

THE JOURNAL OF THE
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL

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Spring/Summer 2007

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



*A steam engine, originally built for the Manistee & Luther Railroad
by the Baldwin Locomotive Works, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

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THE INDIAN RIVER JOURNAL

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Juan Ponce de Leon

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**CASTOR BEANS GROWN IN TITUSVILLE SUPPLIED OIL
FOR
WORLD WAR I PLANES**

Compiled by Roz Foster

**Extracted from the East Coast Advocate Newspaper Printed February 1,
1918**

According to an article in the East Coast Advocate Newspaper, printed February 1, 1918, Castor bean oil was used in airplanes during World War I, and local farmers were urged to grow them in support of the war effort.

Mr. Herman B. Walker, a member of the firm of Helm and Walker located in Miami, Florida, held a meeting at the Brevard County Courthouse in Titusville, to explain the cost of the seed, the price that the US government would pay for them, and the method of cultivating the castor bean. He also made a strong appeal to those in attendance to grow the castor bean in support of the war effort. He stated, “. . . so the United States government could get sufficient oil for air planes to fly over Germany, and help end this ruthless German military war before the military power of Germany came to this country to ruin us, like they had done in Belgium, France and other countries.” He explained the contract terms between his firm and farmers who were interested in growing this summer crop.

The following instructions were given by Mr. Walker for growing castor beans:

1. Seed should be planted two beans to the hill and hills four feet apart in the row. The rows seven feet apart.
2. When plants are up about six inches, remove the weaker of the two plants, so the remaining stronger plant will absorb all of the nutrients.
3. When the plants arrive at the stage where the top crop can be harvested, pull out every other plant in the row, thus leaving the remaining plants eight feet apart. This will provide sufficient room for the lateral branches to spread and get sunlight.
4. Fertilizing – Use a low grade fertilizer, four hundred pounds per acre. If fertilizer is already in the ground before the ground is prepared for the crop, use less fertilizer than stated. Fertilizer should be applied after the plants are up and have been thinned out in the hills. A little should be applied then and more later on.

The meeting was well attended by interested farmers from Titusville and surrounding areas in spite of being held at two o'clock mid afternoon.

At the conclusion of Mr. Walker's presentation, many attendees came forward and signed contracts, and Mr. Adhemar Brady was appointed chairman to oversee the castor bean growing in Titusville.



Castor bean: bean produced by *Ricinus communis*, a plant of the spurge family, widely cultivated as an ornamental. Moles die when they eat the roots. It has long been used as an ordeal poison in parts of Africa. Ricin, the toxic protein found in the bean seeds, can be extracted and used as a poison or chemical weapon, but it is not as poisonous or as readily absorbed as other such weapons. Castor oil is also extracted from the beans.

From: The American Heritage Dictionary. *Answers.com*. Retrieved from www.answers.com/castor%20 on 03/07/2007.

GEORGE WASHINGTON HOPKINS: 1844-1925

By Ed Vosatka

"I have had the pleasure of being associated with Mr. George W. Hopkins since he first came to Florida and my observation of him has been that he is not a man with a desire to make money, but rather to spend it in the development of his large interests for the benefit of future generations." -- Arthur E. Donegan, August 29, 1916.¹

Melbourne, Florida was a quiet coastal town of 157 back in 1910. Barely 30 years old at the time, it was already well known for its rich back country, fine hunting and fishing, proximity to pristine ocean beaches, low incidence of hurricanes and, as was most of east Florida, its mosquitoes! Farming, ranching, fishing and related trades supported the local economy. There were no large industries, and no electricity, ice production, hospital or municipal water and sewage systems. The town was almost totally isolated from the interior of the state by the 6-mile-wide floodplain and virtually impenetrable marshes of the upper St. Johns River. In fact, no railroads or highways crossed the river south of Enterprise Junction, some 80 miles to the north.

West of the river lay the 100,000-acre Ocean Prairie Ranch of George W. Hopkins. His was a modern cattle ranch, intelligently operated, and fenced, contrary to the old free-range practice. He bred up the native scrub cattle and introduced the tick-resistant Aberdeen-Angus and Brahma breeds.² In 1911, his stands of virgin cypress, long-leaf yellow pine and hardwood were appraised in excess of two million dollars. Seeking to log this timber, he contracted with Clark Brothers, a well-known and successful lumber firm from Alexandria, La.³ Clark Bros. built and operated a large sawmill complex on Melbourne's south side and a railway running to Hopkins' timber. The Union Cypress Company became Melbourne's first big industry. Although George Hopkins did not found the company, he soon became its president. Nor did he name the mill town that bore his name. He *"...always had leisure for an interview about business, but did not care for personal mention, notoriety or individual publicity."*⁴

The mill created employment, which led to Melbourne's growth and development. To support and feed the workers, *"...farms were laid out, fences made, lumber for houses furnished, houses built, live stock, farm implements, seed and fertilizer furnished and flowing wells to supply water were all financed by the developer."*⁵ George Hopkins established the Upper St. Johns Drainage District as he developed his farm and ranch lands. Melbourne's very first elec-

tric power came from the mill's power plant. The company's railway connected Melbourne with the state's interior six years before the Kissimmee Highway (U.S. 192) was built.

George Hopkins brought and applied many facets of his vast background and experiences to his new home in Brevard and Osceola counties. His is truly a rags-to-riches story.

---Virginia---

George W. Hopkins was born November 8, 1844, on the family farm near what is now Aurora, West Virginia. He was the 4th child of Samuel Hopkins, a farmer and carpenter, and his wife, Susannah. His great-grandfather was the Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D.D., of Barrington and Newburyport, Mass., founder of the Hopkinsian system of theology.⁶

---Michigan---

When he was 10, George moved with his family to Ogden, in Lenawee County, Michigan. His siblings were Mary, David, Margaret, Lovinia, Virginia, Martha & Missouri. Samuel was employed as a mechanic. There, the last three Hopkins children were born: William in 1856, Rose in 1858, and Milton in 1859. George left the farm when he was 18 and spent two years working with Samuel Giles making county maps. Then, at 20, with a capital of \$46.50, he started selling fruit trees.⁷

---Manistee---

The fall of 1866 saw 21-year-old George buying land in the town of Manistee. There he started a brick yard, and by the following spring, produced the first brick ever made in Manistee County. His older brother, David, joined him and, in October, 1867, they founded a partnership, **GEORGE W. HOPKINS & BRO.** They manufactured brick for 3 years at a rate of 25,000 per day. In addition to the brick business, they contracted to log 12,000,000 feet of timber east of Manistee during the winter of 1867.⁸ Winter logging was a common practice as snow and ice made it easier for horses to pull sleds loaded with cut timber.

When George was 23, he married 22-year-old Mary Ellen Stuart at Bellaire, Ohio, on Aug. 4, 1868. "Ella" was born near Boston, Mass. and spent her girlhood days in Baltimore, Maryland. Educated in the teaching profession, she later taught school in West Virginia.⁹

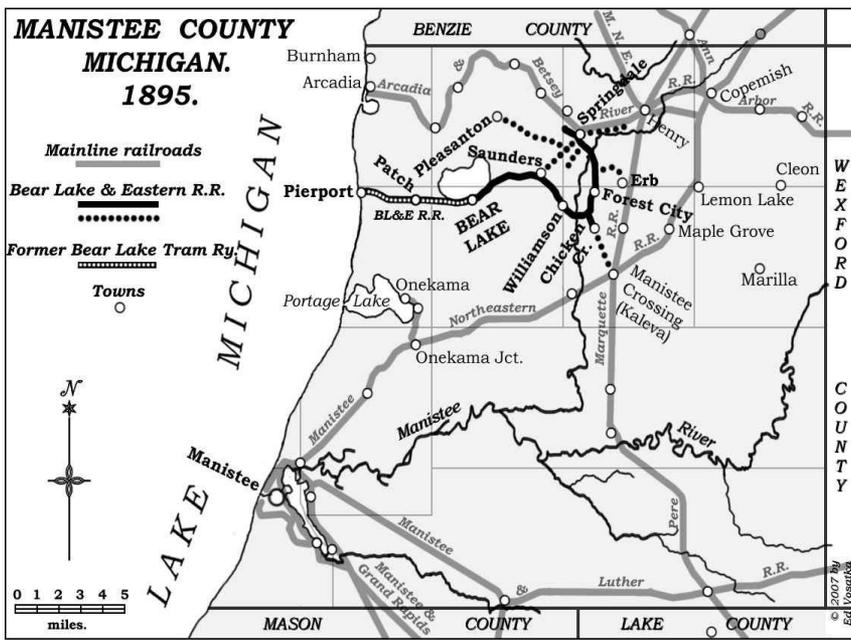


MR. & MRS. GEO. W. HOPKINS

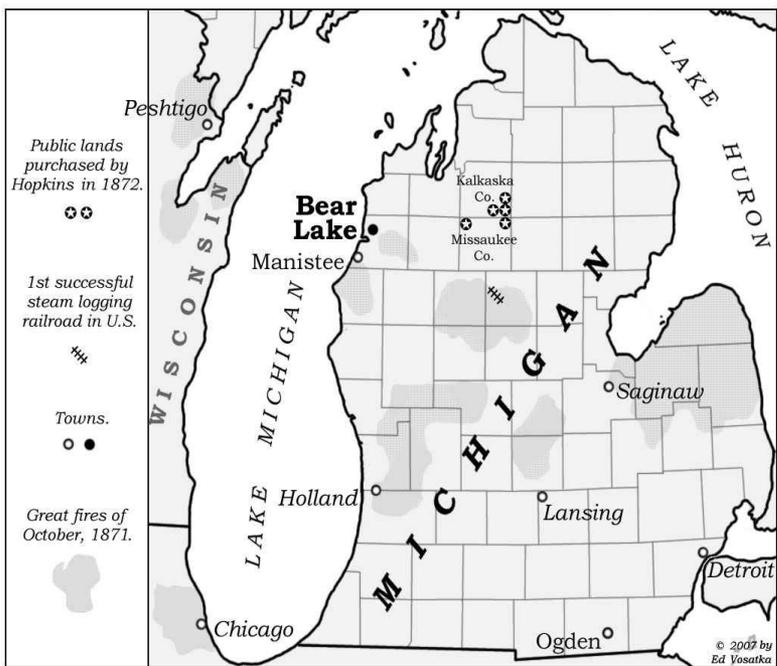
-- *Standard Atlas of Manistee County, Michigan*. Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle & Co., 1903.
 Courtesy of University of Michigan, Michigan County Histories collection.

By July of 1870, George and Ella were back in Manistee, sharing their home with his brother David and 18-year-old sister, Martha.¹⁰ There, their first two children were born: Arthur “Arlie” on Aug. 13, 1870 and Agnes on Oct. 18, 1871. (The extended Kempfer families of Deer Park, FL, are direct descendants of Agnes.) George & David quit the brick business in 1870 and began dealing exclusively with logs and lumber under the name of **HOPKINS BROS.**¹¹

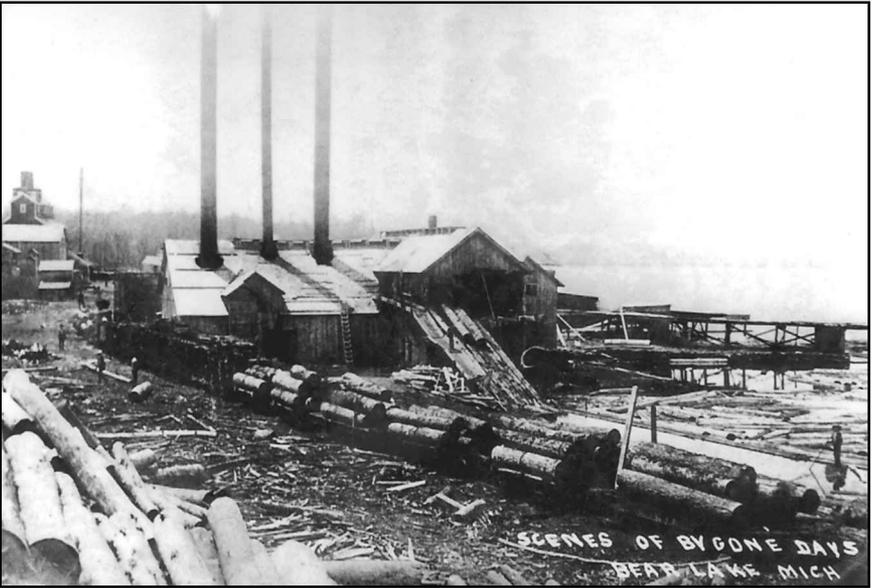
Manistee, with a population of 4,000, was almost completely annihilated by a gale-driven fire storm on October 8, 1871. *“Every thing went down before the storm—dwellings with their home treasures, mills with their machinery, stores and their stocks, warehouses and their contents, the fine swing bridge at the foot of Maple street, vessels and their cargoes, all mingling in common ruin.”* About one-half of the mills and one half of the houses were destroyed.¹² The



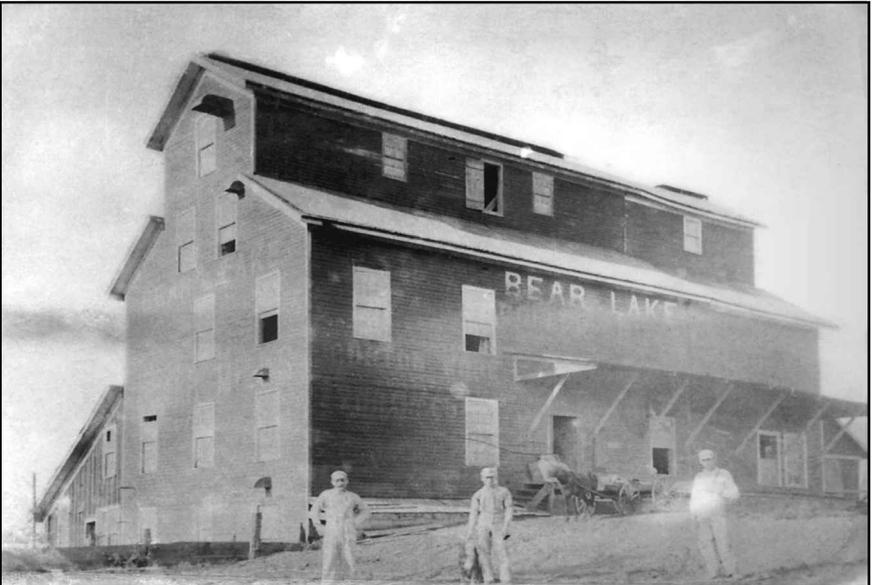
Tackabury's Atlas of the State of Michigan. Detroit: R.M. & S.T. Tackabury, 1873 & 1884.
 Standard Atlas of Manistee County, Michigan. Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle & Co. 1903.
 History of Manistee County, Michigan. Chicago: H.R. Page & Co. 1882.
 Map of Michigan, Map of Southern Michigan. Chicago: Rand McNally & Co. 1888, 1895, 1897 & 1902.



fate of the Hopkins family is unknown, but most likely they were displaced by the fire. Similar conflagrations devastated many other towns that same night,



Bear Lake Sawmill, built in 1882 by the Hopkins Manufacturing Co. -- author's collection.



Bear Lake Roller Mills, built in 1881 by the Hopkins Manufacturing Co. -- author's collection.

the most famous being Chicago, Illinois; Peshtigo, Wisconsin; and Holland, Michigan.

In 1872, the Hopkins brothers jointly purchased 637.19 acres of public land in Missaukee and Kalkaska counties from the U.S. General Land Office. All 11 deeds mention only that they were residents of Manistee County. What they did with this land is not known.¹³

--- Bear Lake ---

George and David began their greatest venture in June of 1873, when they purchased the pioneering homestead of Russell F. Smith on the south shore of Bear Lake.¹⁴ They, with Cyrus Wise, bought and refurbished the local sawmill and grist mill. The sawmill went into operation in August, with a daily production of 20,000 to 25,000 ft. of lumber. The grist mill started operating January 1, 1874.¹⁵

In spring 1874, the brothers platted 88 acres for the village of Bear Lake. George, Ella, Arlie, and Agnes, moved to Bear Lake that fall.¹⁶ There, the rest of their children were born: Clare in 1876, Stuart in 1878, Via in 1880, and Bess in 1885. Stuart and Via died in infancy.¹⁷ David later followed his brother to Bear Lake.

George was described in the 1882 *History of Manistee County, Michigan* as “...a clear-sighted and successful business man...keeping thoroughly posted upon public matters...active in political and other county affairs.”¹⁸ He “... was a man of immense energy and indomitable business courage and his enterprises afforded a livelihood and business opportunity to a large number of people. He was an earnest student of questions pertaining to the public welfare and a fearless advocate of what he considered to be just and right.”¹⁹

Within five years the Village of Bear Lake had grown to 580 people with about 75 buildings. Hopkins Bros. built most of the buildings in the village, loaned money to parties desiring to build, and sold homes upon terms of easy payment. Their own 3-story office building contained a store and a public hall. “*The results of their enterprise and liberality are seen in the beautiful and thrifty village...the buildings are tasty, the streets well laid out, and every one seems prosperous...the private residences of the village are a good deal better, on the average, than will be found in many much larger villages. Messrs. George W. Hopkins and D. H. Hopkins have not only comfortable, but very elegant residences.*”²⁰ George was president [sic] of the newly incorporated

village for several years, and it was “...largely through his influence that Bear Lake became early known as a dry town and a specially enterprising community, both in business and educational leadership.”²¹

The Manistee County Agricultural Society was first organized at Bear Lake because this was the center of the county’s valuable farming region. George was “...instrumental in securing the location of the county fair grounds at Bear Lake, loaning the Agricultural Society funds with which to improve the grounds, besides contributing liberally to advance the interests of the society.”²²

“Mr. Hopkins early became interested in farming as a means of utilizing his cut-over lands and started the big fruit and stock farms which have since been highly developed by his son, Arlie.” He organized the Michigan Hardwood Lumber Association for the inspection of hardwood lumber, and, while he was lumbering in Bear Lake, he took a partnership in an extensive lumbering operation near Florence, South Carolina.²³

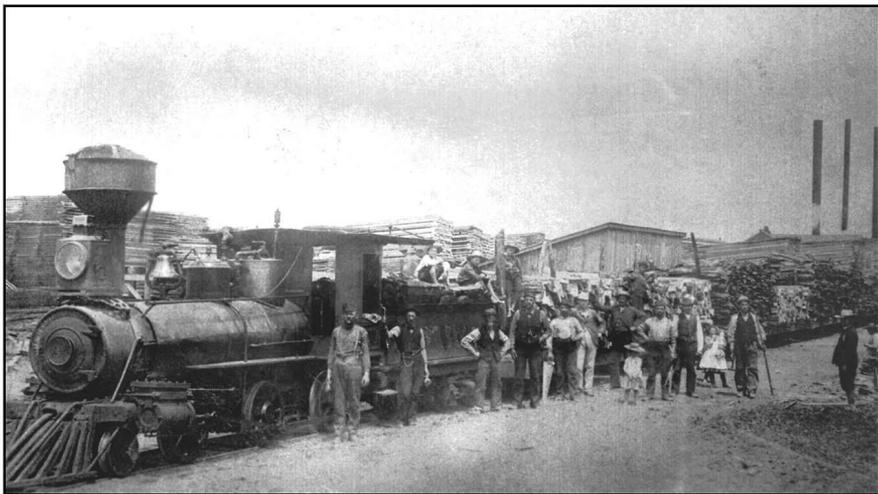
Ella Hopkins was deeply involved in nearly all the cultural, temperance, and educational affairs of the developing village. She was a member of the school board for over 20 years, organized the local Chautauqua Circle and participated in the Red Ribbon Society. She was active at the local, county and district levels of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and was a delegate to their national convention.²⁴

Six miles west of Bear Lake was Pierport, a landing for steamers and sailing ships traveling among ports along and across Lake Michigan.²⁵ In order to ease the burden of getting ever-increasing quantities of wood and farm products to market, the brothers founded the **BEAR LAKE TRAM RAILWAY CO.** They built a narrow-gauge line of maple rails topped with steel strapping from Bear Lake to Pierport.²⁶ The company was incorporated on January 19, 1876, with George as president, David as secretary, and Cyrus Wise as treasurer.²⁷ Traffic began moving on June 10th with trams consisting of identical flat cars, each drawn by one horse. They carried large quantities of hardwood lumber, hemlock bark and farm crops to Pierport. Returning, they carried farm, mill and home supplies and other merchandise.²⁸

Meanwhile, to the east in Clare County, in late 1876, the steam locomotive began to revolutionize the logging industry. The Lake George & Muskegon River R.R. became the first successful steam-driven logging railway in the United States. Lumbermen were no longer dependent on the whims of winter snows or spring floods to ship their timber to the mill. In 1882, some 32 nar-

row-gauge lines were constructed in Michigan. By 1889 there were 89, totaling almost 450 miles of track.²⁹

Back in Bear Lake, the **HOPKINS MANUFACTURING CO.** was organized in 1877, with George as president, Ella as treasurer and David as secretary.



-- author's collection.

BL&E #1, an 0-6-0, was acquired in 1882. It was built in 1882 by the Lima Locomotive Works, Lima, Oh, c/n 32, and later rebuilt as a 2-6-0 in the BL&E shops.



-- courtesy of Carolyn Kempfer.

BL&E #2, a 2-6-0, was acquired in 1886. It was originally built in 1883 for the Manistee & Luther RR. by the Baldwin Locomotive Works, Philadelphia, Pa, c/n 6699.

The company acquired a small steam locomotive in late 1877, but it was too heavy for the wooden rails. They started the first livery stable in the northern part of the county in 1878, and in August, 1879, built their own general store and 360-ft. pier (**Bear Lake Pier Co.**) at Pierpoint, giving the town a second shipping facility.³⁰

The June 1, 1880 census shows George (a lumberman), Ella, Arlie, Agnes & Clare living at Bear Lake. His brother William (a store clerk) & his family were also at Bear Lake. However, David (a lumberman) & his family, and Martha, were now living in Onekama. George's father, Samuel (a farmer), wife Susan, and children Lovinia & Milton were still in Ogden Township.³¹

The *Manistee Times & Standard* of June 25, 1881, reported: "*The company has 500,000 feet of pine this year, which will enable them to fill any demand from neighboring towns and at prices below Manistee.*" That year, the Hopkins Mfg. Co. rebuilt their stone grist mill as a roller grist mill. The **BEAR LAKE ROLLER MILLS** became the first mill of this type in the northern part of peninsular Michigan.³²

Increasing shipments from farms, sawmill and grist mill were overwhelming the little tramway, so a new railroad, the **BEAR LAKE & EASTERN RAIL ROAD CO.**, was chartered on Jan. 24, 1882, to succeed the tram railway. The old tram line was rebuilt with 20- and 30-lb. steel rail and was projected to run some 20 miles from Pierport through Bear Lake and on east to Cleon Township.³³ Within 10 years the railroad grew from one locomotive and 44 cars to three locomotives and 72 cars. Initially, passengers rode on plank seats on flat cars. In 1884, a comfortable 40-foot passenger car of oiled hard wood with seats along the sides and two tiers of windows were built entirely in Bear Lake.³⁴ Again, George Hopkins was president, Ella was treasurer, and David was secretary. Another brother, Milton, was superintendent.

Hopkins brothers sold their old sawmill to Charles B. Bunton in the spring of 1881 and the next year, built a new sawmill. At 40,000 ft. per day, it was double the capacity of the old mill. By now the company owned at least 2,000 acres of uncut timber and 5,000 to 6,000 acres of stump lands.³⁵ In the summer of 1887, the Hopkins' store and its contents were destroyed by fire.

A severe outbreak of typhoid fever struck Michigan during 1887. with 2,424 cases and 411 deaths statewide. The Michigan State Board of Health stated in its sixteenth Annual Report "*...it seems probable that the increased typhoid fever in 1887 may have been due, in part at least, to the low water in wells in that year, it being the third year of small rainfall.*"³⁶ George Hopkins was

among those stricken.³⁷

Because George's illness severely curtailed his ability to manage his business after the fire, the Hopkins Manufacturing Co. was forced into bankruptcy in December of 1887. Charles Bunton bought the mill and reopened it as the Hopkins & Bunton mill in the spring of 1888. The railroad started running again in June.³⁸

Poor's Manual of Railroads announced in its annual report for 1900: "In January, 1900, this [Bear Lake & Eastern] company reported that its affairs would soon be wound up."³⁹ The mill closed and the railroad was taken up during the summer of 1902. The rail and rolling stock were purchased by a Manistee firm.⁴⁰ The BL&E was abandoned on September 1, 1902.⁴¹

On January 16, 1905, a (unnamed) newspaper reported: "*The old Bear Lake sawmills of Hopkins and Bunton has been sold and is being shipped to Alpena. The machinery is hauled to Onekama on sleighs and there loaded on cars.*"

George Hopkins then "...spent several thousand dollars to transform it [the mill property] from a lumber yard to a place of beauty and to prevent the encroachment of the lake upon it and then freely gave the use of it to the public for a pleasure ground and camp ground."⁴²

--- Florida ---

George's health continued to suffer and about 1890, he and Ella decided to winter in Florida. Perhaps he was having relapses of typhoid fever, but, starting in summer of 1907, Brevard County newspapers began mentioning attacks of malaria.⁴³

Where they first stayed is not known, but they eventually started coming to the Kissimmee area. In 1902, he started buying large tracts of land at St. Cloud and Deer Park. He began excavating the "Hopkins Ditch" connecting Lake Washington with the Eau Gallie River. His canal still exists, and can be seen along the south side of Aurora Road starting about ½-mile west of Wickham Road. Further west along the canal, in the vicinity of John Rodes and Harlock roads, is the site of Aurora, a community of vegetable and truck farms, presumably named after George Hopkins' birthplace.⁴⁴

By 1903 George and Ella were staying with friends in Eau Gallie. Redstone & Son of Eau Gallie erected a large houseboat, WOLVERINE, for them in 1907.⁴⁵ For the next three winters, they anchored in the Eau Gallie harbor and sailed the Indian River. In 1910, they bought property just west of Bennett's

Boat Basin (today's Eau Gallie Yacht Basin).⁴⁶ There, they had the WOLVERINE hauled out of the water and converted into a regular house. George and Ella spent their remaining summers in Bear Lake and winters in Eau Gallie. During the summer, George tended to his businesses in Bear Lake. During the winter he presided over the Union Cypress Co., raised cattle and developed his ranch. Ella, as always, was active in church, social and civic organizations.

George W. Hopkins passed away January 21, 1925, at the age of 80. Ella passed away on April 16, 1930, at age 84. They are buried in the Melbourne cemetery, beside their children, Agnes and Clare.⁴⁷

---References---

All material from Manistee, MI, newspapers was received in transcript form and has not been confirmed.

These abbreviations are used for repeated references:

BC = Brevard County, FL, records; ECA = *East Coast Advocate*, Titusville, FL; FS = *Florida Star*, Titusville & Cocoa, FL; MDN = *Manistee Daily News*, Manistee, MI; MFT = *Melbourne Times*, Melbourne, FL; MNA = *Manistee News-Advocate*, Manistee, MI; MMT = *Manistee Times*, Manistee, MI; MTJ = *Melbourne Times-Journal*, Melbourne, FL; SCT = *St. Cloud Tribune*, St. Cloud, FL.

HG = Hopkins, Timothy: *John Hopkins (of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1634) and some of his Descendents*, 1932.

HMC = *History of Manistee County, Michigan*. . . . Chicago: H.R. Page & Co. 1882, pp. 78 – 82.

¹ Kempfer, Wm. H., *Deer Park Farm Lands, Deer Park, Florida*. Melbourne, FL: Melbourne Times Co., c. 1916.

² SCT, Aug. 21, 1919.

³ ECA, Nov 3, 1911.

⁴ MFT, January 17, 1923.

⁵ MFT, February 24, 1933.

⁶ HG, pp. 74, 178, 179, 308.

⁷ HG, pp. 308-310, 471, 472; HMC, p. 79; Federal census, July 25, 1860, p. 208.

⁸ HMC, p. 79; Kaleva (Michigan) Chronicle, Jan. 23, 1925; MNA, "Ella Stuart Hopkins," Mar. 23, 1991.

⁹ HG, p. 470; MFT, Sept. 4, 1918; MTJ, April 18, 1930; MNA, "Ella Stuart Hopkins," Mar. 23, 1991.

¹⁰ Federal census, July 13, 1870, p. 189.

¹¹ HMC, p. 79.

¹² Goodspeed, Rev. E.J. *History of the Great fires in Chicago and the West*. New York: H.S. Goodspeed & Co. 1871, pp. 606, 624; Luzerne, Frank. *Chicago as it was, and as it is!* New York: Wells & Co. 1872, pp. 277-279.

¹³ U.S. Bureau of Land Management certificates, nos. 4565-4569, 4840, 5056 and 5262-5265.

¹⁴ U.S. Bureau of Land Management homestead certificate, no. 419; HMC, p. 79.

¹⁵ MMT, Aug. 21, 1873; HMC, p. 79.

¹⁶ HMC, p. 79; MFT Jan 17, 1923.

¹⁷ HG, p. 470.

¹⁸ HMC, p. 79.

¹⁹ Kaleva (Michigan) Chronicle, Jan. 23, 1925.

²⁰ HMC, pp. 79, 80.

²¹ Kaleva (Michigan) Chronicle, Jan. 23, 1925.

²² HMC, pp. 79, 80.

²³ Kaleva (Michigan) Chronicle, Jan. 23, 1925.

²⁴ MNA, March 23, 1991.

²⁵ MMT, Aug. 21, 1878, Aug. 2, 1879.

²⁶ HMC, p. 79.

²⁷ Michigan Articles of Association, No. 156089; HMC, p. 79; Meints, Graydon M. *Michigan Railroads and Railroad Companies*, Vol 1. East Lansing: MSU Press, 1993. pp. 41, 87, 211.

²⁸ MMT, May 27, 1876, Sept. __, 1877.

²⁹ Dunbar, Willis F. *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965. pp. 473-474.

³⁰ HMC, p. 79; MMT, September __, 1877, Aug. 23, 1879.

³¹ Federal Census, June 1, 1880, pp. 10, 11, 19, 26.

³² MMT, Jan. 29, 1881; HMC, p. 79.

³³ Michigan Articles of Association, No. 156080; *Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1886, p. 949; HMC, p. 79.

³⁴ Unknown Michigan newspaper, May 19, 1884.

³⁵ HMC, pp. 79, 81.

³⁶ *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Secretary of the State Board of Health of the State of Michigan for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1888*. Lansing: Darius D. Thorp. 1889. pp. 254.

³⁷ MNA, "Bear Lake in 1888," March 19, 1988.

³⁸ *Manistee Times-Sentinel*, April 4, 1890; MNA, "Bear Lake in 1888," March 19, 1988.

³⁹ *Poor's Manual of Railroads*, 1900, p. 1432.

⁴⁰ MDN, June 9, 1902.

⁴¹ Meints, Graydon M. *Michigan Railroads and Railroad Companies*, Vol 1. East Lansing: MSU Press, 1993. pp. 41, 87, 211.

⁴² Kaleva (Michigan) Chronicle, Jan. 23, 1925.

⁴³ ECA, June 28, 1907; ECA & FS, July 12, 1907; ECA, May 15, 1908.

⁴⁴ ECA Sept. 24, 1909; FS, April 16, 1909.

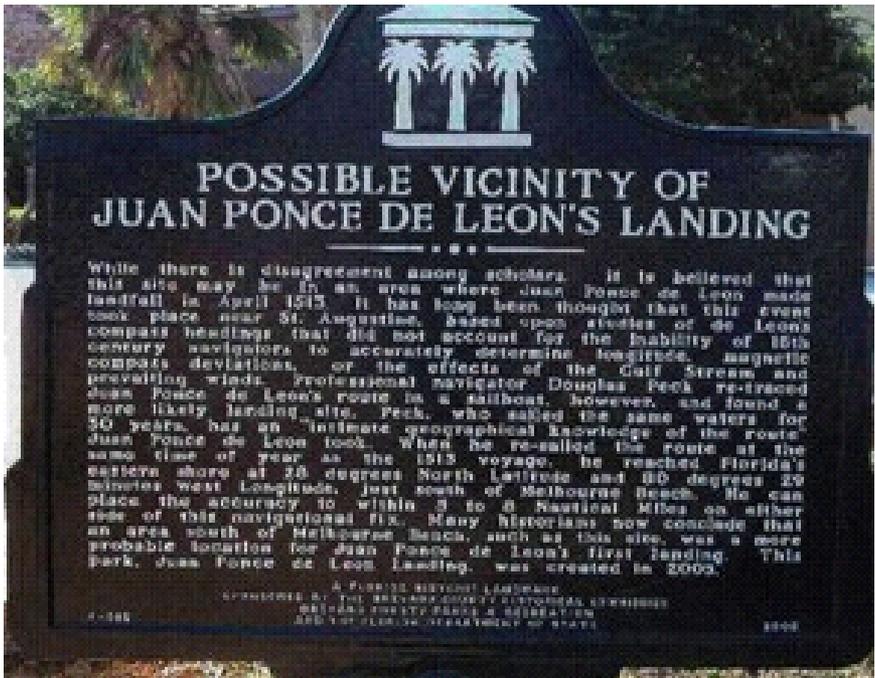
⁴⁵ ECA, Aug. 30, 1907.

⁴⁶ BC deed book QQ, p. 262, February 23, 1910.

⁴⁷ MFT, January 22, 1925; MTJ, April 18, 1930.

MARKER DEDICATION

The Ceremony Was Held on Site
Just South of Melbourne Beach on April 2, 2005.



THE FINAL DISCOVERY OF THE AMERICAN MAINLAND

by Ed Bradford

As we have all been taught, Columbus discovered America in 1492. But did he really? Actually, he discovered the Islands in the Caribbean. The actual American mainland wasn't discovered 1513. Just think of it, ships sailed to, from and around the Caribbean for 21 years before Juan Ponce de Leon came across the American mainland and even then he was looking for another island and initially thought he found it.

Juan Ponce de Leon is credited for the discovery of the American mainland because permanent European settlements followed shortly thereafter and the Europeans wrote the history we've been studying all these years. However, if we go back in time, it is believed that Asians actually discovered America thousands of years ago. They settled permanently and became what we now call Native Americans. Unfortunately, there are no historical documents that exist, at least that I'm aware of, which tell that story. There is archaeology though and some tremendous discoveries have been made in Brevard County, Florida and other areas that advance our knowledge about that time. I've also heard that some historians believe the Phoenicians made their way to America and may have influenced the Native Americans. It appears that they didn't stay. And we shouldn't forget Leif Erickson's credited discovery of a place he called Vineland about a thousand years ago. But again, he didn't stay. Juan Ponce de Leon, the former governor of Puerto Rico, made the discovery and permanent settlements followed. The irony is, as our history lessons taught us, America wasn't named after Columbus or Ponce de Leon as it should have been,. It was named after Amerigo Vesppucci.

So where did Juan Ponce de Leon first step ashore? Why, somewhere along Melbourne Beach, Florida, according to sailor, navigator and author Douglas T. Peck in his book *Ponce de Leon and the Discovery of Florida*. There isn't any archaeological evidence to support the location of the exact spot and none is expected to be found. However, through navigational science, the area has been narrowed down to within a few miles along Melbourne Beach.

So what was Ponce de Leon looking for when he came across the mainland? To determine that all we need to do is look at the voyage charter granted by King Ferdinand. In those days an explorer just didn't pick up his kit and go off exploring. The exploration had to be authorized by the King. After all it was his ships, money and men that the explorer was using. According to author Douglas T. Peck, the voyage charter that Ponce de Leon received for this exploration stated he was looking for a large Island that had a lot of gold.



Local Brevard County, Florida resident, Samuel Lopez, portraying the landing of Juan Ponce de Leon on Melbourne Beach

What about the Fountain of Youth? According to Mr. Peck, it is not mentioned in the charter the King granted. The first mention of a Fountain of Youth in conjunction with Juan Ponce de Leon appears to have been made by Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo, a Spanish historian, in his book *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*, written in 1535. That was 15 years after the death of Juan Ponce de Leon. Why he made such a statement when there appears to be no evidence to support it remains speculation.

If my math serves me right, the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the American mainland will occur during the year 2013. That's only six years away. This is a date that should be celebrated by everyone. After all, the discovery of the American mainland is not only significant to Florida but also to the nation, the American continent and internationally as well.

If you haven't done so already, I encourage you to read Douglas T. Peck's book *Ponce de Leon and the Discovery of Florida*. I found it fascinating and refreshing.

ISABEL CLOHECY

by Jill Berry

This is the story of a Florida Pioneer woman, Isabel Clohecy, and her family. Sadly, having died over fifty years ago, and leaving no heirs, Isabel's story was buried along with her, until now.

The year was 1869 when young Isabel Marion Clohecy was born in Cincinnati Ohio, to John P. Clohecy, and Bridget Hart Clohecy, his wife. Bridget was born one of nine children in Ireland in 1843. As a young woman she went to Cincinnati, Ohio and met and married John P. Clohecy. Soon afterward Isabel was born. They had another child, a son they named John P. Clohecy, Jr. Together the four of them ventured south to Jacksonville, Florida in 1874. Shortly after their arrival, an outbreak of "Yellow Fever" erupted and their young son John caught it and died. Filled with grief, John Sr., Bridget and Isabel sailed south toward Titusville.



Isabel Chohecy became the first president of St. Vincent's Charity School of Nursing in 1905.

On November 24, 1874, the young Clohecy family homesteaded one hundred and sixty four acres along the edge of the Indian River which they called "Farview". It was in Tilman or what is now known as "Palm Bay".

They were in the wilderness, with one other white settler, an Englishman named Thomas Mason, and a freed black former slave family. Then in 1875, they had another son which they named John Hart Clohecy.

A little more than a year later in December 1876, anguish came on the Clohecy family again. While seeking provisions for his small family, sailing south from Titusville, John Sr. fell overboard to his death. Now, Bridget was all alone with two small children, to endure in a time when a woman had no rights of voting or ownership.

The young widow, far from realities or friends and undaunted by the terrors of the pathless wilderness about her, was determined to carry on, and validate for her babies, the title of a Homestead of which they would someday be proud. It was a brave fight and a courageous struggle, as only noble motherhood can inspire. As a solitary adult, she lived for the next five years, raising Isabel, and John, trading with the Indians, and participating in commerce on the Indian River. That was when the river wasn't being used as a playground for her children, as it so often was.

In 1881 Bridget met and later married John M. Minor who was living at Turkey Creek. He was a manager for Tilman Orange Groves and for sixty years was involved in the citrus culture. John Minor was also the first Palm Bay postman and for sixteen years a census taker for the county. He helped Bridget raise young Isabel and John. Bridget and John Minor stayed married until her death in 1927; she was eighty four years old. John died at Farview in 1940, he was eight seven.

John Hart Clohecy remained with his family until 1890, when he attended St. Mary's, an all boy's school run by the Jesuit Priests, in St. Mary, Kansas. At the turn of the century he returned home, where the family had the grove at Farview. Tragically, his life came to an abrupt end in 1930 while riding with a Melbourne police officer friend. A call came for a disturbance at Lorraine's Cafe in south Melbourne. When his friend did not return, John went into the cafe to find him, only to meet his death. He was shot dead by Arron Thomas. The gunman fled on foot and was never brought to justice. John had never married and consequently did not have a family of his own; he was fifty five years old when he died.

Except for a few years while she was away getting an education, "Miss Bell", as she became affectionately known, lived out her life at Farview. In 1891, at the age of thirty one, she attended the first school of nursing at St. Vincent's Hospital, in Cleveland Ohio. She was the class President, and it was there that she would find her life's calling as a Registered Nurse. Miss Bell graduated in 1905, and went off to supervise a number of Children's floating Hospitals. Then she returned to Tilman to serve as a medical advisor and midwife, until the event of a Doctor moving in to the area in the early 1920's.

Isabel was a woman of Victorian times, very proper, very Christian and spiritual, as were her family and a very devout Catholic. They were lifetime parishioners of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, on Miller Street in Palm Bay. Miss Bell lived out her life at Farview, managing a small grove and living on an acre that she maintained. She had sold off parts of the family homestead parcel by parcel throughout the years.

Miss Bell was loved by all who were privileged to know her. She served God, the church, and her neighbors completely. She was a prime example of a well respected woman, who endured growing up in the wilderness, at the rivers edge. She endured the loss of her family and towards the end, a lonely life of isolation. Although she was educated, and could have pursued a career in a less rural environment, she chose to help the sick, assist area Doctors, and the medical community right in Palm Bay. Isabel past away in 1952, at the age of eighty three.

Isabel Clohecy, along with her brother John, her mother Bridget and Bridget's second husband, John Minor, are laid to rest at the cemetery on Miller Street in Palm Bay.

About the Author

Jill Berry has been a resident of south Brevard for over three decades. She is a Realtor and local historian. She has been researching the Clohecy family story for two years now, and is working on a manuscript to tell the story of the courage of this pioneering woman and her family. Jill has also been meeting with the Church at St. Joseph's to have a bronze plaque placed to commemorate the founding pioneers.

END OF AN ERA THE BYRD PLAZA BARBER SHOP

By
Stephen R. Benn

In 1959, the Byrd Plaza Shopping Center in Cocoa was the first shopping center to open in Central Brevard County. The Byrd Plaza Barber Shop was originally owned by Ross Parsons who sold it to Jim and Gerry Whidden in 1965. The Whiddens ran the shop until November 15th, 2006 when they retired. They served several generations in the Cocoa, Merritt Island and Rockledge area, not to mention flocks of snow birds.

Six months later, long time customers, unaware of the closing, gather at the Barber Shop, peering through the window at the empty room, expressing sadness and a sense of loss. They reminisce from their many visits over the years and wonder where to get their hair cut now. Jim and Gerry are enjoying their well deserved rest and retirement, but will be missed by many.



Jim Whidden (left) and Jack Barnett relaxing in the shop, a few days prior to closing forever.



Jim Whidden (left) and Jack Barnett outside the Barber Shop, a few days prior to closing forever.

BREVARD COUNTY TRIVIA

Most rivers in the continental United States flow generally south. The St. Johns River, which runs through Brevard County, flows generally north.

The Florida State Legislature passed legislation in 1854 creating Brevard County. The Governor didn't sign the legislation until early 1855 and thus started a creation year controversy which is still debated today.

In 1880 the population of Brevard County was 1,497.

ONLINE SERVICES

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

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

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

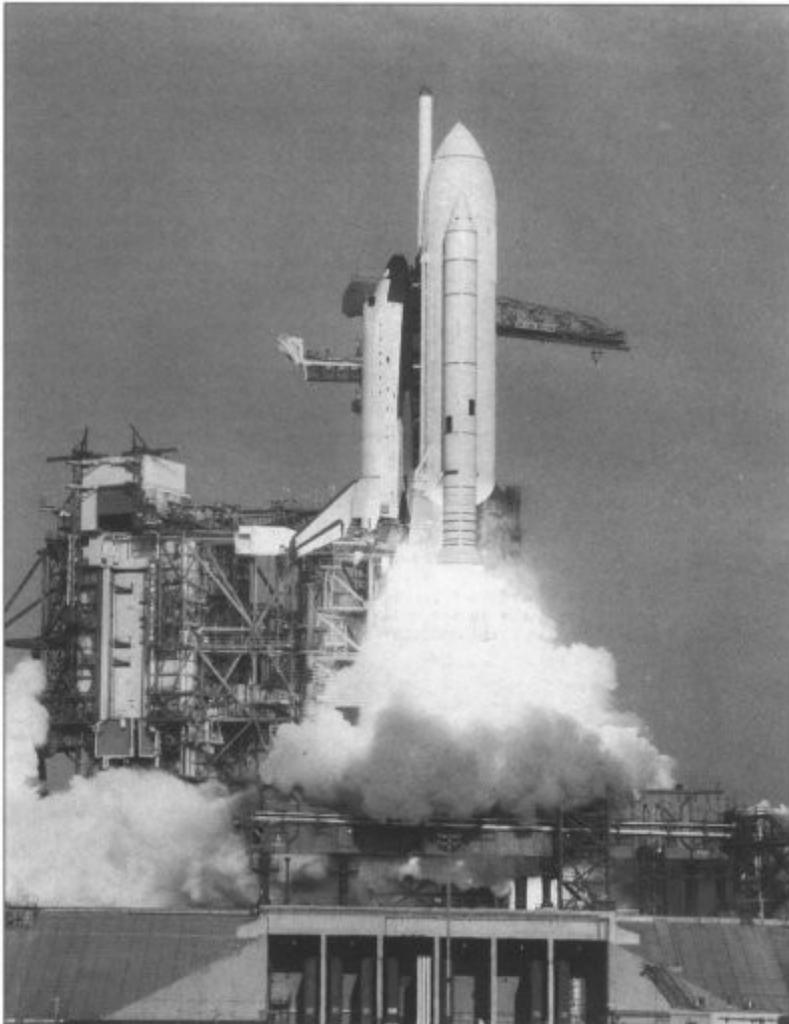
<http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/stlib/>

The State Archives of Florida

Preserving the past and present for future generations

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

**FIRST SPACE SHUTTLE LAUNCHED
AT
CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA**



The first mission of the space transport system (STS-1), flew on April 12, 1981. Named "Shuttle Columbia". Photo courtesy of NASA.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The end of last year turned out to be very eventful for the Historical Commission. Several things happened that we were trying to accomplish: the hiring of an Archivist, we took on the responsibility for our web portal on the County's web site and the taking over of Records Management for the County.

An Archivist was transferred into the Historical Commission at the beginning of December. The Archivist has been instrumental in enabling us to be more organized. Also, the project of scanning documents has now begun and we'll start posting them on our web site in the near future. Another benefit with the addition of this person is we will now be able to keep the Archive open most of the time during business hours.

In December the request to take over Records Management was granted by the County Commission. It is not scheduled actually come about until the next budget year. You may be asking yourself why we would want to take on such a responsibility. The answer is simple; today's record is tomorrow's history. There are a lot of things that need to be accomplished before the transfer of the responsibility can come about. One of the biggest hurdles to climb over is the space that will be needed to store the records. In addition, we are currently acquiring the knowledge needed to properly follow the County, State and Federal guidelines for proper records management.

Ed Bradford
Chairman, Brevard County Historical Commission

Want to know more about Brevard County History?

We have history books available.

Go to the inside back cover for details.

MUSEUMS IN BREVARD COUNTY

Air Force Space & Missile Museum, Space Launch Complex 5&6, Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, FL

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

The Astronaut Hall of Fame, 6225 Vector Space Blvd., Titusville, FL 32780

BCC Planetarium & Observatory, Brevard Community College, 1519 Clearlake Rd., Cocoa, FL

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

Brevard Museum of Art and Science, 1463 Highland Ave., Melbourne, FL 32936

Brevard Museum of History and Science, 2201 Michigan Ave., Cocoa, FL 32926

East Coast Surfing Hall of Fame, 4275 N. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach, FL 32031

The Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Cultural Center, 2180 Freedom Ave., Mims, FL 32754

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

North Brevard Historical Society Museum, 301 S. Washington Ave., Titusville, FL 32782

U.S. Space Walk of Fame Museum, Searstown Mall, 3550 S. Washington Ave., Titusville, FL 32782

Valiant Air Command Warbird Museum, 6600 Tico Road, Titusville, FL 32780

HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS

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

Brevard County Historical Commission, 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

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

Cocoa Beach Pioneers, 580 South Brevard Ave., Cocoa Beach, FL 32931-2529, 783-8389, mmayorjoe@aol.com

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

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

Sons of the American Revolution. Ben DuBose, 950 Falls Trail, Malabar, FL 32950. 321-952-2928

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

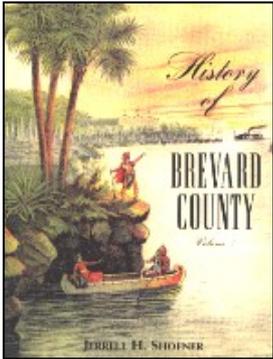
Town of Melbourne Village Historical Preservation Commission, Jean Henderson, Secretary, 724-0070

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

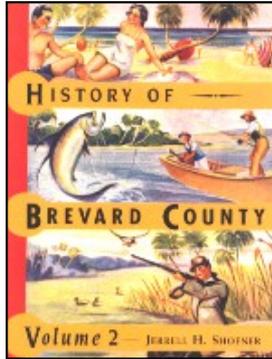
Try as we might to keep this list accurate with up-to-date information, it seems that changes occur that we don't know about until after publication. If you know of a needed change, see an error or have an addition to what we've presented here, please let us know. Our address is Brevard County Historical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

The History of Brevard County

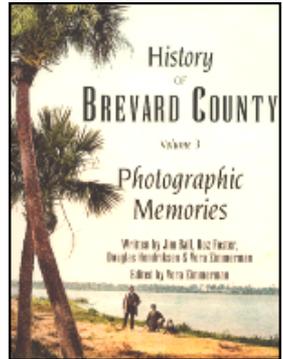
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