

THE JOURNAL OF THE  
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

# THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL

*Volume V, Number 1*

*Spring/Summer 2006*

**Brevard County Historical  
Articles & Features  
Organizations & Activities  
Announcements & Reviews**



**The Gibson Tenement Houses, Palm Avenue, Titusville, Florida  
In June 2005**

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**THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL**

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**The Gibson Tenement Houses**

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## THE TREASURE AT CAPE CANAVERAL

By  
Ray Osborne

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It was not so long ago in the 1970's that Cape Canaveral sported a magnificent Museum of Sunken Treasure. Displayed in the museum were gold, silver, fine oriental porcelain, wooden chests and diving equipment used to salvage the treasure. The building itself had been specially designed to look like "King Solomon's Mines" to house the trove of glittering treasure.



**The Museum of Sunken Treasure in Cape Canaveral, Florida**

Inside the building, in addition to the exhibit cases, a huge treasure map was painted on the ceiling. Visitors would pass through a circular hallway where they would view seascapes complete with coral reefs, rocking ships and other realistic underwater scenes. Visitors could gaze at the sandy seabed and notice gold coins flickering their brilliant light.

The treasure on display at this museum consisted of many valuable artifacts from the 1715 plate fleet of Spanish Galleons sunk during one of Florida's notorious hurricanes. A gold dragon chain was reported as having been washed up on a local beach where it was discovered by Kip Wagner's nephew. It was

considered the most valuable piece at \$50,000 at the time. Nicknamed "The Captain's Chain," it measured 11 feet 4 1/2 inches long. It was made of 2176 solid gold links; attached was a gold pendant in the form of a dragon. The dragon's belly concealed a gold toothpick; its tail serves as a device for cleaning earwax from one's ear, and the dragon itself is a whistle. The chain, made in China, is of a type once worn by the captain-general of a Spanish fleet as his emblem of office.

Hints of the sunken treasure first came to light in 1955 when Kip Wagner, a retired builder, discovered an irregularly shaped silver 'piece of eight' stamped with a cross and the arms of Spain. He promptly bought an army surplus mine detector and soon realized his discovery was a 18th-Century Spanish salvage. Soon many other valuable finds followed. News of the 1715 find was constantly being written about in the press. On March 21st, 1965, *The Melbourne Sunday Times* gave an account of Kip Wagner's research which included a trip to Spain to review old Spanish manuscripts. This led to his making discoveries of treasure with his Real Eight Corporation. The Times reported "Finally last May 21st came the big hit; the finding of a greenish black coral mass containing 50 pounds of silver coins. Then a few weeks later, the group brought up 3,336 gold doubloons still shiny-bright after centuries under the sea, gold and silver ingots, jewelry and delicate Chinese porcelain preserved in clay packing." On July 3, 1965, The New York Times reported that Harold Canon, a member of the Real Eight Corporation, told a news conference that their most recent discovery of treasure just south of the Sebastian Inlet "will far exceed" the 1.6 million dollars the group took last year from a galleon near the Fort Pierce Inlet. More bulletins and updates followed lauding the work of Wagner's company.

The Real Eight Company was reported as having done their work well. "The Real Eight Company is doing its work in a scientifically impeccable fashion," wrote Van Ferguson on January 13th, 1961. "Detailed drawings, photographs and other records have been made, and correlated with the specimens recovered. To our best knowledge this is the first and only wreck in Florida to have been properly investigated, scientifically speaking. This company is apparently the only one to attempt to fairly meet their contractual obligations under a salvage lease."

The treasure went on an exhibition tour where it was displayed in mid-December of 1964 at the *National Geographic* Explorers Hall in Washington, DC. This coincided with a feature article in the January, 1965 issue of *National Geographic*. Interested readers can find this issue at their local library and admire the photographs of the Plate Fleet treasure. Wagner's writings in his book

"Pieces of Eight" reflected his pride in the treasure and equal pride in the new museum he was going to build at the Cape. He wrote of his temporary museum at Satellite Beach. "We have armed guards stationed in the gallery at all times and a number of other security safeguards that must remain secret. I can say only this, we're not burglar proof, yet neither are the Crown Jewels of England. But we feel our treasure would be just about as hard to steal, and that we have a more than adequate security system. It is something we cannot take for granted, and we don't."

Real Eight Corporation leased rooms from the First National Bank of Satellite Beach for a temporary exhibition of the treasure. The grand opening was on May 1, 1967. Joe Salvo, the curator, arranged a county-wide press conference for the formal opening the next morning. The newspapers splashed the headlines across the front page resulting in record crowds with as many as 400 people a day attended. The first half of the year more than 25,000 visited the treasure. People from all over the world came to see it. One particular account was of a blind lady visiting from Scotland. The curator let her feel a heavy gold disk, valued at more than \$10,000. Upon her touch, her ecstatic facial expression lit up everyone else's in the entire gallery. The museum at Satellite Beach was a huge success and gave the promise of even greater success for a brand new museum at Cape Canaveral.

It was in 1967 that an 18th Century axe found on one of the wreck sites was used to break the ground for the planned \$500,000 treasure museum at Cape Canaveral. The Museum of Sunken treasure was scheduled to open the following spring. The museum would have nine dioramas tracing the stories of the recovery of the treasure. *The Orlando Sentinel* reported "It's going to be fabulous. People will actually get the feeling of flowing through the whole experience of the Spanish galleons driven onto the reefs south of Sebastian by the hurricane."

Finally the moment that everybody had waited for arrived as the museum had its premiere opening on Friday, June 28th, 1968. A complete Gala with approximately 400 state and local political dignitaries and astronauts including Gordon Cooper and Walter Schirra attended the grand opening. A group of men from the Desoto Historical Society at Bradenton dressed as Spanish conquistadors added a touch of colorful history to the pomp and ceremony of the grand opening. Included in the exhibit was a 48 foot replica of a sunken ship shown as if it were on the bottom of the ocean, mired in mud and complete with a gash in the side of the hull. A newspaper reported about the \$750,000 new museum. "Its success will mean a economic shot in the arm for the area as well as the Real Eight members". The museum was a success for many years to

come, offering tourists, school children and other local residents a beautiful historical exhibit. Then it ended abruptly one week in 1976.

The date was Sept 21st, 1976 when the headline in *The Florida Today* newspaper read, "Thieves Steal Museum Gold Worth \$750,000." The story continued, "More than \$750,000 worth of gold bullion and jewelry was stolen early Monday from the Museum of Sunken Treasure in Cape Canaveral, police and museum officials said. "Although the thieves do not appear to be professionals, they certainly knew what to take", said Mr. Tweed, police chief investigating the crime. "There was no night guard at the museum and the burglary alarm on the door that the thieves entered automatically shut off as soon as the door was closed," reported New York Times Sept 20 - AP. The thieves forced open the southeast door of the museum and made their way to the 15 glass display cases containing the treasure. "The thieves then 'selectively stole many priceless artifacts and jewelry, including a bullion chest of gold and silver coins and a rare 300 year old gold chain measuring 11 feet long,' " said Cape Canaveral Police Chief Bob Tweed. Emily Hahn states in her book that she believed it was a replica of the chain that was stolen and other sources indicate that the chain was sold on auction before this heist took place. At the end of the week, Alan McNair, vice president of the Patterson-Erie Corp. of Vero Beach which had a 80 percent controlling interest in the museum, reported to the papers that the company wouldn't try to reopen the tourist attraction after thieves stole \$750,000 worth of gold, silver and jewelry earlier that week. "We have decided it is no longer practical to continue business, particularly since Cape Canaveral is no longer a tourist mainstream," McNair said. "Everything is being packed and will be put in storage until such times we relocate in the Orlando area." He also said he was disappointed over the "apparent lack of progress by police investigators." A newspaper man reported from New York Times "This was the largest ever art-jewelry theft in the county." So ends this story for the treasure in Cape Canaveral.

#### Authors Note:

The reader no doubt has questions; such as who did this heist? Were they ever caught? Where is the Captain's chain? This story will be continued as new information comes to light. Perhaps the thief (since the statue of limitations is up) may want to provide information to finish this story.

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About the Author:

Raymond K. Osborne is a free lance writer with articles published for a full range of genres, including but not limited to historic, consumer, professional and technical publications. He is also a free lance photo-correspondent with a major local newspaper. His main interest is with historical and biographical research and writing. He maintains a number of on-line forums for free distribution of meaningful information and welcomes public speaking opportunities.

E-mail comments and questions to ourhistory153@yahoo.com “ask about the opt-in events mail list”

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*On April 2, 1513 Juan Ponce de Leon came ashore somewhere along the Brevard County coast near Melbourne Beach. He is credited with discovering the North American mainland which eventually led to the oldest permanent settlement at St. Augustine. The year 2013 will be the 500th anniversary of that event. A gala celebration is being planned. I wouldn't run out and buy your picnic supplies just yet but I'd mark your calendar if goes out that far.*

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## The Hunt for C. J. Hector

By  
Zillah Williams  
Canberra, Australia

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In front of me as I write is a colourful brochure advertising an exhibition being held in Canberra at the National Museum of Australia. The title of the Exhibition is “Outlawed” and the invitation is given to come and, “discover the stories behind the world’s rebels, revolutionaries and bushrangers”.<sup>1</sup>

Pictured in the brochure, alongside “Billy the Kid”, and the Australian bushranger Ned Kelly, is Hone Heke, described as a “Maori warrior chief of New Zealand about 1810 –1850”. Hone Heke is renowned in New Zealand history for leading a rebellion against the British during which a notable battle took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1845 at Kororareka (aka Russell, Bay of Islands) on the eastern coast of New Zealand’s North Island.

Present during that battle was a ten-year-old boy named Cornthwaite John (CJ) Hector, the man who would later be involved with the naming of Melbourne, Florida, after Melbourne in Victoria, Australia.

CJ’s grandfather, also named Cornthwaite John Hector, was a banker and brewer, interested in politics, and lived in a mansion called Stodham House, in Sussex. The family appears to have been very wealthy. There were five daughters and two sons, one of whom was Cornthwaite Hector, CJ’s father.

Cornthwaite Hector married Elizabeth Budd in 1826, and emigrated to the British convict colony, Van Diemens Land (now Tasmania, the southernmost of the Australian States) where he had been given a grant of land by the British government. They arrived on the ship LANG in December 1828.<sup>2</sup>

Handwritten in the front of the Hector family prayer book, now held by the library of St John’s College Auckland, are the births of the Hector children:<sup>3</sup>

“Monlas(?) Hector 1829 VDL Died 26 Mar 1830”

“George, 1830 VDL”

“Anna Matilda 14 June 1832 VDL”

“Catherine 1833 VDL Died 20 May 1834”

“Cornthwaite John Hector born 6th May 1835 at VD Land”

“Hon. Quinton or Martin, Eastborne 1836” [\*]

“Jane & Sydney 19 Dec 1837 (Sydney died 1 July 1839)”

“Elizbt 21 Oct 1839, at Risdon. died 2 May 1840 New Zealand”

“Caroline Georgia 27 Jan 1841 Kororareka, New Zealand [ie Bay of Islands]”

“Edward 22 May 1843 Kororareka, New Zealand”

\*[Judith Bright, St. John’s College librarian, couldn’t guarantee the accuracy of some of these because the hand writing was terrible. However, other sources indicate that this was “Horatia Mary.” –ed.]

Cornthwaite appears to have been a respectable citizen, acting in the capacity of magistrate on occasion, but his venture as a landed gentleman farmer apparently didn’t succeed. He was in London in March 1836 applying for a further grant of land but his application was unsuccessful. He became bankrupt and, by 1839 was in New Zealand where he again became involved in land deals.

The two Hector boys, George Nelson, and CJ, both worked for Bishop George Augustus Selwyn on board various vessels he used to travel among the islands of the Pacific. (Bishop Selwyn became the first Bishop of New Zealand in 1841, laying the foundations of the Church not only in New Zealand, but throughout the islands of Melanesia.)

Cornthwaite Hector made a name for himself during Hone Heke’s insurrection at Kororareka. [Kororareka was the first engagement of the 21-year Maori War.<sup>4</sup> –ed.] The trouble arose over disputes between Maori chiefs with the British government over the recently signed Treaty of Waitangi (Feb. 6, 1840).

He claimed that with just forty men, he could fight off the “savages”, but he was not given the opportunity to prove his boast. During the fighting, he manned a cannon, assisted by his two sons. A newspaper report of the time mentions “the very gallant conduct of – Hector, Esq.” and that “Mr Hector’s two boys also behaved most gallantly in bringing up ammunition from the stockade during the heaviest fire.”<sup>5</sup>

Fourteen-year-old George Nelson Hector gained a reputation for cool courage when he refused to be put on board the Bishop’s boat Flying Fish, a 15 ton schooner, to be taken to safety with his brother and sisters, saying, “I had rather stay with my father.”<sup>6</sup> In later life this young man became a sea captain with the P & O shipping line. The two brothers evidently remained in contact over the years, since CJ borrowed money from his brother, and at the time of his death the authorities notified George Nelson, then living in England.

There is an enlightening comment about CJ then aged 15 or 16, dating from 1851. It comes from the journal of William Nihill, missionary with the Mela-

nesian Mission, and assistant to the Bishop. Nihill, after expressing his high regard for George Nelson Hector, commented that “Corny Hector, his brother, is very different from him.”<sup>7</sup> Nihill describes CJ as an apprentice on this voyage.

The Maori Wars prompted many English people to leave New Zealand and it appears that the Hector family, with the exception of George Nelson, moved to Australia. Vicar Vicesimus Lush, in his Auckland Journals, writes of them that in 1850: “The Mother has died: the Father has turned out exceeding eccentric and, the girls left like orphans in Sydney, the Bishop has determined to receive them all into his own house and be unto them as a Father; what a good and charitable man is this Bishop Selwyn.”<sup>8</sup>

Cornthwaite Hector must have left New Zealand at some stage and gone to live in Australia. Bishop Selwyn later sent for the Hector girls to come and live at St Johns College, Auckland. St Johns College, an initiative of Bishop Selwyn, was a major influence in the lives of the Hector children. Two of the boys were enrolled in the College from 1845-1848. George Nelson attended from 1847 to 1852.<sup>9</sup> The other could have been CJ or his youngest brother, Edward. It was here that two of the sisters were married.

One of the more interesting highlights of my research was the Hector family’s connection with the Melanesian Mission in New Zealand. CJ’s sister, Anna Matilda Hector, married Bishop Selwyn’s assistant, William Nihill, on April 20<sup>th</sup> 1852, at St John’s College, Auckland.<sup>10</sup> The couple went as missionaries to Nengone, a village on the island of Maré in the Loyalty Islands group. Their daughter, Lizzie, eventually married the Rev. John Still of the Melanesian Mission. Nihill went to Nengone with TB and died after only a few years, but it is suggested that he died of dysentery.

(There are Hector descendants in Melbourne, Victoria, and I have heard that one family member is looking into the family history, but after some enquiries I was unable to pursue this.)

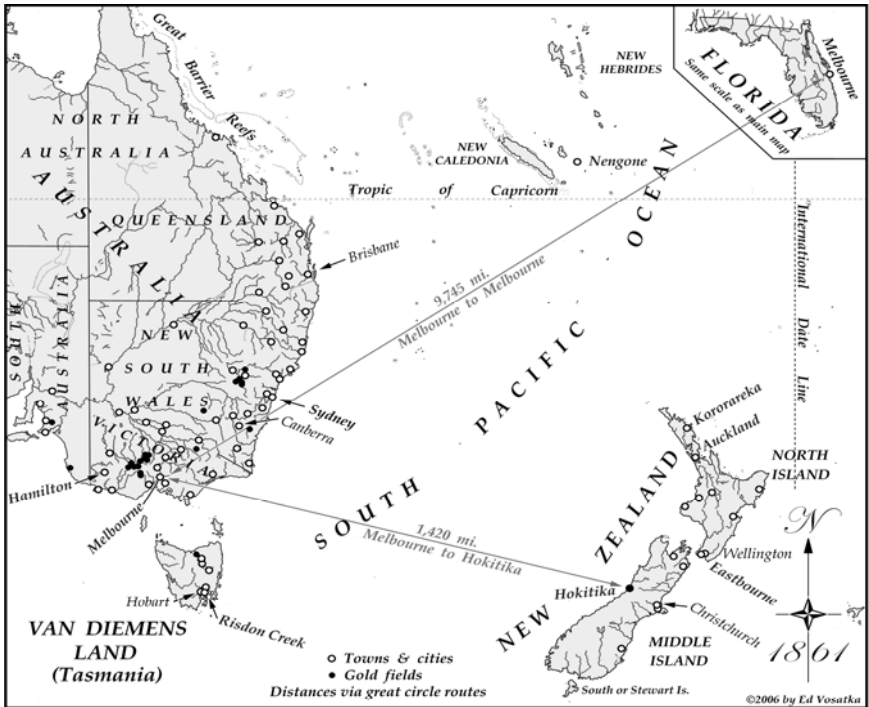
There is a big gap here in my Hector record. The next event I was able to find was that of CJ Hector, age 30, travelling with “Mrs Hector” (Ellen Davelin) on the SS GOTHENBURG, 26 Feb. 1866 from Melbourne, Australia, to Hokitika, New Zealand.

CJ and Ellen both give their birthplace as England. He gives his occupation as “miner” and, since Hokitika, on the west coast of the south island of New Zealand, was in the throes of becoming a booming gold town, it is interesting to

speculate whether he had come from the goldfields in Victoria, Australia, to seek his fortune on the Hokitika gold fields.

Whether he and Ellen had children in New Zealand is not known, nor how long the family remained in there. New Zealand historian Kevin Neal has found some candidates in New Zealand for children to CJ and Ellen, but nothing is certain.<sup>11</sup>

What is known is that Ellen Davelin Hector turns up in Hamilton, Victoria, Australia, as Ellen Clarke in March 1886, giving permission for her son George Nelson Hector (named after Cornthwaite's brother) aged 20, to marry Annie Cooke of Coleraine, Victoria. The groom was a resident of Hamilton, Victoria. The marriage register gives George Nelson's birthplace as Nelson, New Zealand. His father's name is given as Cornthwaith (sic) John Hector, occupation, miner. Whether CJ, age 50, knew of his son's marriage, or cared, is not known, only that he was in Florida by this time.



Adapted from: *The Royal Atlas of Modern Geography* by Alexander Keith Johnston, F.R.S.E. (Wm. Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh. 1861). Original map may be viewed at [www.davidrumsey.com](http://www.davidrumsey.com).

*The Worlds of Cornthwaite John Hector.*

Another interesting sidelight to the Hector story is that Cornthwaite Hector's sister (i.e. CJ's aunt) Maria, married George Henty in Sussex, England. The Hentys were sheep farmers and Henty senior, with some of his sons, being given a grant of land, emigrated to Australia, a couple of years after Cornthwaite went to Van Diemens Land. Finding the land unsuitable for their purposes, the Hentys also moved to Van Diemens Land where, like Cornthwaite Hector, Henty senior acted as a magistrate. Eventually the Hentys, like Cornthwaite, left Van Diemens Land, finding better sheep farming country in Victoria on the Australian mainland. The Henty Brothers, as they became known, became very successful sheep farmers. Since CJ's son appears to have lived in the vicinity of some of their properties, it is tempting to believe that the families knew each other.

Another of CJ's aunts, Anna Jane Hector, married a William Rason. Their son, Cornthwaite Hector Rason, became a navy surgeon. His son, Cornthwaite Hector William James Rason, became the Premier of Western Australia.

CJ Hector sailed from Australia to America in or before 1878. The question remains – when, how, and why did he arrive in the USA? He is said to have regaled his neighbours with tales of his life in Australia. The unpublished Locke Davidson manuscript, which purports to set out details of CJ's early life, appears to be a fascinating mixture of fact and fiction, inviting the impression that he was covering his tracks.<sup>12</sup>

His history in Crane Creek, now Melbourne, however, is fairly well documented. He became the first postmaster, played a part in naming the new town after Melbourne in Australia and, at least until later in life, seemed to prosper.

Jessie S. Goode, one of the earliest settlers to the Crank Creek area, told the Melbourne Times in 1927 that CJ, age 43, came from New York in the fall of 1878. He was a native of Auckland, New Zealand, but had spent several years in Sidney (sic), New South Wales, and also in Melbourne, Australia. The community's new name was decided by a straw poll. When her 8-year-old daughter, Grace, drew the winning straw, Mrs. Goode proclaimed the town be called Melbourne in honor of their first postmaster and of the first families being born under the British flag.<sup>13</sup>

CJ Hector was confirmed at Holy Trinity (Episcopal Church) on April 21, 1887 at the age of 51. The Church Register shows that he was baptized in The Church of England (no date).<sup>14</sup>

CJ Hector married Ida M. Gard on October 10, 1895 at Holy Trinity United,

both being residents of Melbourne at the time. His parents are listed as C. and E. Hector of England, hers as D. H. and Mary Wallace of Ohio.

Did he, compared unfavourably in earlier years with his brother George Nelson, return in later life to his Christian roots? I confess I rather hope so. The black sheep returning to the fold would have pleased his mentor, Bishop Selwyn.

C.J. Hector, age 62, died at Crescent City, Florida, on January 6, 1898. He lies in the Melbourne Cemetery under a simple epitaph:

C. J. HECTOR  
FOUNDER OF MELBOURNE  
1880

References:

<sup>1</sup>The Exhibition was held at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra. 28 Nov 2003 – 26 Apr 2004.

<sup>2</sup>Hobart Town Courier 27 December, 1828. Courtesy Auckland City Libraries.

<sup>3</sup>Judith K. Bright, Librarian, Kinder Library, St Johns Theological College, Auckland.

<sup>4</sup>T.F. Mills, “1<sup>st</sup> Anglo-Maori War: 1845-1847”. [www.regiments.org/milhist/wars/19thcent/45maori.htm](http://www.regiments.org/milhist/wars/19thcent/45maori.htm)

<sup>5</sup>The Daily Southern Cross, 22 March 1845, courtesy of Auckland City Libraries.

<sup>6</sup>The Private Journal of Henry T. Fox (1850). Courtesy of Auckland City Libraries.

<sup>7</sup>“Journal of a voyage from Auckland, New Zealand, to the New Hebrides and Loyalty Islands, 1851” (NZMS 134) Information given in a letter from Mr Iain Sharp of Auckland City Libraries, 21 Feb. 1003, regarding William Nihill’s manuscript Journals.

<sup>8</sup>Vicesimus Lush: The Auckland Journals of Vicesimus Lush, 1850-1863. Christchurch: Pegasus. 1971. p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>Judith K. Bright, Librarian, Kinder Library, St Johns Theological College, Auckland.

<sup>10</sup>Judith K. Bright, Librarian, Kinder Library, St Johns Theological College, Auckland.

<sup>11</sup>Kevin Neal, of Auckland, has an avid interest in New Zealand history and especially in the life of Cornthwaite Hector and his family.

<sup>12</sup>Harry C. Goode, Sr. gave this manuscript to Jim Culberson who states that “Harry’s ancestors personally knew C.J. Hector rather well so what Harry knew was passed down by word of mouth from his Grandmother and father.”

<sup>13</sup> “Woman Who Named Melbourne Tells of Early Days Here”, Melbourne Times, Jan. 25, 1927, page 1.

<sup>14</sup> Barbara A. McCaughey, Executive Assistant to the Rector, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Melbourne, FL.

#### About the Author:

Nine years ago, Zillah Williams, an Australian citizen living in Canberra, became fascinated with the story behind Florida’s Melbourne being named after Australia’s Melbourne.

Through contacts with historians, archivists and others, she amassed a great amount of material about C.J. Hector. Her sources were in Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand and the United States, including Brevard County.

Zillah is a “70-ish” retired public and state librarian, active genealogist and published writer of juvenile fiction. Born in Surrey, England, she moved to Australia with her parents when she was 13. She and her husband, Alan, have two grown daughters, Heather and Dianne, the latter an aspiring librarian herself. Both Zillah and Alan are active with Radio 1RPH in Canberra, an affiliate of RPH Australia, a radio reading service for the print handicapped.

In February, 2004, Zillah donated copies of her research material to the Brevard County Historical Commission. Her story, “The Hunt for C.J. Hector,” gives us a never-before-seen peek at Melbourne’s founder. Much of C.J.’s life, however, is still shrouded in the fogs of history. We still do not know where he was born. It could have been in England, New Zealand, Australia, or, perhaps, on board a ship. We still do not know how, when, where or why he came to America.

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**VASSAR BENJAMIN CARLTON**

**By**  
**Clarence T. Johnson, Jr.**  
**Circuit Judge - Retired**

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Vassar Benjamin Carlton was born on November 13, 1912 in the farming community of Island Grove, in Alachua County, Florida, the third of five children born to Ben and Zeffie Carlton.

After several moves, the family finally settled on Merritt Island in 1929, when Vassar was 17. He graduated from Cocoa High School in 1931, where he was Captain of the football team.

He attended the University of Florida and graduated from Stetson Law School in 1937.

After practicing law for several years, he was elected County Judge of Brevard County in 1940 and served for 14 years.

In 1954 he was elected Circuit Judge of the Ninth Judicial Circuit, which included Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin and Okeechobee Counties. For a time he was the only Circuit Judge in Division B of the Ninth Circuit, which was composed of Brevard and Seminole Counties.

In 1968 he was elected, in a statewide election, to the Florida Supreme Court, being sworn in on January 7, 1969. In 1973 he became the only resident in Brevard County history to become Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court. As Chief Justice, he presided over the implementation of the 1972 passage of Article V of the Florida Constitution which abolished Justice of the Peace Courts, Municipal Courts, Civil and Criminal Court of Record and Magistrates Courts and streamlined an overburdened Court structure. He retired in 1974, after 33 years on the Florida Bench.

“Judge Carlton”, as he was affectionately known in Brevard County, was an outstanding example of what a Judge should be. He was fair, impartial, courteous, patient, diligent, intelligent, prompt in his rulings, thorough in his considerations, had common sense, high personal standards, moral courage and led by example. He was a man to be emulated.

He died on August 31, 2005 at 92 years of age, leaving his wife, Sue Carlton, four children, Mary Carol Crisafulli, Martha Fulmer, Barbara Higgins and Pam



Sachs, many grandchildren, and his sister, Coralie Crockett.

In addition to his surviving family, he has left an enduring legacy in Brevard County. In 1991, the “Vassar B. Carlton American Inn of Court” was established, which teaches civility, professionalism, ethics and skills to members of the legal profession, including attorneys recently admitted to the bar. The Inn is still going strong. On October 1, 2004, the Titusville court room in which he presided for over 25 years, was dedicated as the “Honorable Vassar B. Carlton Courtroom”. Judge Carlton was present and spoke at the dedication.

On February 17, 2006, the “old” Courthouse in Titusville was dedicated as the “Vassar B. Carlton Historic Titusville Courthouse”. This “old” courthouse is still used daily by County and Circuit Judges who have offices, hearing rooms and courtrooms there.



### **The Vassar B. Carlton Historic Titusville Courthouse Marker**

Judge Vassar Benjamin Carlton was truly a man of whom Brevard County and the State of Florida can be proud.

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**THE CLIFTON COLORED SCHOOL**  
**BUILT 1890-1891**  
**By**  
**Roz Foster**

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Prior to building the Clifton schoolhouse, the children of Butler Campbell and Andrew Jackson attended school in the home of a man by the name of Mr. Mahaffey. Having no school in their locality, the families employed a certified teacher, and the Brevard County School Board of Public Instruction, paid five dollars for every child of school age taught, after examination of the children's progress by the school superintendent.

Any locality claiming a school had to provide a public school house, select at least one trustee, and secure a certified teacher. In 1890-91, Campbell and Jackson decided it was time to build a proper structure for their nine children. A neighbor, Wade Holmes, provided a one-acre lot as the building site, which was located in the northwest corner of his property adjacent to the Campbell's lot. Lumber and building materials bought in Titusville were shipped by sail-boat to north Merritt Island. Campbell, Jackson, and Holmes built a 12x16 structure of heart pine lumber. Two sets of glass-paned windows were placed opposite each other on the north and south sides. The front of the schoolhouse faced west which was fitted with a double paneled door. The roof was made of cedar or cypress boards. The structure rested on hand cut coquina blocks about one foot off the ground.

The Indian River Advocate newspaper described the "Closing Exercises of the Clifton Colored School" on September 27, 1892. Professor Mahaffey was praised for the high quality of education of his students. The Campbell children included Florida, Eugenia, Agnes, Henry and Willie. The Jackson children were Annie, Mary, Floyd and Douglas who was class Valedictorian. Studies included primary reading, physiology and higher lessons in English, and primary/advance classes in math.

In 1893, the school year ended in August after the children attended school during the summer months so they could help with grove and fieldwork during the winter growing season. The exams showed proficiency of all students' studies, especially math and Latin. Willie Campbell was class Valedictorian.

By 1910, most of the children were of the age to be out of school, attending school in Titusville and elsewhere or seeking higher education. Eugenia returned in 1924 and later lived in the structure.

When NASA took over North Merritt Island in the 1960's, the families were relocated to other areas. Most of the structures were demolished or fell to ruin, but the little school house was overlooked and rediscovered in 2004, barely standing.



**The Clifton Colored School as it looked when found in 2004**

**THE GIBSON TENEMENT HOUSES  
AND  
THE GIBSON FAMILY  
TITUSVILLE, FLORIDA  
By  
Roz Foster**

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The three shotgun style tenement houses located at 709, 711, and 713 Palm Avenue, are the only visual evidence of the existence of what used to be the vibrant black owned business section along South Street in Titusville, Florida. Platted as the town of Joynerville in 1879 by J. Frances Le Baron, Civil and Railroad Engineer, and recorded October 27, 1881 by Alexander A. Stewart, Clerk of the Circuit Court, as T22S, R35E, Sec. 3, Lot 3 N ½ in Book 1, page 132, the sparsely populated black section of Titusville was located in the west half of Lot 3, on the south side of South Street, between DeLeon Street and Third Street, (was named DeSoto Street on the north side of South Street).

The three shotgun style wood structures are all that remain of a larger complex of tenement houses built sometime in early 1900 and owned by William Gibson and his wife Kate. They provided a decent place to live for grove workers, farm hands, and railroad workers when they came to this area to work seasonal jobs. There were two larger houses located on the northern section of the lot, one was a duplex and the other was a single house used by the supervisor and his family. Another shotgun style house was located at the south end and was lost to deterioration years ago. The last larger duplex house was demolished in the year 2000. The duplex was originally 810 sq. ft. with a front porch, and the small shotgun houses were each 371 sq. ft. William's second wife Sadye added indoor bathrooms and front porches, sometime after she and William were married in the late twenties. They were constructed of heart pine lumber, painted clapboard siding, tin hip roof, and sat on brick piers. The remaining houses still have the original 2 over 2 glass paned windows, and appear much as they did when Sadye remodeled them in the late 1920s.

This area of Titusville became known as "Colored Town" in the late 1800's, and legend has it recorded like this: E.L. Brady and Brother Grocery Store, a well established business located on Washington Ave. in downtown Titusville, put into use a delivery wagon in order to provide better customer service. At first he could identify each customer by name, and when a delivery was going to the black section, he would say, "This goes to Andrew Gibson", or as the case may be. When Titusville's black community became more populated, neither Mr. Brady nor his clerk could no longer easily name everyone, so he

would put the customer's orders in certain baskets and would tell his delivery-man, "This load goes out to Colored Town". The name stuck for many years.

When another black businessman by the name of Henry Maxwell arrived in 1880, he found a black population of approximately thirteen already there, which included the families of Dick Wright, Andrew and Ed Gibson, and Betsy Thomas. Most of the black community were located on the south side of South Street, until after the completion of the JT & KW Railroad in 1885, when many of the railroad workers settled in Titusville. When the black community began to grow, many newcomers, who were grove workers, farm hands and railroad workers, found there were no available places to live and resorted to living in tents. When Judge George Robbins, a white man, saw these deplorable conditions, he had a large rooming house built on the north side of South Street near the railroad tracks. It was a two story wood structure, 125 feet long x 60 feet wide, and often referred to as the "long house". In 1886, a well-respected man by the name of Dick Wright, was the only black who owned a home on the north side of South Street. He was the mail carrier on the route from Titusville to Eau Gallie, and ran a boat called the "Dolphin".

#### THE GIBSON FAMILY HISTORY

Andrew Jackson Gibson was the fourth of nine children, four sons and five daughters, born to a mulatto slave by the name of William, who was the son of an unnamed African female slave and a white planter by the name of William Gibson. Listed in the first United States census taken in 1794, William Gibson was a freeholder of Camden County, Georgia (near Brunswick), of Scottish descent, age 35 years, with a wife, age 19 years, and son Thomas, age 1 year. The 1810 census lists him and family as freeholders of Currituck County, North Carolina (near Elizabeth City), the addition of another son James, born in 1804, and the acquisition of a mulatto slave named William, born in 1805. Sometime during the next twelve years, Gibson moved his family to Warren County, Georgia (near Augusta). Two more sons were born, Henry in 1812, and William in 1822. In the 1840 census, Andrew Gibson is listed as being 9 years old, one of nine children sired by the mulatto slave William, and all property of William Gibson, the planter. During the period of 1840 – 1850, William Gibson the planter died, and after his death the mulatto slave William and his off-spring became the property of the eldest son, James Gibson. After 1850, there was no record of the mulatto slave William, but there were records that all of his nine children, including Andrew Gibson remained property of James Gibson until emancipation. Records indicate that none of the children were literate, and following emancipation, some spelled the name with a "p" (Gipson). Andrew's sister Julie, who lived in Jacksonville, Florida during

the latter part of the twentieth century spelled her name Gipson. His brother Norman, who lived in Sanford, Florida in the late nineteenth century spelled his name Gibson.

Following emancipation, Andrew and his brother Edward moved to Thomasville, Georgia and later to Monticello, Florida where they lived until 1869. In 1869 they both came to Brevard County and settled in Rockledge. Andrew returned to Monticello in 1872 where he farmed. There he met Miss Miley Macon, and married in 1873. He returned to Florida with his wife and daughter Emily and settled in Titusville in 1876. He became the first black businessman of Titusville when he opened the first barbershop, which catered entirely to white customers, and a shoe repair shop. In 1880 he became Brevard County's first jailer, and fed prisoners meals that he and his wife prepared in their small home. He also worked as the supervisor of the only public road in Brevard County, and held these two public offices at the same time. The county turned the first poor over to him, a man named Stone, whom he took him in and nursed for the county. Andrew saw a need and later initiated the formation of the Brevard County Poor Farm. Gibson opened a restaurant, which was located across the street from the Titus House. It was famous for fresh oysters and seafood, and served meals to both blacks and whites.

In 1886 Andrew, Edward and a railroad worker by the name of Louis Ufollow, started the first black church in Titusville in a little 12 x 12 upright wood shack



**Andrew Jackson Gibson**

owned by Andrew. The Missionary Baptist Church was founded and they served as the first deacons. The congregation continued to grow and services were moved to the larger home of Tom Smith. When the need for a larger church became apparent, Louis Ufollow went to Mary Titus to make arrangements to get a lot for a church. \*Mrs. Titus donated a lot for a church and a school, and named William Gibson, Isaiah Gory and Lewis Ufollow as trustees. Today the church is known as The Greater Bethlehem Baptist Church and continues to play a central role in the religious life of Titusville's black community. Andrew remained active in the church until his death August 2, 1928. He is buried in the Gibson family plot at LaGrange Ceme-

tery. Andrew was also a member of the Masonic Lodge.

A warranty deed recorded January 27, 1887 records the following information: An indenture was made on December 17, 1886, between William Gibson, Andrew Gibson, and Edward Gibson, named as Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Mary E. Titus, widow, of the town of Titusville, for the sum of one dollar for a church lot for the use of and benefit of said church. It is described as Lot Number twelve (12), Block number twenty-five (25), as shown on the 1880 map by J. Francis Le Baron and on file at the clerks office in the county of Brevard and State of Florida. This map shows the location of lot 12 to be on the northwest corner of South and Canaveral Streets, and possibly was St. James AME Church, which is presently located on the corner of South Street and Dummit Ave.

Seven of Andrew and Miley Gibson's eight children were born and educated in Titusville. Although Andrew was illiterate himself, he was a strong advocate of the value and power of education. When public education was not available to black children, he hired a white woman, Mrs. Annie McGrath, to teach his children. He was also a dedicated supporter of Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune in her struggle to establish what has become Bethune-Cookman College at Daytona Beach, Florida.

Victoria Gibson was born September 12, 1887, the eighth and last child of Andrew and Miley. She married Jake Rodgers and they had no children. Victoria and Jake lived in the two story Gibson family home which was located on South Street and Dummitt Avenue. Victoria was also a teacher and during the thirties worked at Titusville Colored School when Harry T. Moore was principle. Out of the eight Gibson children born and raised in Titusville, Victoria remained here with her husband Jake until death. Victoria died May 25, 1965 and is buried in the Gibson family plot at LaGrange Cemetery.

Another daughter, Mamie Gibson Robinson developed a hair care system rivaling Madame C.J. Walker's Poro System. She operated her hair care business at 1314 Nebraska Avenue in Tampa, Florida from 1910 to 1913, where she was also very active in civic affairs.

William Gibson was born December 25, 1865, the son of Edward and Emma (Smith) Gibson. William married Kate Reed in 1890 at Titusville, Florida. Kate was born in 1870, and died October 6, 1926. She is buried in the Gibson Family plot at LaGrange Cemetery. He had two sisters, Addie, born February 19, 1878, and Jerusha (Ziegler) who also lived in Titusville. Addie married Henry R. Rivers, born 1875 and died May 31, 1944. Addie died February 24,

1944, and both are buried at LaGrange Cemetery.

William married Sadye L. Smith, September 5, 1927, in Titusville, Florida. Sadye Gibson became a teacher, and in 1932 taught second grade at Titusville Colored School, where Harriette V. Moore was also a teacher, and Harry T. Moore was the principle. When Sadye had difficulty teaching the history lesson, she would ask Mr. Moore for help, because she knew he was always willing to help one of his teachers. She also taught math at the Gibson School in the late 1950's. Sadye was born May 31, 1904 and died April 12, 1996. William died May 13, 1960. Sadye and William are buried in the Gibson family plot at LaGrange Cemetery.

The preservation of the Gibson tenement houses will provide an important visual link to the rich heritage and history of the black community of Titusville and Brevard County. Through preservation of such structures, future generations are provided with tangible evidence of the past and the history of those who have paved the way to the present.

#### Research Sources:

Brevard County Tax Records, Deed and Mortgage Records, County and City of Titusville and Joynerville Maps, U.S. and Brevard County Census, Mortuary Records, Star Advocate Newspapers Articles and Obituaries, Gibson Family Records and Oral Histories.



**The Gibson Tenement Houses**



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**THE WILLIAMS FAMILY OF WILLIAMS POINT  
RECORDED BY DAUGHTER PATRICIA WILLIAMS BAYER**

**By  
Roz Foster**

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Hub and Nell Williams came from north Florida to the community of City Point in 1903. In 1923, they built a restaurant on the banks of the Indian River in Sharpes, and named it "Hub's Inn." They started the business with five tables, and their food and recipes became world famous. Before opening the restaurant, the Williams family sold fish meals in paper bags. Hub's daughter, Nellie Williams Lynch helped run the restaurant off and on when Hub and Nell were ill. They finally turned it over for her to run full time in 1932. She tried to make it into a tearoom, but fresh fish was the key to its success. Members of the Williams family continued to own the building, and leased it out until 1966 when it closed.

In 1901 their son Charles E. Williams was born. The family owned and operated a commercial fishing business, where Charlie worked. He attended Cocoa High School, and in 1919 was one of three students in the first graduating class. He furthered his education by attending Georgia Tech for two years, taking mechanic courses, and then attended automotive school in Missouri to receive his machinist degree. His first "garage" was operated out of his father's car garage. He later borrowed money and built a two-story building next to Hub's Inn. When U.S. Highway 1 opened, he bought the point of land created at the intersection of the river road and the Dixie Highway and named it "Williams Point". At this location, he built a filling station with a garage in the back, and a one-bedroom apartment upstairs and later an office downstairs. Charlie opened his business on Christmas Day in 1927, which housed a machine shop and a concession stand in addition to the filling station.

When business became profitable Charlie invested in land. He donated some of his land to the Four Communities Fire Department of which he was a charter member, chief and volunteer fireman.

Charlie married Myralene Thurmond in June 1935, and they lived upstairs in the one-bedroom apartment for the first five years of their marriage. Myralene and her parents came to this area from Georgia in 1924. She graduated from Cocoa High School in 1931, and attended business school for two years. She became a telephone operator when it was standard procedure to pull plugs to connect people on the line. She later was employed as a secretary by Dr. Kenaston, a well-known doctor in Cocoa, and became his medical assistant.

In 1937 Charlie, Myralene and her father, a carpenter by trade, built a two-story structure on the west side of U.S. Highway 1. She operated Myralene’s Pit BBQ Restaurant downstairs, and rented rooms upstairs. Myralene perfected her BBQ sauce as she served it to her customers, and then bottled and sold it. They also built a separate building for preparing the pit BBQ, and a fruit-packing house. Charlie, Myralene and volunteers caught mullet and made side dishes for “fish fries” to raise money to build the firehouse and later to continue supporting it. The packinghouse was used for cooking and serving the fish dinners. The windmill at the point was used to pump water to the elevated water tank which provided running water. Before the firehouse was built firemen used grove sprayers to put out fires, which were filled with water from the same water tank.

The building that began as Myralene’s Pit BBQ Restaurant in 1935 eventually became the home of the popular Corky Bell’s Seafood Restaurant, which has been lost to the elements of nature in recent years. The elevated water tank and windmill that served the community of Williams Point for so many years, still stand, caught in time, on the hill located behind the new Corky Bell’s Seafood Restaurant.

Efforts are underway to move the elevated water tower and tank, and the windmill to a proposed historic park located within the Chain of Lakes Project where they will be restored and preserved for future generations.

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**THOUGHT FOR THE DAY**

Some people walk this earth and leave behind a trail of accomplishments.  
They will be remembered in the future.  
Some people walk this earth and never leave a footprint.  
They will be forgotten in the future.  
Will your walk on earth be remembered or forgotten?

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

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We are about half way through this budget year and on target completing the first year of our Five Year Plan. We should begin digitizing some of our collection in the very near future. This is the first step in creating our Cyber Media Center and making the collections digitally available at both the Brevard County Historical Records Archive and over the Internet.

Dave Paterno and his team of volunteers are doing an outstanding job with the NASA photo project. They are near completion. The team received a round of applause at a recent Historical Commission meeting for their efforts. This is the first phase of a two phase project. Phase two will be to set up displays using the NASA photographs that can be shown in and around Brevard County.

The history video project has a committee assigned and will be getting underway producing a series of history videos that cover Brevard County history. Progress has been slow because of the many other projects going on at this time. A lot of effort will go into planning before the actual video recording and editing will begin.

We have continued with the marker program by adding several new markers in the County. A full report on the markers will appear in the Fall/ Winter 2006 Issue of the Indian River Journal.

As a new hurricane season begins, my thoughts return to the devastation of last year. One topic that got only a little press last year was the loss of historical records. A lot of records were kept in buildings that weren't resistant to hurricane force winds or sat in low areas that flooded. Reports concerning the losses are deceiving. Some simply say "Historical Society building – totally destroyed," with emphasis on the structure and not the contents. The impact of losing the building will be remedied by the construction of a new facility that, I hope, will be on high ground and resistant of hurricane force winds. The impact of losing the historical records will be felt forever.

Ed Bradford  
Chairman, Brevard County Historical Commission  
and Brevard County Historical Records Archive

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## ONLINE SERVICES

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**Brevard County Historical Commission**

<http://www.brevardcounty.us/history/>

**Brevard County Historical Maps**

<http://fcit.usf.edu/florida/maps/county/brevard/brevard.htm>

**Florida Historical Museums**

[http://www.floridasmart.com/attractions/museums\\_hist.htm](http://www.floridasmart.com/attractions/museums_hist.htm)

**The Florida Historical Society**

<http://www.florida-historical-soc.org/>

**The Florida Memory Project**

An interactive Web site of Florida history, photos and letters

<http://floridamemory.com/>

**Public Records Management**

Services to state and local governments

[http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/index\\_RecordsManagers.cfm](http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/index_RecordsManagers.cfm)

**Services to Genealogists**

Researching your family history at the State Archives of Florida

<http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/barm/fsa.html>

**The State Library of Florida**

Collecting, preserving and making available the published history of Florida

<http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/stlib/>

**The State Archives of Florida**

Preserving the past and present for future generations

<http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/barm/fsa.html>

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## FROM THE NASA PHOTO ARCHIVES

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KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, FLA. -- STS-95 Payload Specialist John H. Glenn Jr., a senator from Ohio and one of the original seven Project Mercury astronauts, is checked by Dave Martin (left), of United Space Alliance, and Danny Wyatt (right), of NASA, in the white room at Launch Pad 39B before entry into Space Shuttle Discovery during a dress rehearsal for launch. Glenn and the rest of the STS-95 crew are at KSC to participate in the Terminal Countdown Demonstration Test (TCDT) for the launch scheduled for October 29, 1998. The TCDT includes mission familiarization activities, emergency egress training, and a simulated main engine cutoff. The other crew members are Mission Commander Curtis L. Brown; Pilot Steven W. Lindsey; Mission Specialists Scott E. Parazynski, Stephen K. Robinson, and Pedro Duque of Spain, representing the European Space Agency (ESA); and Payload Specialist Chiaki Mukai, representing the National Space Development Agency of Japan (NASDA). The STS-95 mission includes research payloads such as the Spartan-201 solar-observing deployable spacecraft, the Hubble Space Telescope Orbital Systems Test Platform, the International Extreme Ultraviolet Hitchhiker, as well as the SPACEHAB single module with experiments on space flight and the aging process.



Photo No.: KSC-98PC-1300, Released October 9, 1998

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## HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS

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**African American Preservation League**, Helen Williams, President, 321-638-3805, Meets at Field Library 7pm, 1st and 3rd Tuesdays

**American Police Hall of Fame & Museum**, 6350 Horizon Dr., Titusville, FL 32780

**Alma Clyde Field Library** (Florida Historical Society), 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922

**Brevard County Historical Records Archive**, 801 Dixon Blvd., Suite 1110, Cocoa, FL 32922

**Brevard Cultural Alliance**, 2725 Fran Jamieson Way, Building B, Room 104 Viera, FL 32940

**Brevard Genealogical Society**, P.O. Box 1123, Cocoa, FL 32922-1123

**Brevard Heritage Council**, c/o Alma Clyde Field Historical Library, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922

**Brevard Museum of History and Natural Science**, 2201 Michigan Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922

**Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation**, P.O. Box 1978, Cape Canaveral, FL 32920

**Florida Historical Society**, Nick Wynne, Executive Director, 1320 Highland Ave., Melbourne, FL 32935

**Genealogical Society of North Brevard**, P.O. Box 897, Titusville, FL 32781-0879

**Grant Historical Society**, P.O. Box 44, Grant, FL 32949

**Indian River Anthropological Society**, Tom Pender, President, 3365 Heather Dr., Titusville, FL 32796

**Liberty Bell Memorial Museum**, 1601 Oak Street, Melbourne, FL 32901

**The Mosquito Beaters**, George "Speedy" Harrell, President, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922

**National Railway Historical Society**, Florida East Coast Chapter, P.O. Box 2034, Cocoa, FL 32923-2034

**North Brevard Historical Society**, 301 S. Washington Ave., Titusville, FL 32789

**Preservation & Education Trust, Inc.**, P.O. Box 560823, Rockledge, FL 32956-0823

**Rockledge Heritage Foundation**, Amanda Mitskevich, 27 Barton Ave., Rockledge, FL 32955

**South Brevard Historical Society**, Betty Preece, President, P.O. Box 1064, Melbourne, FL 32902-1064

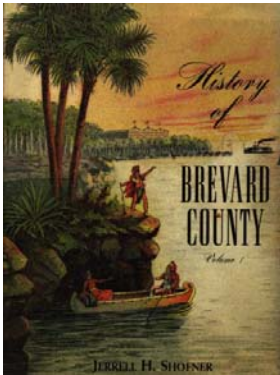
**Town of Melbourne Village Historical Preservation Commission**, Jean Henderson, Secretary, 724-0070

**Williams Building Committee**, Ann Downing, Secretary, Old Town Hall Historic Center, 2373 Oak St., Melbourne Beach, FL 32951

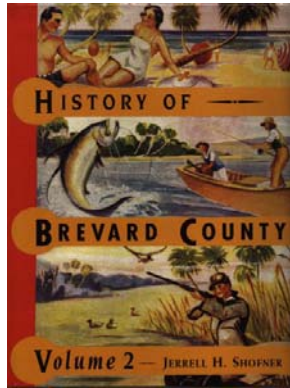
*Try as we might to keep this list accurate with up-to-date information, it seems that changes occur that we don't know about until after publication. If you know of a needed change, see an error or have an addition to what we've presented here, please let us know. Our address is Brevard County Historical Commission, 801 Dixon Blvd., Suite 1110, Cocoa, FL 32922 or by telephone at 321-433-4415*

# The History of Brevard County

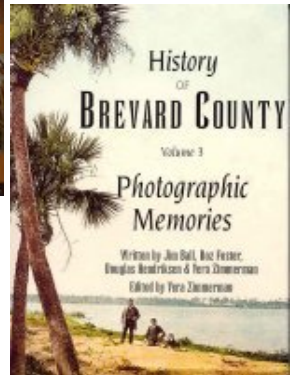
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