

# The Palm Coast Historian

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## • Palm Coast 40th Anniversary •

### THE WAY WE WERE IN 1969:

#### An Interview with Wilhelmina (Prunie) Wadsworth Rodgers

As we continue the story of the founding of Palm Coast, we are fortunate to be able to rely on information obtained in a taped interview with a member of the Wadsworth family, an integral part of the beginning of our community.

In January 2009, with the music and clinking plates at Woody's as background, Wilhelmina (aka Prunie) Wadsworth Rodgers related her family's history, shared her memories of the '60s and '70's, and answered questions about the early days of Palm Coast.

Lewis Edward Wadsworth, Sr. and his wife Lotta moved to Flagler County with their four children around 1923 when it "was little more than one huge undeveloped pine forest." Lewis, Sr. operated the St. Joe turpentine still until his death in 1935.

One of Lewis's sons, William L. (Billy), graduated from the Citadel, was an Army major in WWII, received a law degree from Stetson and moved back to Flagler County where he was its only attorney for some time. He served in the State Legislature from 1956-66 when he was elected Circuit Judge of the Seventh District, serving there until his death in 1978. Wadsworth Park was named for him in 1980. Susan, Gail, and Prunie are his daughters.



L.E. Wadsworth, Jr.

At age 18, Lewis Edward Wadsworth, Jr. continued his father's turpentine business. He began purchasing land and timber, and by the time he was 31, he owned 30,000 acres of Flagler County pine forest land. He built a sawmill between U.S. 1 and the railroad in Bunnell and was soon one of Florida's largest suppliers of lumber and

wood chips. In 1954 Lewis purchased the property now known as Princess Place Preserve.

The Flagler County Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1962 when the major employers in the area were Lehigh Cement (300 employees), Bunnell Timber (100), and Marineland. Lewis was elected president of the Chamber in 1967 and was still in office when Levitt & Sons presented them with the Palm Coast Development project in 1969. Lewis had been working with lumber giant Rayonier Corporation, which had become a subsidiary of the expanding ITT conglomerate. The stage was set for the birth of Palm Coast.

Prunie remembers living on St. Joe's Grade (now Palm Coast Parkway) around the "site of the old Spanish mission." She described an active turpentine still and surrounding structures and houses supporting approximately 200 employees. (I've been told the still was located about where McDonald's is on Old King's Road.) She provided this photo of area residents.



Prunie Wadsworth



Children gather in front of the home of an early turpentine still worker

Prunie described the care-free days of her childhood when "the kids used to hike up the dirt road (Old Kings) to what is now the Princess Place, encountering every animal known in Florida." The

(continue on page 4)

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF FLAGLER COUNTY

*(third in the series by Sisco Deen)*

### Flagler County Places, Then and Now Espanola

In 1880 this little community boasted three families. No waterway, no paved roads or railroad to attract anyone. These families were the Hunters, Helms, and Raulersons. Descendents from these families still live in Espanola today.

I've been told that this community was originally called Raulerson. I have also been told that it was Windermere – but could find no proof of either. On old maps, Lake Neoga, just north of Espanola, is called Lake Windermere, so perhaps Neoga was the settlement of Windermere.

Anyway, in the early 1890s, news spread that a railroad was coming through to Espanola from East Palatka. New families came to settle near the railroad, possibly to seek work. The George Durrance family came over from San Mateo. George Burnsed came from Matanzas. George W. Deen of Baxley, GA., bought several large tracks of land in this area and established turpentine stills which he leased to operators. His brother, James Monroe Deen and family, moved onto one of the turpentine still sites near Espanola. Later he moved to a camp known as the Sapling's in the Haw Creek area.

Daniel Martin Deen, another brother, came from Georgia in 1903 to lease a still just west of Hunter Branch and established his son-in-law, Zachary G. Holland and family there to operate the still. The Hollands cleared land and began an early farming operation, becoming one of the first potato and cabbage farmers.

William Henry Deen and son Carter came from Baxley, GA. in 1905 to lease the turpentine still near Espanola and one at Dinner Island. He was joined the next year by his brother, Robert William Deen and family.

After spending some time in the turpentine business, the Deen brothers later became early potato farmers. Their sister and her husband, the

Worth Richardsons, operated a still near St. Joseph. Jephtha Dennis Barber came in 1903 to assist George Deen in saw mill operation at the site of the old Holland home. He brought his family here in 1905.

It was during this time that Espanola's large saw mill was erected with many branch tram roads scattered throughout surrounding woods to haul in virgin timber to be sawed into lumber for the northern markets.

Lawrence Sidney Cody and Joseph Barrett Boaz operated a stave mill at Espanola for some time. When the partnership was dissolved, Mr. Boaz went to Hastings. A few years later, Mr. Cody and George Allen, Sr. operated a similar mill in the Bimini area.

The narrow gauge (three-foot) railroad originally built by Utley James White from Rollerstown near Palatka to Daytona was purchased by Henry Morrison Flagler who changed it to a standard gauge and called it the Florida East Coast Railway. By this time Espanola was a thriving community of about 100 people.

Later, as the railroad was completed and the mills began to close for lack of timber, the community's economy became depressed and many of the people moved away. Then, in 1915, Espanola began to boom again as the new Dixie Highway was built through it. This was a narrow brick road, which still exists north of Espanola. Florida Farms Development Company began selling farm tracks to new settlers arriving from the north.

Espanola then had a hotel, post office, garage, cafe, rooming house, barber shop, dry goods store, grocery store, school, and mail route. Elzie Hunter, using a horse drawn cart, was mail carrier. Farming became an important part of the economy with Irish potatoes, corn, and narcissus bulbs being shipped from Espanola, with Bimini (west of Espanola) becoming a major potato farming area.

*(see Flagler County, page 3)*

**FLAGLER COUNTY** (continued from page 2)

Tourism became another important segment of the economy with camp grounds established for overnight tourists or, as they were often called, "tin can tourists." One camp was "Live and Let Live." Another was "Hoosier's Inn." During this time new families who settled in Espanola were the Knox Jones, the Kudrnas, Teeters, Pellicers, Pringles, Cauleys, Gatlins, Whittons, Thompsons, Burnsides (aka Burnseeds), Blounts, Millers, and Cobbs.

The Harry Murray family settled in Neoga (north of Espanola). The Karl Lord family bought the Aldrich Hunter place and ran a dairy farm. Also moving into Espanola were the Emerys (still there) and the Harts.

Espanola was depressed again as the "boom"

came to an end and the Dixie Highway was moved to bypass Espanola (now U.S. 1). Today, Espanola remains a quiet and peaceful little community where they relate fond remembrances of days gone by.

You can get to Espanola by driving south from Palm Coast on U.S. 1 to State Road 13 (about a mile before the overpass), take S.R. 13 north until you hit the middle of Espanola. You must then either turn west or east. If you head west, you will pass the Espanola Cemetery and eventually run into S.R. 100 in Bimini. If you head east, you will be on the Old Brick Road (Dixie Highway).

The Old Brick Road turns north and extends for a distance of 11 miles between S.R. 204 and Espanola. The northern two miles of the road is located in St. Johns County.

The road was part of the Dixie Highway which stretched from Sault Sainte Marie, Mich. south to Miami Beach, Fla. The road is composed of a packed shell foundation topped with a nine-foot wide brick roadbed and four-inch wide concrete curbs, flanked by three-foot wide shell shoulders for a total width of 15 feet. The road construction was part of a 66-mile project completed in 1916 by St. Johns County.

**Favorita**

One of the oldest former towns in the county was the lumber camp called Favorita. Named by the Spanish, it is now known as Favoretta. It was a lumber and turpentine center and many thousands of dollars worth of turpentine has been taken from its pines.

George Moody (Isaac I. Moody's brother and Flagler Beach developer) was the first postmaster of Favoretta and was its most prominent developer, for many years owning a sawmill in the vicinity and doing much toward its advancement.

The East Coast Railroad runs through the former town as does U.S. 1. It is located just south of Korona and while there is a state road sign which identifies the "town," the sign is about all that is there at present.

(more **Flagler County History** in next issue)

**For Sale**

**Palm Coast License Plate**

Donation \$10

(plates are available at the Community Center, Clubhouse Drive & Palm Coast Parkway West)

**Black & white prints of Palm Coast's early buildings and golf courses**

by **Starr Coale**, local artist.

Donation: \$10 for 1, \$15 for 2

Or call Debby, 446-9031

ALAN SMOLEN: FATHER OF PALM COAST, 1975-1985 by Art Dycke, Palm Coast City Historian, is available. In 138 pages of text and photos, it tells the story of the man who shaped the development of Palm Coast in his years as president of IIT Development Corporation. It also presents a fairly complete history of the Palm Coast community. Older residents can relive the "good old days" and newcomers can learn how Publix and the I-95 Interchange became fixtures here. This book sells for \$15.

Also available are a few remaining copies of IMAGES OF AMERICA: PALM COAST, a picture history, for \$19.99, also authored by Mr. Dycke.

Contact Art Dycke, 446-8636, for additional information.

**The Way We Were in 1969** *(continued from front page)*

area just east of the present Palm Harbor Publix was the area's favorite "ol' swimming hole." She remembers the Eatman, Chidwell, DuPont, and Gage families living in this area.

The Palm Coast section of Flagler County was recognized as a hunting and fishing paradise, even by out-of-staters, by 1969. Prunie described her dad's philosophy as being "if you're not going to eat it, don't hunt it." She stated most people belonged to a hunt club or camp on privately-owned property. Guiding visiting hunters for pay was a staple part of the local economy that consisted mostly of growing potatoes and cabbage, raising cattle, and lumbering after Lehigh Cement closed in 1965.

Prunie delivered many more enjoyable memories of early Palm Coast which will be continued in later installments of our history. But we must now consider the major 1969 events that got Palm Coast started.

ITT-Rayonier purchased the local Lehigh Portland Cement property for \$4.5 million, according to an announcement in the January 2, 1969 edition of THE FLAGLER TRIBUNE. The sale had been rumored for several months and payment was made in New York City and the deed filed on December 23, 1968 with the Flagler County Clerk of Circuit Court.

ITT-Rayonier already controlled (through ownership and lease) more than 50,000 acres of timberland in the area.



*Dr. Norman Young*

Lehigh had vacated the property in 1965 when they discontinued production of cement in Flagler County.

Dr. Norman Young, an economic and marketing specialist with Levitt and Sons, a subsidiary unit of ITT for development, be-

came president of Levitt Land Co., developer of the new residential community in June of 1969.

The project was designed to attract people with leisure time, retirees, and persons wanting to invest. Though initially there were no plans for any industry, it was noted that light industry would be stimulated to move into the area.

There was no public information regarding the scope of what ITT intended to do with their purchase for more than five months. In mid-June, Mr. Wadsworth and Dr. Young made a stunning local announcement to a national audience.



*A few of the 175 invited guests, including state & county legislators, local officials, chamber of commerce members, other local business leaders, and a large press & television corps, gather at the Princess Place on June 16, 1969 for the announcement by ITT officials of a land development project of almost 90,000 acres to ultimately be known as Palm Coast.*

The rest is history which will be covered in a future edition of the Historian.

**Visit the Historical Society Center**

Art Dycke, City Historian, will be at the Center, 2nd floor of One Corporate Plaza (Technical Training Bldg.) each Wednesday at 1:30-4 PM

The Palm Coast Historical Society is looking for back issues of THE PALM COAST NEWS for 1977, '78, '79, '80, and '81. Call Art Dycke, 446-8636, if you have copies.

## The Civic Association: Palm Coast's First Organization Turns In Its Banner *by Art Dycke*

On January 2, 1972, the first three families moved into a new Palm Coast development that had no amenities within 11 miles other than a sales center and a golf course with a small club house that served free beer. These pioneers in a "strange and distant land" had obvious need to band together for fellowship and solution of community problems.

In July the Palm Coast Civic Association was organized. Only 50 homes had been completed in the development. About 20 residents became the organizing committee and drew up the bylaws at the old "19th Hole."

The purpose of the organization was to provide a means through which members and residents could gather and discuss ideas and programs for improving the community and to enlist the concerted efforts of the membership to effectuate the desires of the majority. Their objectives included maintaining and increasing property values, civic functions, social activities, entertainment, recreation, nuisance control, beautification of property, and a liaison with the developer, ITT-Community Corporation.

Bill Loeb was PCCA's first president with Cliff Parr vice president, Charles Konopasek treasurer, and Bernadette Collier secretary.

By August 17 THE FLAGLER TRIBUNE headlined, "Palm Coast Civic Association Shows Interest in Local Politics." Group members traveled to Espanola to attend a "Meet the Candidate" rally for which PCCA had contributed musical entertainment. Local dentist, Dr. Ben Lacy, was master of ceremonies at the event.

Social life in 1973 was organized with boat trips and restaurant excursions that did not require a local venue. By 1974 PCCA compiled a telephone and address directory of local residents. Other accomplishments included establishing a YMCA, enlarging the postal facility, lobbying for a ten-acre park, establishing recreational vehicle and small boat storage, and major improvements in

hospital, library, and educational facilities.

The Association grew from 20 members to 1,150 members in just six years, wrote PCCA's president, Bill Cochrane in a 1978 article in the PALM COAST NEWS.

The organization also actively participated in the debate over establishing a county government service district for Palm Coast with local lawyer Michael Chimento representing PCCA. Merhl Shoemaker, Civic Association president in 1976, later became the first Palm Coast resident to sit on the Flagler County Commission. VP David Siegel headed a self government study group which thoroughly examined all forms of municipal governments that could be adapted to our community. They laid the foundation for a successful incorporation later.

In February 2009 longtime Civic Association president Raleigh Stockton wrote, "The Palm Coast Civic Association was organized to become the community voice. (It) monitored Service District meetings and Flagler County Commission meetings to make sure community interests and quality-of-life issues such as canals, roads, streets, and water quality were improved and maintained. In the 1990's, after many attempts to organize for incorporation, a group offshoot of the Palm Coast Civic Association called the Home Rule Coalition was formed. This group worked successfully to incorporate Palm Coast, and on December 31, 1999, Palm Coast became a city after a majority vote of the residents.

"After much work through the years, constantly monitoring our new City Council and County Commission to improve and maintain our quality of life, as the new year 2009 dawns on our community, we, the Palm Coast Civic Association, question our relevancy in our community.

"In these uncertain economic times, with many concerned about the comfort and

*(see Civic Association, page 6)*

**Civic Association** (from page 5)

wellbeing of home and family, a civic association is not part of community concern. And with the technology of present day communications, there is a feeling of no need to attend meetings. With meetings televised on local cable community channels (198 City and 199 County, Palm Coast City Councilmen and Flagler County Commissioners having individual emails for public community, city council and county commission holding individual informational meetings, and with membership dwindling, we, the Palm Coast Civic Association are questioning, 'Has our effectiveness run its course.' Our purpose has been achieved, by this we mean public proactive government bodies at the municipal and county level. We would caution you, the public, to be constantly vigilant of decisions by our elected government that effect our lives as we, the residents of Palm Coast and Flagler County, embrace the 21st century."

As the first organization created in Palm Coast, the Civic Association has a proud, lengthy history of bringing public issues to the attention of the residents and providing them with a forum to "have their voices heard" for the benefit of their



Raleigh Stockton, President of Civic Association (center), presents sign and banner to Art Dycke, City Historian, and Debby Geyer, President of PCHS

community. Their accomplishment in initiating and executing the incorporation of the City of Palm Coast provides their lasting legacy.

On March 4, 2009 Palm Coast Civic Association President Raleigh Stockton formalized the end of the organization's collection of dues and holding of monthly meetings at the Community Center when he turned over the Association's original sign and current banner along with a copy of their constitution and bylaws.

In all probability the PCCA will resuscitate if the need arises. Meanwhile, the Palm Coast Historical Society will use the Association's regular Wednesday time slot in April and May at the Community Center.

Many thanks to those who contributed to and participated in this historic program. Robby Creal informed and entertained with an array of stories about life in Flagler County BPC (Before Palm Coast). He gave PCHS an incredible photo of his family exploring the ruins of the St. Joseph's sugar plantation, now buried under canal fill in the Florida Park Drive/Palm Harbor area. This will be displayed soon.

Prunie Wadsworth Rodgers and Betty Jo Strickland provided anecdotes used in my hastily prepared program. Sisco and Gloria Deen delivered dozens of photos of life in Bunnell around the 1960's that are normally displayed in Holden House's new annex. (You must visit it if you haven't already.)

Our gratitude goes also to Terri Pruden and Robby Creal for allowing Ed Moore to bring a selection of Flagler Beach Museum's photos to our meeting.

There were questions and participation by an attentive audience. We look forward to your joining us at future meetings.

*Welcome New Members*

*Robert Creal*  
*Sandra Sites*  
*Emilie Sulkes*

## Calendar Additions

On April 1 local historian and author Bill Ryan will present a power point program about Old King's Road, Osceola, and other early history on the big screen at the Community Center. On May 6 Art Dyke will present his program entitled "The Afro-American Cultural Heritage in Palm Coast."

Following is a synopsis of scheduled events through October:

- 7 PM Wednesday, April 1 – "Old Kings Road" power point program by Bill Ryan at Community Center
- 12 NOON Monday, April 27 – "Beginnings of Palm Coast: 1969-79" presentation by Art Dyke at Community Center
- 7 PM Wednesday, May 6 – "Afro-American Cultural Heritage in Palm Coast" presentation by Art Dyke at Community Center
- July – "Palm Coast: The 1980's" Month-long display at Flagler County Library
- Saturday-Sunday, October 10-11 – Creekside Festival exhibits

In the fall a number of events commemorating the incorporation of the City of Palm Coast will be announced in the HISTORIAN.

## SEARCH FOR OLD KINGS

ROAD by Bill Ryan

The history and recent discoveries of Old Kings Road, which was built before the American Revolution and used right up to 1918 as the main entryway into Florida.

It ran from the Georgia border to Jacksonville, St. Augustine, thru Flagler County, and down to New Symrna. Most of our early history happened on this historic roadway, bits and pieces of which still exist in Flagler County. Rich plantations, Minorcan settlers, angry Indians, desperate British loyalists, and the settlement of Florida depended on this road first built by British engineers in 1771.

Bill Ryan traces this vanishing old road with maps, history, interviews with local residents, and an important time line. Price \$18.

## Kudos to our Volunteers

by Patricia Eldridge, Catalog Committee Chair

Thank you hardly seems adequate for all the hard work our volunteers did in moving our Historical Society to its new location in the Technical Service Building at One Corporate Drive.

Most of the Catalog Committee packed, then unpacked many boxes. Art Dyke supervised, and George Libonate, Ed Moore, and Jack Pitman helped arrange files, furniture, equipment, cabinets and then rearranged them when I changed my mind. (That's a woman's prerogative – right?) Our wonderful calligrapher, Norma Kendrick organized the storage room and created labels and signs.

The hall/entrance area in our suite now looks very attractive and inviting, thanks to George. He hung many photos, plaques, and maps along the walls so folks are greeted with a bit of history as they enter.

Recently PCHS hosted an event at Palm Coast Community Center. Ed Moore, Eileen Carter and Betty Buchanan assisted Art with the displays. Thank you for your outstanding effort and support. Now that we are settled, each volunteer is working on his/her individual projects.

We welcome Emilie Sulkes, Arthur Jannery and Anita Mylis to our group and hope all of you will come see us in our new space. We are usually there Wednesday and Thursday from 1:30 to 4 PM.

## I AM GREY EYES – A STORY OF OLD FLORIDA by Bill Ryan

Two very real characters, Grey Eyes, a most unusual Seminole Indian, and Black Sandy, a well educated interpreter for the British army, view the history of Florida, its settlement, a famous cattle drive, the American Revolution, the second Seminole War, and a whole series of connected historical events. Author Bill Ryan said these characters were real and emerge as the main characters in his historical/fiction book. He takes them thru a series of real events to increase your knowledge of Florida's early history. Price \$22