. In November 1867, the 300 ton steamer, overloaded with family and equipment, wrecked on a sandbar at Indian River Inlet. It was a bitter disappointment, but Titus was familiar with bad luck. Securing a small sailboat, the family sailed north through the Haulover Canal and returned to Jacksonville. In June 1868, after Edward Hopkins learned of his daughter's distress, Mary Titus received a deed from the Florida Provisions Company for seventy-five acres near present-day Titusville—just the spot Titus dreamed of for a trading post and resort.

Not much has been said about the women that stood behind men like Henry Titus. Mary Evelina (Hopkins) Titus raised eight children and supported her husband's every endeavor. She was accustomed to the amenities of Jacksonville, but did not hesitate to help finance and sustain her husband's desire to build a showplace at Sand Point. Many years later her youngest son, Pierre Titus, visited his hometown during the boom of the 1920's. He reminisced about the old days, adding the curious comment that the town had been named for his mother.⁹

When Titus returned to the Indian River in 1868, the area was still in Volusia County. At the time, Brevard county's northern boundary was parallel to Melbourne's Hibiscus Boulevard. (The boundary was moved north three times before reaching the current location in 1879.) Determined to live down his reputation for military fiascoes, Henry Titus became a dedicated civic leader. He took an interest in beautification, planting live oaks along the sandy streets. During his first decade at Sand Point, Titus built the Titus House, a well-known gathering place and hotel, stocked with the best liquors, supplies and furnishings that family connections could provide. In addition, he managed a hack line that offered trans-

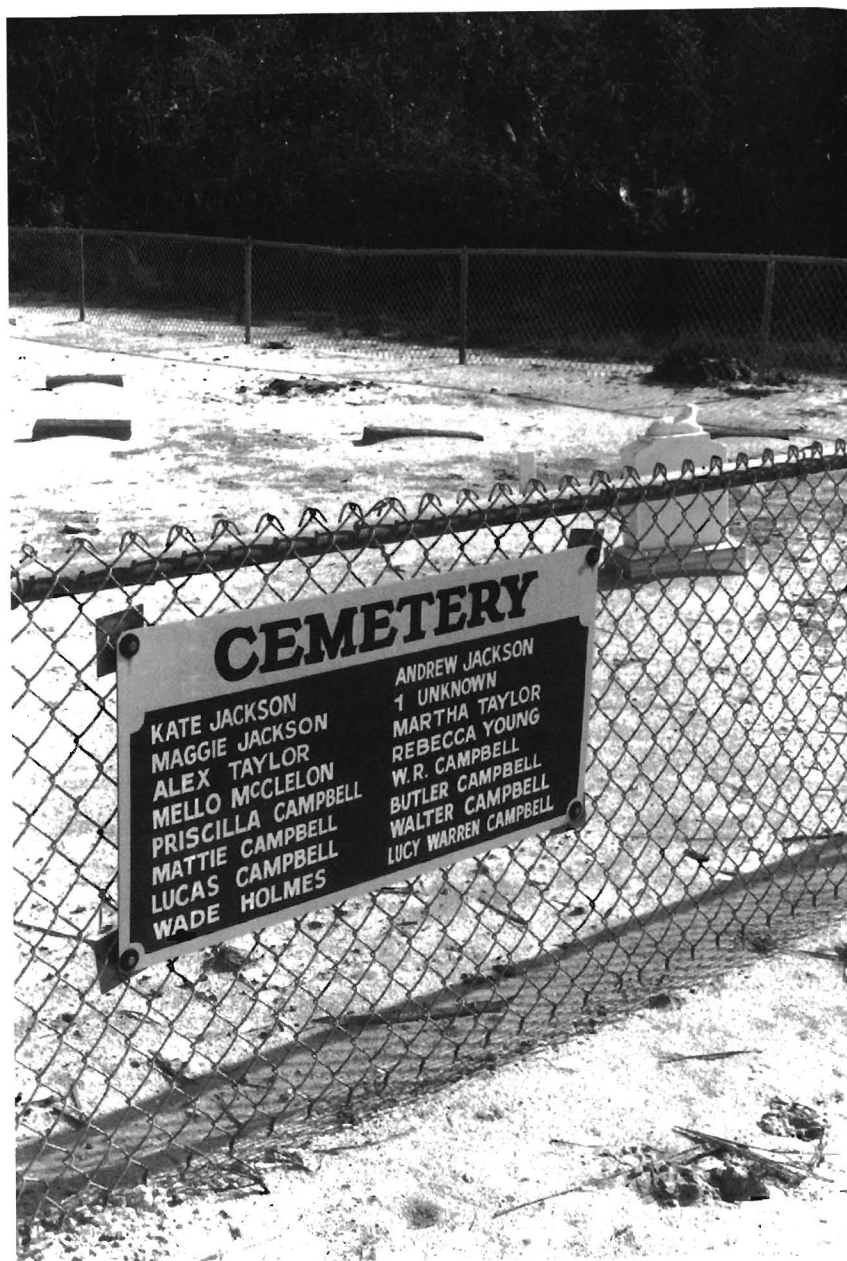


portation service from Salt Lake to the Indian River. This was a wooden-rail tram pulled by mules and which brought travelers to his new hotel, which fast became the social hub of the Indian River and the adjacent two-county area. Titusville was also linked to Enterprise by a hack route that passed through a small rest stop at Maytown.

Wealthy sportsmen soon discovered Indian River and advertised its assets. The following description from Daniel Brinton's 1869 publication, *A Guidebook to Florida*, touts the area:

"Persons wishing to visit Indian River for camp hunting, should hire an open boat, guide, and tent, (if the latter is deemed necessary), at Jacksonville, and bring them to Enterprise on the steamer. From that point they can row to Lake Harney in two days, where the boat and tent can be carried across to Sand Point, on Indian river, on an ox team. Col. H. F. Titus has a store and dwelling at Sand Point, and accommodates tourists either with his team or his table....A hack sometimes runs to Lake Harney during the winter season (fare \$4.00), which delivers the mail at the Point. Indian River is properly a lagoon, or arm of the sea...At places a ridge approaches to the water's edge and offers first-class camping grounds."

Titus acted as the town's postmaster and, in 1873, notified Sand Point residents that the local post office would forevermore be known as the Titusville Post Office. In her book, *Stories of Early Life Along Beautiful Indian River*, Anna Pearl Newman noted how the name of Titusville was arrived at. According to her, the outcome of a friendly game of dominoes between the town's two leading figures, Titus and Captain Clark Rice, produced the new name. Prior to the game, the players agreed that the winner of the game could rename the town. Modesty had no a role in pioneer society, and Titus proposed Titusville while Captain Clark Rice thought Riceville was the better choice. However, the dogged Colonel disappointed his armchair opponent.¹⁰



Cemetery at Laughing Waters (Allenhurst). Note grave of Kate Jackson, daughter of Douglas Dummett.

By winning the game, Henry Titus was spared the humiliation of having to live with Riceville as his place of residence. It is an amusing story of chance and daring, although it is difficult to imagine why Titus, proud of his family's name and accomplishments in Titusville, N.J., Titusville, PA., and Titus County, Texas, would allow Rice any opportunity to curtail his sense of destiny.

Titus and Rice were not alone in their sense of self importance. A few years later, a prominent saloon owner, J.J. Joyner, paid surveyor Francis LeBaron to prepare a plat, later duly recorded by the clerk, showing eastern Titusville as the Town of Joynerville.

During the twenty-five years prior to the arrival of Henry Flagler's railroad, Titusville grew into the largest and most notable town on the east central coast of Florida. Ideally located between the navigable portion of the St. Johns River and the Indian River, the town was a needed rest stop for river traffic that passed through the Haulover Canal. In short, it provided a common link to the commerce and passenger traffic, whether steam, sail or rail, that steadily flowed into the developing Indian River Country during the late 1800s.

Indian River development was very appealing to a prosperous settler in the south. After William H. Gleason settled his family on the banks of Key Biscayne, he became a man in constant motion. Even before moving to Florida, he had written to the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund to ask for business.¹¹ The former banker planned to build his fortune by ditching and draining the east coast of Florida. He hoped to develop the east coast's inland waterways, and later, cut a cross-Florida steam ship canal. The canal had first been proposed in 1825 by the Territorial Council.

Born in 1829, at the height of the "canal age," Gleason was further inspired by the completion of the Suez Canal in 1868. His frequent visits with officials in Tallahassee brought him into contact with T.W. Osborne of the Freedmen's Bureau and Harrison Reed, a former Wisconsin politician. These men were extremely



Campbell House. Deep in the woods, south of the Allenhurst cemetery, this old house survived the Space Center's demolition crews of the 1960s and 1970s.

political and fostered Gleason's inclination to promote his business interests by securing a political office of his own.

Gleason was a man of compromise. A member of the Constitutional Convention of 1868, he used his considerable abilities to secure the ratification of the new charter, and when Florida regained its status as a state, the articulate newcomer was nominated for the office of Lieutenant Governor.

On the same day that Florida was readmitted to the Union (July 4, 1868), Gleason was elected with the new Governor, Harrison Reed. As Florida's first Lieutenant Governor, Gleason also made friends and gained influence through his additional duties as President of the Senate. His newfound power base was strengthened when his political ally, Thomas Osborne, was elected to the United States Senate the same year.

This period following the Civil War has been described by one prominent historian as "one of the most corrupt periods in our history, with politicians at all levels willing to sell their favors."¹² It was in this frenzy of growth, greed, and opportunity that Gleason and Osborne matched their influence with that of Florida's new governor, Harrison Reed.

Reed became famous for his use of the veto, and soon the first of four bills calling for his impeachment was introduced. The nation had witnessed the attempted impeachment of President Johnson in March, and this political device was fresh on the minds of citizens. Like Johnson, Reed clung to his post. In the interim between passage of the impeachment bill and a Supreme Court review, Lieutenant Governor Gleason supposed himself to be governor.

Reed was not impressed. The young Lieutenant Governor was a lawyer, but had no friends or allies on the Florida Supreme Court. On December 14, 1868, the Court, responding to Reed's suit which argued that Gleason failed to meet residency requirements, removed him from his post.¹³ Reed, who managed to stave off the attempts to impeach him, had also managed to eliminate the key aspirant for his job.

Gleason was no longer Lieutenant Governor, but he was not of public office altogether. The new state government constitution suffered from a lack of clarity, and, in the confusion, Gleason retained his position as the Senate president. Legislative records for June 1869, six months after his removal, indicated that the Senate was "called to order by Honorable W. H. Gleason, President of the Senate."¹⁴

For the next ten years, Gleason remained very visible in state politics and became an expert on the laws governing the Internal Improvement Board, the key to any developer's success. The board, created by the 1850 Internal Improvement Act, granted certain swamp and overflow lands to the states. Florida received 500,000 acres from the Federal Government and, a few years later, received another ten million acres. Although these lands were generally considered worthless, not all of this land was swamp. The Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund worked with private companies to develop and improve the state's resources, and they controlled the allocation of lands conveyed by the Federal government. (The Trustees exist today under the Department of Natural Resources.)¹⁵

One of Gleason's first proposals was to open an intracoastal waterway from Biscayne Bay to the Halifax River, which, in his words, was "an almost uninhabited country." The territorial council had previously authorized a private canal company to open the waterway in 1837, but the project had never materialized.¹⁶ Gleason became familiar with this route during his 1865 survey as an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau. In 1869, speculating on future growth along the proposed waterway, he made an initial purchase in the area of Elbow Creek. He subsequently accumulated a total of 20,000 acres between the Indian River Lagoon and Lake Washington. He named this area of thirty square miles, Eau Gallie. Prior to the Civil War, the Gleason family had developed a portion of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. A small community west of Eau Claire is named Eau Galle, and a variation of this was given to Gleason's Florida holdings.¹⁷

Much of the money to finance these land acquisitions was derived from the Internal Improvement Fund. The Trustees of the Fund were permitted to contract with developers to construct canals or railroads throughout the state, and developers like Gleason were allowed to purchase 640 acres of state land for \$40 in consideration for every 50,000 cubic feet of ditching completed.¹⁸ This amounted to just over six cents per acre and provided an eight hundred percent return on investment if they could resell the land for fifty cents an acre.

Trying to maximize his investment potential, Gleason became interested in one of the first internal improvements the state had proposed. This was the old idea for a canal from Lake Harney to the Indian River. In May 1875, Gleason claimed that the state would be better served if the proposed canal were relocated to Lake Washington. His proposal was to rechannel and deepen Eau Gallie's Elbow Creek to connect with Lake Washington. The state's payment for this work was set at \$4000, plus 4,000 acres for every mile of canal constructed.

It was not a coincidence that prior to this proposal, Gleason offered a 2,320 acre donation of intermittent swamp lands east of Lake Washington to the Trustees of the Florida Agricultural College if they would select Eau Gallie as the school's campus. The site was approved and construction on the initial college buildings was underway in Eau Gallie.¹⁹ Gleason later received \$100 from the state for the two small Eau Gallie lots used as the site for college.²⁰ The State completed a two-story coquina building in 1875, but it was never used for its intended purpose.

In 1877, the Lieutenant Governor lost much of his political power after the collapse of Florida's Republican government. As a result, his plans for the college and the canal project were left not completed. The college reemerged in 1884 in Lake City after Democrats resumed control of the state's political machinery. The erstwhile canal project generated some excitement in Titusville when the town received the machinery from Gleason's Lake Wash-

ington dredge and converted it into the area's first profitable saw-mill.²¹

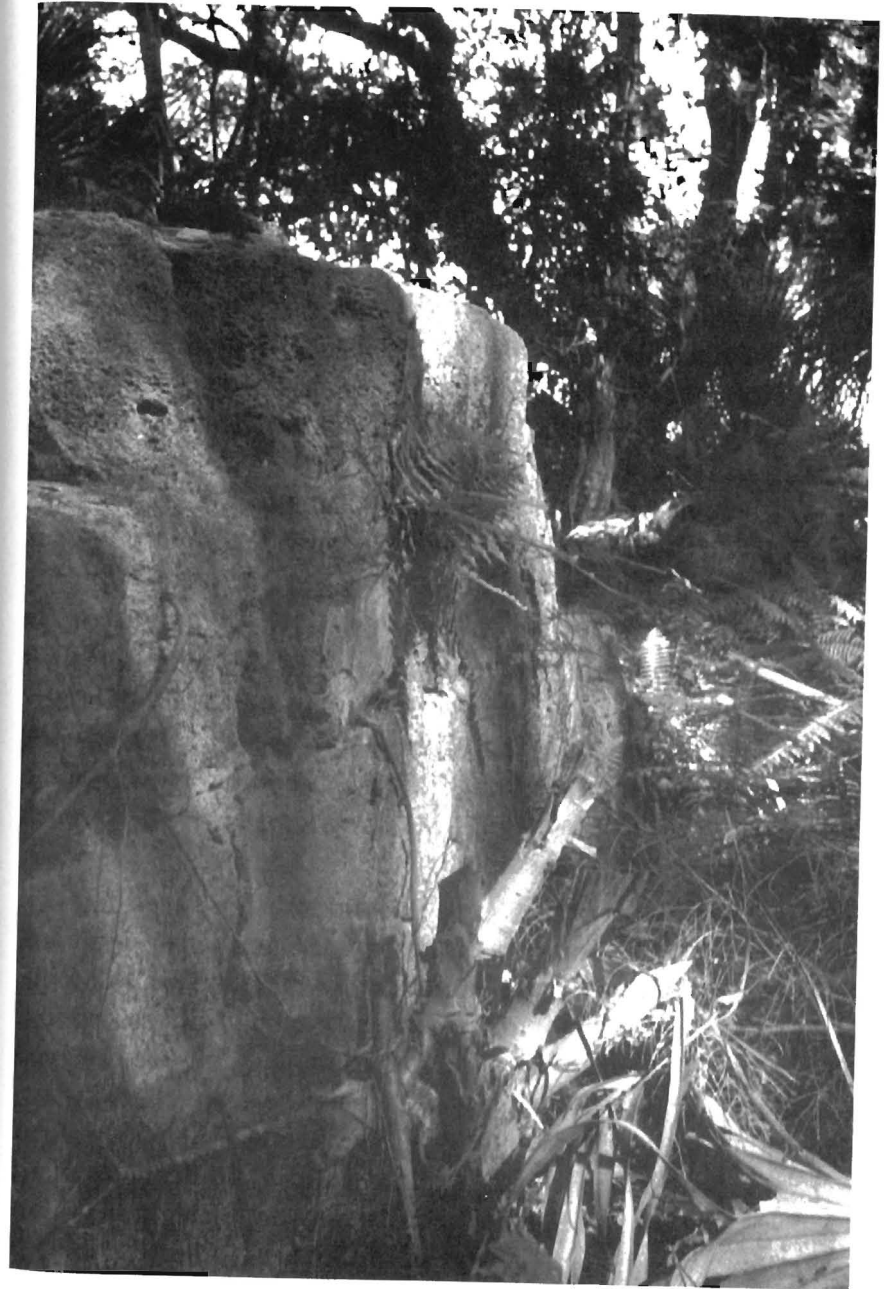
Leaving politics to the Democrats, William Gleason continued to be a vociferous advocate of Brevard County real estate. While still living on Biscayne Bay, he actively advertised and sold lots in Eau Gallie and Brevard in the Gomez Grant, below St. Lucie Inlet.²²

Although Brevard Countians claim that the college campus in Eau Gallie was the beginning of the University of Florida, it was not. The earliest forerunner of the University was the East Florida Seminary in Ocala. Established in 1853, it was nothing more than a small grammar school. During the late 1800s, a number of other state schools were created. One was the Florida State Agricultural College, originally approved for Eau Gallie.

In 1905, the Legislature passed the Buckman Act which abolished these schools and authorized only three state schools—the University of Florida (for men), The Florida Female College (Florida State) and the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College. In 1905, the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College of Lake City became the University of Florida's College of Agriculture and College of Engineering.

The confusion concerning the roots of the University of Florida might be due to a decision by the Florida Agricultural College in Lake City to change its name prior to 1905. In 1902, the college changed its name to the University of Florida, anticipating the legislative change and erroneously predicting that the Lake City campus would become the new home of the University of Florida in 1905.²³

When William Gleason was President of the Senate in the late 1860s, he developed an enthusiasm for the beauty and great potential of the entire Florida peninsula. He traveled incessantly and had many opportunities to see the countryside during frequent trips between his Biscayne Bay home and the capital.



Ruins of the Florida Agricultural College in Eau Gallie. (Courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Poynter)

On one of these trips he met Doctor John Milton Hawks, who also had plans to invest in waterfront real estate. In 1869, the same year that Gleason made his initial Brevard County purchase at Eau Gallie, the two men decided to study the entire east coast from Port Orange to Biscayne Bay. Using a small boat, Hawks followed Mosquito Lagoon south to the old Haulover Canal and passed into the north Indian River Lagoon. They planned to rendezvous at Jupiter Inlet.

In *The East Coast of Florida*, Hawks described this early trip down Florida's east coast. His observations of the early Indian River Country offer a rare view of the first settlers below Henry Titus' Sand Point. Passing the Haulover, his first stop was at Sand Point, where he met "the noted leader of the border war in Kansas, Colonel Titus." At day's end, Hawks was "put up at Gardner Hardee's, who was clearing for oranges in some excellent hammock land."

Gardner Sheppard Hardee had settled in this area he called Rock Ledge, with two brothers, Bobby and Buddy. Robert Augustus Hardee had early plans for the area known as Hardeeville, just south of today's Port St. John but moved to the Sebastian area, then known as Newhaven, in 1889 to become an influential citizen in that community.²⁴

Hawks missed meeting some other important new residents by a few months. On Christmas Day 1870, Nancy Jane Dixon and her large family arrived on the Indian River. Her husband, Robert, was advised to move to Florida because he had consumption. The Dixons passed through the old Haulover Canal and stayed overnight with Andrew Jackson, Douglas Dummett's son-in-law. They soon made friends with Mills Burnham and neighbors John Sanders, Jim Russell, Gardner Hardee, E.W. Hall, the Willard brothers, and others. Nancy Dixon later wrote of her struggle to adjust to the "camping out" way of life. In her words,

"When we reached our house, all felt bad...the house was made of round pine logs, one door, no shutter, no window,

one end sawed out so to permit a boat to be taken in...my daughter wept. We had no transportation here only as Capt. Lund came up to Lake Harney or Salt Lake about every three or six months, so John Dixon boarded the Gipsy Queen, a small schooner belonging to Capt. Hardee and navigated by Sam Trott, a colored man, and went to Jacksonville for supplies. We still had a little provisions yet that I brought for us from Jacksonville by buying one barrel of buds, fish and some vegetables. He was detained on account of high winds when he got to the inlet of the Indian River and he could not get through...a good many things got damaged on account of getting wet..."²⁵

Crossing the lagoon, John Hawks explored Merritt's Island and noted the difficult Banana Creek passage, the island's northern boundary. He estimated that there were fewer a "half dozen" people living on the island. Merritt Island was referred to as Merritt's Island until the 1930s.²⁶

In 1869, Hawks met Frank Smith near old Fort Pierce. Smith was Clerk of the Court and represented Brevard County in the Legislature in addition to operating a store and post office in Fort Pierce.²⁷ His residence near the old Indian River Inlet was a further indication that Susannah was Brevard's early county seat.

Until Titusville became the permanent county seat in 1879, Brevard County had a number of temporary courthouses. The first was at or near old Fort Pierce, landfall of the Indian River Colony in 1842.

Cattlemen arranged to move Brevard's seat to the little settlement of Bassville along the east shore of Lake Tohopekaliga in the early 1860s. During the late fifties, they had become very wealthy, profiting from the Cuban demand for beef. Through out the Civil War some of their main cattle trails passed through north-west Brevard, which included the boggy marsh of Bassville near the present-day city of Kissimmee.²⁸ Starting in north Florida, their cattle drives followed the eastern shore of the St. Johns, crossed

the river near Fort Christmas and skirted Lake Marian, and ended at Punta Rassa on the Gulf coast. Before the Civil War, Needham Bass was operating a ferry service through the marsh between Lake Tohopekaliga and a smaller lake to the east. Bassville became a trading post and the county seat along the major north-south cattle trail that Jacob Summerlin and others followed. Known as the "Cattle King of Florida," Summerlin later established Orlando as the Orange County seat.²⁹

Perhaps it was also these same men who, after Indian River settlers complained about the long trip required to reach the inland courthouse, arranged to have a large portion of northern Brevard County, including Bassville, annexed to Orange County on December 6, 1866.

The Indian River Brevardians were now free to establish their own county seat, but they did not choose to return it to Susannah. Brevard's new northern boundary was moved south to a line paralleling today's Hibiscus Avenue in Melbourne.³⁰ Therefore, the new county seat should have been somewhere below present day Melbourne, but Walter Hellier noted that some voting precincts were well beyond these boundaries. His report does not conflict with county records in the Clerk's Office of Land Records. Surprisingly, only two of Brevard's precincts were within the boundaries of 1871 Brevard (the oldest surviving record)—St. Lucie and Fort Drum.³¹

Precinct number one, created in 1871, was Magnolia Point, twenty miles above the county line. This was the home of John Dixon, on the east end of today's Dixon Boulevard in Cocoa. Early Brevard County Commissioners probably met at Dixon's home on Magnolia Point despite the fact that it was in Volusia County.

Because of the ever changing meeting places, carelessness, and occasional fires, only a few county records have survived from the years before 1879. Poor communication, isolation, and fickle boundary changes created confusion among residents. Between

1855 and 1887, Brevard's courthouse sites changed with the rise and fall of political groups, while boundaries shifted with the whims of the Legislature. At least seven times during this period, Brevard County changed shape.

The confusion was magnified in 1870 when a feud developed between some Brevard and Orange county residents. One of the feuding parties was Orange County sheriff and tax collector, David Mizell. Brevard resident Mose Barber was the disgruntled subject of an official trip to northern Brevard in February of that year. At that time, Orange and Brevard counties were divided by a line running from present-day Melbourne through Deer Park.

Sheriff Mizell, armed with a warrant to serve on Barber, rode south through eastern Orange County and into the Jane Green Swamp. The sixty-two year old Barber was thought to be camping in the swamp. A crusty old "cracker" who had grown rich over the years herding scrub cows to Punta Rassa, he was a veteran of two Seminole Indian wars and the Civil War. Barber was not accustomed to taking orders from Carpetbaggers nor to paying taxes for the Reconstruction government. A veteran also of a number of encounters with Sheriff Mizell, whom Barber felt had betrayed his state by siding with the Republican newcomers, the scene was set for a violent confrontation.

Barber had long complained that Mizell had no jurisdiction in Brevard County, and questions always arose as to exactly where Orange County stopped and Brevard County began. During one court appearance, Barber's attorney offered the defense that his client was being tried in the wrong courthouse.

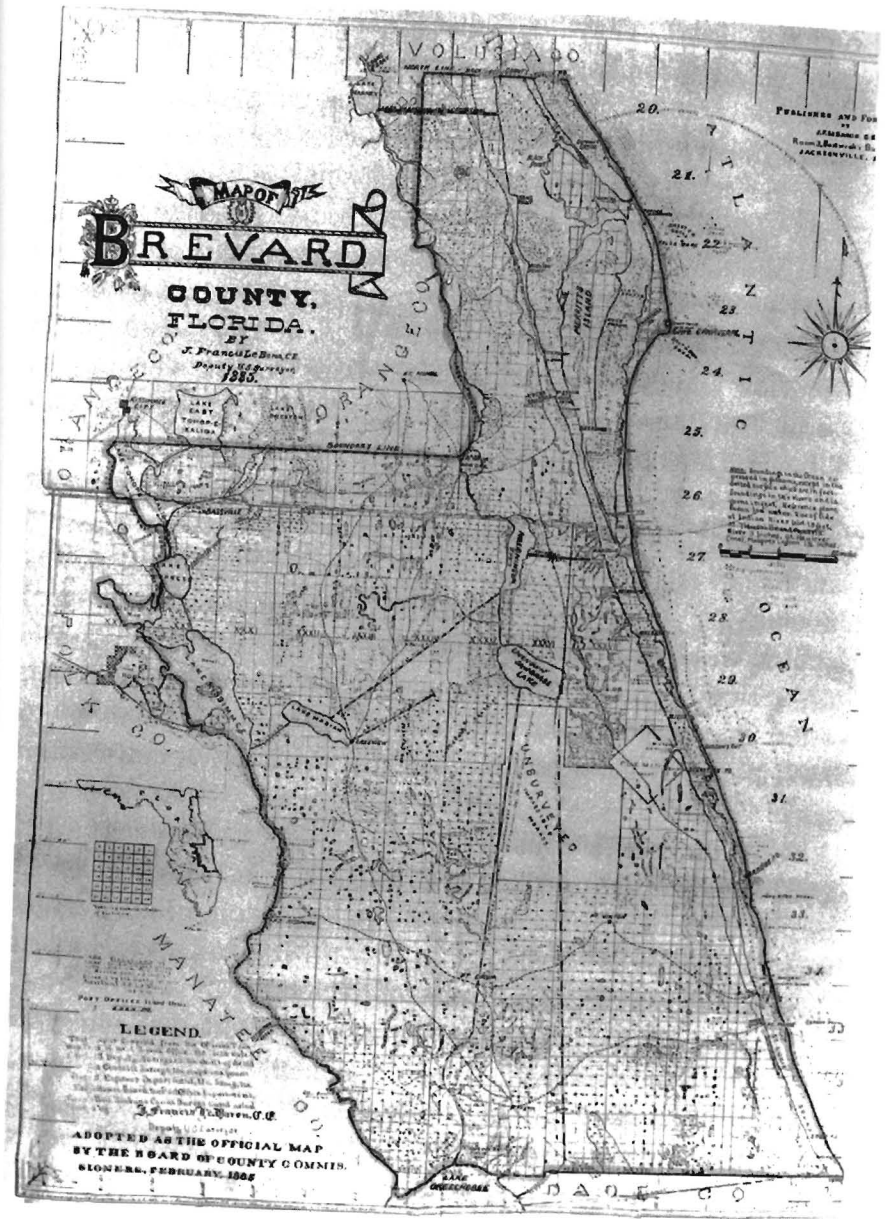
As Mizell made his way across Bull Creek, a single shot rang out and the sheriff fell dead. News of the shooting quickly traveled statewide, and Mizell's brother, Judge John Mizell, ordered a posse to track down the suspected murderer. Their orders were to shoot first and ask questions later. It is not known if Mose Barber lived through the ordeal, but forty-one men were eventual killed as a result of the feud. Only ten defendants came to trial,

Western commissioners, based in Kissimmee City, watched eastern Brevard's population multiply. Agricultural and fishing activities in eastern Brevard supported a growing population, and eastern leaders sought to gain political control of the entire lagoon. Even though Volusia County claimed the northern one-third of present-day Brevard in 1878, that county had no use for the northern Indian River Lagoon. Titusville did not serve Volusia's interests along the St. Johns nor the developing plantations along the northern Mosquito Lagoon. Nor was there any close affiliation between Sand Point and Daytona, the community started in 1871 by Matthias Day.³⁷ Titusville's main concern was for moving people, supplies, and information south and in providing a port for the Indian River's outgoing products. By 1878, the Indian River country formed a unique, cohesive community.

Serviced by dozens of steamers, eastern Brevard developed into a distinct political unit. Charles Magruder, an early post-war resident of Bonaventure (below Rockledge) wrote in the 1870s that:

Many regard this as a remote frontier country, almost inaccessible, possessing few or no advantages, and as scarcely habitable. It seems not generally known that there are families scattered all along from Sand Point to Fort Capron, houses in many places being less than half a mile apart...there is good reason to suppose that we will, before a great while, see flourishing schools and churches established...Many of the Indian River residents are enlarging their dwellings, for the purpose of accommodating visitors during another season...the orange, of course, takes precedence...and we believe there will be a demand for Indian river oranges, when once their superior sweetness and flavor shall become generally known.³⁸

Late in 1878,, the Lake View commissioners became worried that the eastern leaders would burn the Lake View courthouse and "paid the sum of \$20 for service for guarding the courthouse of



The LeBaron Map of 1879. Depicts a new northern boundary (same as today's line) and a new western boundary, the Kissimmee River. These boundaries were in effect from 1879 to 1887.

Brevard County.” They knew that a Lake View fire would be a handy excuse for Indian River commissioners to establish a more conveniently located county seat. However, the Indian River men ignored Lakeview and planned for a new riverfront site after annexing the southern portion of Volusia County in March 1879.

The new area contained the northern Indian River Lagoon and Titusville, the proposed new county seat. Two unsuccessful attempts by the Indian River faction to get their western rivals to meet at Savage’s store, west of Lake Winder and halfway between Lake View and the new addition to Brevard County, were unsuccessful. The future residents of Osceola County did not show any willingness to compromise by attending the meeting.

In July 1879, the eastern commissioners decided to meet “at Captain Stewart’s on Indian River.” Perry Wager acted as the chairman of the new commission. The first order of business was to require that “all motions introduced by any member of the board be put in writing.” Wager, the soon-to-be publisher of *The Florida Star*, seemed something of an intellectual to his less educated western counterparts, and they viewed the new rule as a ploy to inhibit potential motions from some of the less tutored western leaders.

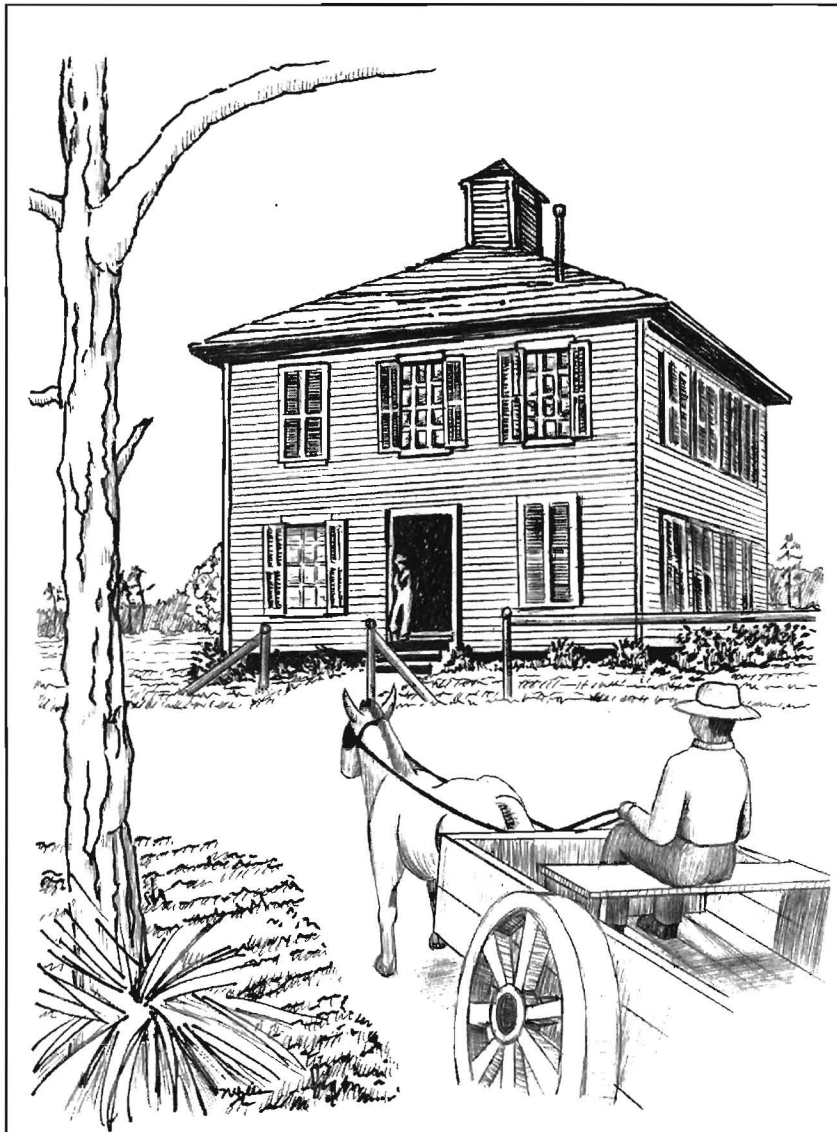
The commissioners made an effort to join east with west when they accepted bids for a lighter to be placed in Lake Winder. In the 1870s, there was an established route from the Indian River through the lake to Lake View in western Brevard. Soldiers had previously used the eastern section of the route, part of the original Hernandez trail, to pick up supplies at Fort Taylor. In September 1879, John Sanders agreed to build a lighter, ten feet by twenty-five feet, to be used to transport horses and vehicles across the lake. The lighter was to be the link between eastern Brevard’s lagoon and western Brevard’s prairies.

The connection between the political rivals of these two areas was Henry L. Parker. Parker had been served as county commissioner at the Lake View site. Unschoolled, yet self-educated, Parker made use of the new lighter to offer his services to the eastern

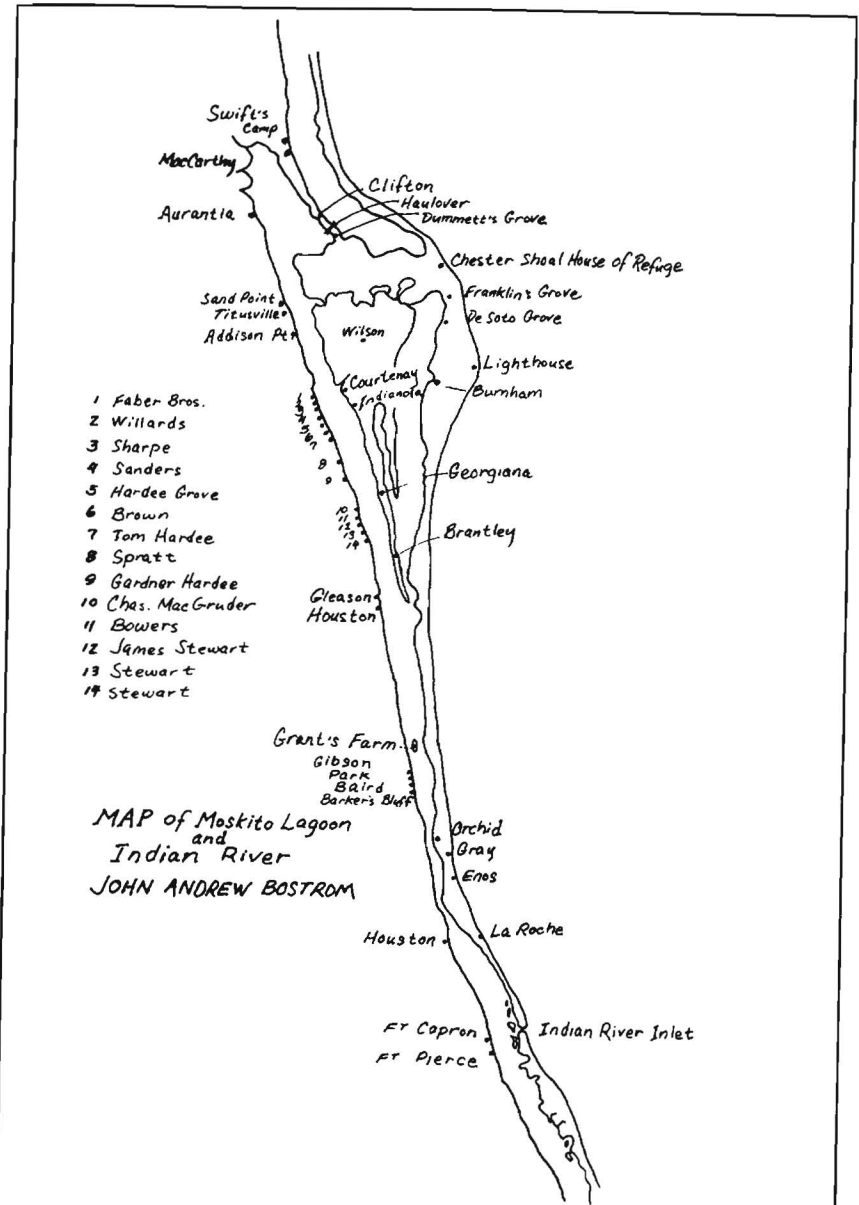
commissioners in 1879. The new commissioner brought his experience of how to “run” an election. After an October 1879 vote to select a new county seat, he ordered all the “fraudulent” names found on the list of voters to be erased. The number of eligible voters totaled 343. Henry Titus, who would live only two more years, made his choice for county seat well-known in advance of the election. Anticipating approval for Titusville, the Colonel borrowed \$1000 to refurbish his hotel. He purchased two chandeliers, carpeting, new pillows and sheets, dining and bedroom furniture, one new card table, kitchen utensils and shiny new silverware to impress his guests.

Titus was not disappointed. Eau Gallie voters cast thirty-five votes in favor of Titusville, while Rockledge voters returned thirty-nine pro-Titusville ballots. From Titusville came 195 affirmative ballots, and no consideration at all was given to the Lake View site or the vast territory of southern Brevard County. Titusville became the county’s new seat on October 7, 1879. A few months later, the commission accepted Titus’ offer of free land for a new Brevard County courthouse.³⁹

The power struggles over the county boundaries and courthouse sites during the 1870s resulted in almost eight years of political stability during the 1880s. The *LeBaron Map*, adopted as the official map of Brevard County in 1885, recorded the county boundaries during this period and included much of today’s Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, Brevard, Okeechobee, and most of Osceola counties. Although the commissioners were pleased with Titusville, its remoteness became a factor in the future shape of the county. Cattle interests in west Brevard were blocked from easy access to the new Titusville courthouse by both the St. Johns River and the lack of adequate roads running east. The commission made some efforts to unify the large county, eventually ordering a survey for a road from Titusville to Lakeview. But, without access to and representation in Titusville, western and southern Brevardians worked for the day when they could legally manage their own affairs.⁴⁰



Brevard County Courthouse. Completed in 1882, it was the first permanent county building. The structure preceded the current courthouse on Titusville's Palm Avenue. (Courtesy of Nancy Dillen)



An 1880's chart of Indian River by Captain John Andrew Bostrom. (Courtesy of The Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Metro-Dade Cultural Center)