

Notes on North Port, Florida History

18,000 – 13,000 B.C.E. - first human habitation at or near Little Salt Spring.

“Although archaeologists disagree over the precise date, sometime between 20,000 and 15,000 B.P. (before present), humans first settled the peninsula. ... to whom these people were related and whence they came are mysteries, for recent DNA mapping of their brain tissue, some of which was found near Melbourne and at Little Salt Spring and dated to 7000 B.P. has shown them to be ethnically different from any other contemporary group in North America.” (Derr, 213)

“Deep springs and other water sources were not restricted to northern Florida. Research at several sites in southern peninsular Florida suggests that the limited water sources in that region also drew Paleoindians. Two sources in Sarasota County are deep sinkholes that in Paleoindian times would have provided Access to the lowered water table. Warm Mineral Spring and Little Salt Spring have produced important data on Paleoindian lifeways. (Milanich, 44)

The Wacissa river *Bison antiquus* skull with the broken stone point has been dated to more than 10,000 years ago and a humerus of the same animal found several feet away was dated 11,170 years ago. Similar dates have come from Paleoindian materials and bones recovered by Carl J. Clausen from the Little Salt Spring sinkhole in Sarasota County. At that site an extinct giant land tortoise and a pointed wooden stake possibly driven through the animal were dated to 13,450 and 12,030 years ago. Two wooden stakes, perhaps anchors pounded into the side of the sink to aid people in lowering themselves to the level of the water, yielded dates of 9,645 and 9,500 years ago, while charcoal from a small hearth was dated to 10,190 years ago (Clausen et al. 1979:611). The stakes' late Paleoindian or early Archaic dates are comparable to a series of dates obtained from Warm Mineral Spring, another deep sinkhole in Sarasota County (Clausen, Brooks, and Wesolowsky 1975:9). Occupation of those springs at that time, about 7500 B.C., may correlate with the less arid conditions that began about 10,000 years ago. (Milanich, 46, 47)

Other animals associated with Paleoindian sites such as Little Salt Spring (Clausen et al. 1979:610)...Include both extinct and extant species. Many of the extinct forms were large mammals: sloth, tapir, horse, camelids, and mammoth. Smaller animals, now extinct were also eaten, including a species of box turtle. The most important extant forms were deer, fish, turtles, and shellfish; others were gopher

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tortoise, diamondback rattlesnake, raccoon, opossum, rabbit, muskrat, and wood ibis.

From Warm Mineral Spring (Cockrell and Murphy 1978:6) other extant animals have been identified, including panthers and frogs. All could have been eaten by Paleoindian peoples. (Milanich, 47)

Underwater excavations at Warm Mineral Spring (Cockrell and Murphy 1978:figs. 4, 5) have also produced bone and shell tools from Paleoindian strata, several of which indicate use of the spear-thrower. One is a shell spur or "trigger"; these fitted over the end of the throwing stick and provided a surface for the base of the shaft or dart to butt against. A possible throwing-stick weight also was recovered. Other tools from the site include a worked fossil shark tooth; a bone, eyed needle; a socketed antler point; and a socketed bone handle (Cockrell and Murphy 1978:fig5).

From Little Salt Spring, Clausen (Clausen et al. 1979:611, fig.2) recovered a similar socketed antler projectile point and a portion of what appears to be a carved oak log mortar, perhaps used to grind seeds or nuts. One of the more extraordinary artifacts from that site is the head of a nonreturnable wooden boomerang. Carved from oak, the tool is similar to boomerangs used by the Australian aborigines. (Milanich, 52, 53)

Early Archaic materials are found at the same sites as Paleoindian artifacts; Page/Ladson, Harney Flats, Little Salt Spring, and Warm Mineral Springs are examples. Also, the distribution of early Archaic artifacts is greater than that of Paleoindian materials, and more land sites, rather than inundated sites are known. (Milanich, 64)

Middle Archaic sites are found in a variety of locations, including for the first time, freshwater shell middens along the St. Johns River and the Atlantic lagoon. Middle Archaic peoples also lived in the Hillsborough River drainage northeast of Tampa Bay, along the southern Florida coast (where marine shell middens are found), and in south Florida locales such as Little Salt Spring in Sarasota County. (Milanich, 76)

Radiocarbon dates from a number of sites help to establish the chronological parameters for this period and its distinctive stemmed projectile points, including the Newnan point (Bullen 1975:31). The dates, all from sites where Newnan points have been excavated include

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two dates averaging about 4000 B.C. from site 8A1356 in Alachua county (in Clausen, Brooks, and Wesolowsky 1975:28), several dates averaging about 4000 B.C. from Little Salt Spring (Clausen et al. 1979:611), and three dates averaging about 3460 B.C. from the Tick Island site in Volusia County (Jahn and Bullen 1978:2, n.1). Similar dates have come from several other middle Archaic sites, all of which are pond cemeteries. (Milanich, 76)

Together, the Little Salt Spring, Bay West, and Republic Grove sites provide a rare glimpse of the range of objects used by the middle Archaic peoples, especially the wooden, antler, and bone tools not preserved on land sites. As demonstrated by the Windover Pond site, these cemeteries have the potential to provide extraordinary information about native peoples. (Milanich, 82)

Some burial sites around Charlotte Harbor contain Weeden Island or Safety Harbor pottery, in addition to locally made undecorated wares. (Milanich, 313)

The Safety Harbor culture, named for a site on Tampa Bay, developed out of late Weeden Island-period cultures in the central gulf coast region after A.D. 900. Safety Harbor sites extend from the mouth of the Withlacoochee River in the north southward to Charlotte Harbor. Most of the sites – shell middens and shell and/or earth mounds-are found along the coast, especially around Tampa Bay. Other, inland Safety Harbor villages, camps, and mounds are present in the region as well. (Milanich, 389)

15th Century

Native tribes in North Port area – Mogoso and Ocita, both in the Timucuan confederacy. (Williams, 6)

Timucuans – mound builders and sun worshipers. Agricultural society, unlike Calusas to the south who relied on fishing for food. (Williams, 7)

Early 16th Century

Ponce de Leon explored and attempted to establish a colony south of the North Port area on Pine Island without success. (Williams, 12)

Circa 1509

Warm Mineral Spring was 1st seen by Friar Juan Ortiz.

1539

Hernando De Soto was the next to authorize exploration of west Florida. He sent Juan Anasco to find a landing site. He returned to report “of a site ‘very near’ Havana.” (?) Ultimately he attempted to

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reach the Indian village of Ocita (Ucita). This town was located near present day Charlotte Harbor or on the Peace River, and very close to North Port. (Williams, 12) Ucita or Ocita was supposedly De Soto's base camp from which he launched his ill-fated, 4 year-long journey through the S.E. and southern U.S. (Williams, 14)

1560's

The next Spanish explorer of Florida's west coast was Menendez D'Avila. He supposedly explored as far as possible up both the Peace and Myakka Rivers. (Williams, 16)

22 February 1819

Spain cedes East and West Florida to the United States as a result of the Adams-Onis Treaty.

1823

The portion of Florida Territory in which the future city of North Port was located was in Alachua County – stretching along the west coast of Florida and from just north of Fort Brooke (Tampa) south to Charlotte Harbor.

January 1834

Alachua County was subdivided and the area of present-day North Port was included in the new Hillsborough County with Fort Brooke (Tampa) as the county seat.

December 1838

Captain William Bunce, delegate to the Territorial Constitutional Convention represented the area of present-day Sarasota County.

April 1841

EXCERPTS FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: Nearly all the Indians west of the Peace River had been relocated. An effort was begun to advance against the remaining 300 members of various tribes still roaming the region east of the river.

In July, Camp Ogden, on the southern bank of the Peace, about 20 miles from its mouth, was established. It was named after Edmund Augustus Ogden, assistant quartermaster at Fort Brooke.

Three months later the nearby Seminoles had been captured and relocated through Tampa, and the camp was broken up.

For the most part, the camp remained uninhabited for the next 16 years, until the end of the Third Seminole War and the removal of Billy Bowlegs and his followers from the region. The departure of the Seminoles meant the opening of the southern Peace River region for settlement.

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Camp Ogden found itself renamed Fort Ogden around that time when Capt. Enoch Daniels moved his family in and began to develop the cattle trade in the region, taking advantage of the military road, with bridges, which ran from Tampa to Fort Meade and south from there to Fort Ogden.

Among those relocated were Jacob Summerlin and Francis C.M. Boggess. Summerlin joined Daniels in the cattle trade, having already become partners with Capt. James McKay of Tampa in the sale of cattle to Cuba. McKay and Summerlin built an 800-foot wharf of unpeeled pine saplings, probably near what is now Cleveland, for the loading of cattle. (Sarasota Herald-Tribune, April 23, 1997)

August 1842

The Armed Occupation Act was established by the U.S. government opening up 200,000 acres of land from south of a township line near Palatka to the Peas Creek (Peace River). This Act was enacted for one year. The Act entitled any male over 18 years of age, able to bear arms, able to clear 5 acres, and able to properly file the claim to 160 acres free. In addition, the claimant must build a habitable dwelling and live there for 5 years.

“In all, just under the 200,000-acre total was ‘patented’ from federal to private ownership. Included in those patents were about 6,000 choice acres opening the Manatee-Sarasota Bay lands. These lands bordered the new Indian reserve and actually lay in the path of Indian traffic between the villages and the government’s Indian agent at Fort Brooke.” (Matthews, 129)

1842

William H. Whitaker – first settler in Sarasota County.

3 March 1845

Florida achieves statehood.

October 1856

Manatee County was created from another split, this time Hillsborough County’s. North Port now lay in Manatee County which extended from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Okeechobee, was 60 miles long, and contained 5000 square miles. The first county seat was the village of Manatee. On 29 April 1866 the county seat was moved 40 miles inland to the village of Pine Level.

1860s during the
Civil War

“Much of the Charlotte Harbor area was still owned by the government...open range for cattle.” Cattlemen generally opposed slavery, but the primary customer for Florida cattle was the Confederacy. (Williams, 36, 37)

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- 20 May 1862 Homestead Act of 1862 was passed by the U.S. Congress. It provided for the transfer of 160 acres (65 hectares) of unoccupied public land to each homesteader on payment of a nominal fee after five years of residence; land could also be acquired after six months of residence at \$1.25 an acre. The Homestead Act was sponsored by Galusha A. Grow. In 1976 it expired in all the states but Alaska, where it ended in 1986.
- 24 December 1863 Enoch Daniels led 15 rangers to “occupy and conquer the country between Charlotte Harbor and Tampa Bay.” They started at the mouth of the Myakka River and headed inland. (Williams, 37)
- 1866 Pine Level was chosen as the county seat of Manatee County (consisting of present-day Manatee, Sarasota, Desoto, and Charlotte counties) when it was broken away from Hillsborough County. (Williams, 51)
- Post Civil War Carpetbaggers ran the Manatee County Voting District 7 (area around Charlotte Harbor). (Williams, 50)
- “Much of Florida land after the war was tied up in ownership disputes between the state and federal governments.” Most settlers were squatters. (Williams, 60)
- 1868 Jesse Knight, cattle raiser, acquired property in the Myakka River region near Nokomis. The property extended from Shakit Creek east to the Myakka River. It was a peninsula 10 miles across and 30 miles long and contained some of the richest grazing ground in the state.
- April 1887 Manatee County was subdivided into Desoto and Manatee Counties with Manatee City (Bradenton) becoming the county seat for Manatee County. (Williams, 72)
- Mid/Late 1800s Possible land owners in the North Port area – Ziba King, Joel Knight, James Whidden, Francis C.M. Boggess, Joseph Durrance, Francis A. Hendry. (Williams, 43)
- The Seminole Indian reservation was located east of the Peace River. (Williams, 44)
- 1890s thru 1930s Pine trees were prolific in Florida and turpentine camps were established throughout the state including in and around the Murdock

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and North Port area. The camps had stills where the raw pine resin was distilled into turpentine.

One such possible camp may have existed in North Port along the Myakkahatchee Creek. There are remnants of, what appear to be, a still basin and loading dock. According to long-time residents, buckets, iron implements, and a more complete dock could be seen at this site in the 1960s. (Scott)

1894

“Oxen were the preferred beast of burden in Southwest Florida at that time (1894) because there were few roads. Those dignified by that term were just tracks in the sand. In the rainy season, the countryside was flooded ankle-deep inasmuch as there were no drainage ditches. Old timers describe the prairies bordering the Peace River during the rains as oceans with trees.” (Williams, 74)

1905

The CH&N, known as the Cold, Hungry and Naked railway was established by the Peace River Phosphate Mining Company. The line was finished in 1907 and ran from Liverpool (now vanished) in Desoto County, south of Ft. Ogden and from other mines to the seaport loading dock on the southern end of Gasparilla Island (Boca Grande). CH&N leased the Southland (El Jobean) pine woods in 1912 to Hall Naval Stores Co. of Marion County. (Williams, 353)

5 July 1905

Alafia, Manatee & Gulf Railroad Co. was incorporated on June 5, 1897 with a proposed route from Plant City to Charlotte Harbor. Buying the rights to this paper railroad in 1905 they quickly increased its capital from 1 million dollars to 2 million, and then changed its name to the Charlotte Harbor & Northern Railroad. (Hensley)

30 June 1907

Construction between Boca Grande and Ft. Ogden was finished on June 30th of 1907 and trains were able to use the PRPMC's tracks to reach Arcadia. Regular scheduled trains between Arcadia and Boca Grande began on August 1st. (Hensley)

1907

A portion of the Charlotte Harbor & Northern Railway was run through the southeast corner of North Port, Sarasota County. There is a possibility that a railway stop/turpentine loading dock is located within Sarasota County. According to a map included in Taplines, Part II, the town of Evaland (a turpentine still & CH&N flag stop) appears to be located in Sarasota County. (Williams, 378 and Henley)

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Evaland, 5 miles east of Murdock on the CH&N, was the last of the Charlotte County turpentine camps. It is believed to have been named for the owner's daughter. A black man named Collins tapped trees at Evaland, but he was not coerced in any way. (Williams, 358)

NOTE: Believe that this camp was located in present-day Sarasota County.

- 1912 The Peace River Phosphate Mining Co. RR was incorporated into the Charlotte Harbor & Northern. (Hensley)
- 1914-1920 Tamiami Trail was constructed through the North Port area. It opened to traffic in 1928. (Williams, 327 & 361)
- 1920s EXCERPT FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: Owners See Bright Future In Warm Mineral Springs.
“...another seven years had passed old Ponce felt the need for a restorative was even greater to he sailed again. This time the ship went up the west coast and landed around Charlotte Harbor. Here the Indians told him to head northward and he would find the spring. The party set out in this direction, but before they had a decent opportunity to wet a foot the Indians attacked them and de Leon received a mortal wound from a poisoned arrow. He made it back to his ship where he died.
Thirteen different reference works all allude to the warm mineral spring on the Florida West Coast and their documentation has been compiled into a single historical treatise written in 1943 by Dr. Jonas E. Miller, now a resident of Sarasota.”

“In any case, the spring south of Venice was a favored gathering place for Indians and now that excavations are underway evidence of their having lived on the spot is uncovered daily.”

“After the Indians departed few people even knew of the existence of the warm mineral springs. Either during or before the boom times of the 1920's all of the land now comprising the development was purchased by Mrs. Lill G. Brown, a wealthy Pennsylvania woman who visited here often. She know of the existence of the mineral spring, but she refused all offers to buy the property until 1946 when two Rochester, N.Y., men were able to purchase her holdings. The partners tried to develop home sites in the area, but their capital was limited

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and they were unable to make the area attractive to potential buyers. During their regime the property was know a Warm Salt Springs. When the present owners purchased the development late in 1955 they changed the name and began immediate work to convert the warm spring lake into a scenic spot. Toward this end the grounds have been landscaped and enlargement of the park-like area continues.” (Herald-Tribune, April 21, 1957)

December 1920

D. Worth Gurganious established a turpentine operation using rented convict labor from the State (at Southland/El Jobean). (Williams, 167)

December 1920

Southland acreage was sold by CH&N to turpentiners P.L. Weeks and David W. Gurganious for \$7000. They took over the Hall lease and controlled approximately 30,000 acres of pine trees on each side of the Myakka River. (Williams, 353)

Ca. 1918 – 1950s

A.C. Frizzell was a cattleman who owned approximately 100,000 acres in the Port Charlotte and Murdock areas. (Williams, 45)
Note: This quite probably included land in and around the North Port area.

“Mars was a large turpentine camp owned by A.C. Frizzell in northern Charlotte County, north of Peachland Blvd. and west of Kings Highway.” It employed convicts. (Williams, 353)

The seller of land in the Charlotte Harbor area during this period was the Florida Land and Improvement Company – a consortium of British and Dutch investors. (Williams, 61)

Patti (Bloodsworth) Frizzell (wife of A.C. Frizzell) became station agent for the Charlotte Harbor & Northern (CH&N) Railroad at Murdock in northern Charlotte County. A.C. and Patti bought “a small general store at Murdock and 20 acres of Pine woods,” for \$600. (Williams, 360) The store was a frame building near El Jobean (sic) about 1 mile west of Tamiami Trail (in 1929). Eventually they moved the store to the northwest corner of Tamiami Trail and Toledo Blade Blvd. During the Depression, A.C. bought more land at 20 to 30¢ an acre. (Williams, 361) Eventually Frizzell would own 80,000 acres (in the 1950s) and would form a partnership with the Mackle Brothers.

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They would merge with the Chemical Research Corp. of Delaware and form a subsidiary...the General Development Corporation. (Williams, 362)

Note: A.C. Frizzell's store was originally owned by J.M. Murdock who bought it from J.B. Moody who built it in 1908. (Williams, 413 & 414)

They established a turpentine still 2 miles east of Murdock at Mars (CH&N loading dock). Eventually they bought up worked-out turpentine land from the big turpentine companies for 50¢ an acre. When the land was cleared, they planted Bahia grass and began cattle farming. (Williams, 360)

Hall Naval Stores Company of Florida – re-leased “all untimbered or prairie land...” (Williams, 416)

1 July 1921

Sarasota County was created from a portion of Manatee County.

1922

Weeks and Gurganious leased their property to the Miller Brothers (M.M. & G.C.) and J.D. Stephens. This gave the Miller Brothers “the right to box, cup, dip, chip, crape, work and otherwise use for naval stores and turpentine purposes all the pine trees on lands south, west and southwest of the Myakka River. (Williams, 353, 354)

The Stephens' lease included: one 25-barrel-capacity turpentine still and fixtures, four mules, two horses, a four-horse and a two-horse wagon, 33,000 second-hand clay cups, commissary, stock, fixtures, and turpentine rights to 3014 acres east of the Myakka. (Williams, 354)

Florida banned cheap convict labor. (Williams, 168)

22 April 1923

EXCERPTS FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: Charlotte Co. Firm Deprived of Services: Grand Jury Investigated: Prisoners in Bad Condition and Much Abused:

Tallahassee, April 21 – The board of commissioners of state institutions today ordered that convicts leased to the Mars Turpentine Company of Murdock, Charlotte county Fla., be immediately returned to the county jails from which they were taken. The board acted on the recommendation of Commissioner of Agriculture McRae, who

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investigated reports that prisoners had been inhumanly treated at one of the company's camps and that the sanitary condition had been filthy.

The matter was brought to the attention of the governor and the agriculture commissioner through the return recently of a grand jury presentment in Lee County. The county commissioners of Lee are understood to have made an investigation into the camp located about six miles from Mars, and the grand jury inquiry disclosed that the men were being badly beaten. A physician's examination attested that a large number of Lee county prisoners were in poor physical condition. The prisoners, according to the grand jury report, were quartered with a negro in an advanced stage of incurable disease and forced to use the same eating utensils with him.

The Lee county commissioners acted at that time to recall their prisoners from the camp. Commissioner of Agriculture McRae, when the matter was brought to his attention, communicated with J.O. Gates, a prison inspector. It is understood the inspector's report bore out the reported conditions. Reports for the past three months from the inspector had shown conditions good and regulations complied with in regard to punishments.

The board's order revoking the right of the turpentine company to use convict labor, was based on section 4109 of the revised general statutes, which provides that the commissioner of agriculture, with the approval and advice of the board, shall prescribe rules and regulations and exercise supervision in the handling of convicts under lease and that when his regulations or rules are not complied with he, with the approval of the board, has the right to order the convicts returned to their respective counties. (Palm Beach Post, April 22, 1923)

12 May 1923

EXCERPTS FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: Tallahassee, Fla., May 12 – The board of commissioners of state institutions has rescinded its previous order taking county convicts from the Mars Turpentine company in Charlotte County, it was learned today.

The board's action was taken following a meeting Thursday at which representatives of the turpentine company appeared in defense of charges that convicts had been mistreated, and that sanitary conditions

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in the camp had been bad. The charges grew out of a Lee county grand jury presentment, on the strength of which that county recalled its prisoners.

When the matter comes to the board's attention a report was called for from its convict inspector, and the strength of this report, which was described as bearing out the previous charges, the board summarily ordered the prisoners taken away. The company asked for a hearing however, and as a result the board cancelled its order. (Evening Independent, May 12, 1923)

- 25 April 1928 Tamiami Trail opened to traffic. (LaHurd, 52)
- World War II - 1940s Areas of Sarasota County were used as bombing ranges. (LaHurd, 64)
WHERE?
- March 1945 Warm Mineral Springs, owned by Lilly G. Brown of Philadelphia included 450 acres. She sold it to F.W. Wagner and Nick Corbisella of Rochester, N.Y. (450 acres?).
- 1954 General Development Corporation (GDC) buys 80,000 acres from A.C. Frizzell; the land will become North Port. (Herald Tribune, 2009)

October 31, 1993

Toledo Blade Boulevard Commemorates An Ohio Newspaper

With thanks to Cathy Livimpt, Janet Leiser, and the "*North Port Sun*." Ohioans traveling Interstate-75 through Sarasota County are surprised to see a "Toledo Blade" interchange at North Port. Charlotte County folks risking life and limb on Tamiami Trail (U.S. 41) are puzzled by that unusual name for a prominent street intersection in Murdock.

An elementary school in North Port also bears the name.

Casual motorists often surmise the name refers to the famous steel swords manufactured at Toledo, Spain; but Buckeyes know it for the 158- year-old newspaper of Toledo, Ohio.

Everyone who notices the name wonder how it came to be applied so far from either source, and why it pops up in so many places hereabouts.

The explanation starts in 1954 with the Yellow Knife Bear Mines, Ltd., a Canadian investment firm. It formed a partnership with the Mackle Brothers Construction Company of Miami and bought 70,000 acres of land along 14 miles of Tamiami Trail from Rancher A.C. Frizzell for \$2.3 million. Mackle began building inexpensive two-bedroom homes on Easy Street, a development and name appealing to northern retirees. After selling 250 homes, Yellow Knife-Mackle

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merged with the Chemical Research Corporation of Delaware in 1956. They formed the General Development Corporation, recently reorganized as Atlantic Gulf Communities.

GDC launched an advertising blitz in northern newspapers --- including a generous schedule with the *Toledo Blade*. Undoubtedly the *Blade* received favorable consideration inasmuch as Mackle's executive vice-president and a GDC director, Thomas A. Ferris, began his successful career as a reporter there.

Port Charlotte and North Port lots were sold for \$10 down and \$10 per month. Four, model homes starting at \$6,090 were built on Sunrise Trail, the first street off Elkcam Blvd. The name was Mackle spelled backward. In a short time 125,000 lots were sold. Surveyors worked from dawn to dusk laying out new streets. In accordance with Florida law, all streets had to be named, recorded and marked with corner signs so buyers could find their lots.

Naming streets is not as easy as one might think. Each had to be different from all others in the county for efficient postal service.

In addition they had suggest something in which prospective customers would accept. No one would live on Skunk Avenue, for example; and Easy Street was already reserved.

Developers soon run out of relatives and friends to honor with a street name. Flowers, trees, fruits, exotic plants, states, cities, seas, birds, animals --- and foreign variations thereof --- were soon exhausted. Numbered streets are efficient but lack sales appeal.

If streets are inadvertently duplicated, the postal service will change the least populated one arbitrarily --- with another starting with the same initial.

Everyone in General Development was encouraged to suggest names for the fastest growing communities in Florida history. Even corporate executives pored over plot plans, checked postal directories, and wracked their brains for ideas.

The boulevard that wound through both Port Charlotte and North Port was hard to describe because of its meanderings in two counties.

Ex-reporter Ferris spoke up for the *Blade* once more, pointing out that the newspaper had produced a large number of customers for GDC. He also named another street in Port Charlotte after George Jenks, his best friend at the *Blade* in his younger years. The *Blade* was founded in 1835 amidst the turmoil of the "Toledo War." Ohio was the first state to be carved from the Midwest Territory in 1803. When Michigan sought statehood in 1835, it disputed Ohio's claim to a little frontier village at the mouth of Maumee River on Lake Erie.

An Ohio surveying party laying out a line to substantiate the Buckeye claim was arrested by Michigan militia and carried a few miles north to the village of Tecumseh. The nine men were released the next day, but the Ohio Legislature was incensed. The dispute was taken to Washington, D.C., and a new survey was ordered.

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While the survey was being made, militia men from both states took up positions on both banks of the Maumee. The day before the survey results were to be announced at Toledo, Ohio judges and clerks stole into the sleeping town at 3 o'clock in the morning, held a meeting in its tavern, recorded the notes, and were toasting the event when a shot or two rang out. The exact number varied among witnesses.

The Ohio delegation vacated the premises without completing the toast, but reveled in victory later that day when the survey proved its claim. The Michiganders fired a few more shots into the air in disgust but returned to Tecumseh without "invading" Ohio. Michigan partisans declared Ohio lost the bloodless Toledo War by having to accept responsibility for a backward town of rustics. Today's *Blade* publisher, Bill Block, Jr., says the paper was named for the legendary "cutting edge" of Toledo, Spain, swords.

George B. Way, the paper's first editor, explained the name in his first editorial:

"We hope the *Blade* will always leap from its scabbard whenever the rights of individuals or of the community shall be infringed upon."

In 1987, *Blade* Editor Mike Bartell was vacationing in Florida and saw the Toledo Blade sign at North Port's interchange with U.S. 75.

"I thought, 'Oh heck, since I've worked for the paper 20 years I might as well take a picture of it.'

"I stopped my car and walked back with my camera to the sign. As I was photographing it, a trucker stopped to see if I needed help.

"Boy, was he steamed when I told him what I was doing. I guess he couldn't believe someone would stop to take a picture of a sign."

A framed photograph of the sign now hangs in the paper's newsroom. If any developer is stumped for a name of a new street, may I suggest the Sun-Herald?

By Lindsey Williams, columnist for Sun Coast Media Group newspapers

- 1959 North Port incorporates with 11 families (Herald Tribune, 2009)
- 1975 North Port Library opened (LaHurd, 115)
- 11 June 1975 EXCERPTS FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: "North Port Water Plant 11 Miles From Mining.
NORTH PORT – Phillips Petroleum Co. plans to mine phosphate 11 miles upstream of the city's water treatment plant.
In its development of Regional Impact (DRI) statement filed Tuesday in Manatee County, Phillips says it intends to mine phosphate in the Big Sough (Myakkahatchee Creek) watershed.

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General Development Utilities (GDU) Inc. draws water from the Big Slough to serve the 5,000 residents of North Port.

Fred Vidzes, General Development Corp. (GDC) director of development coordination, said Wednesday he was not aware of the petroleum company's plans. He said GDC will review the DRI statement to see if the city's drinking water source will be endangered. GDU is a subsidiary of GDC.

A review of the DRI application by the Herald-Tribune revealed Phillips Petroleum plans to mine 15,000 acres in Manatee and DeSoto counties.

The tract under consideration lies about 30 miles east of Sarasota and north of Sugar Bowl Road (State Road 72). The land is within Big Slough and Horse Creek watersheds.

In its DRI statement, Phillips says it plans to locate its plant for treating phosphate mined from the area within the Big Slough watershed.

The plans call for using draglines to mine the phosphate, and large quantities of water to separate the mineral used in fertilizers from the thick hard clay in which it is found.

Huge draglines scoop off the 14 feet of surface dirt to get at the phosphate-rich soils below. Large dams are to be built with the surface covering to hold the residue from the plant that separates the phosphate from the clay.

Into these earthen dams, Phillips plans to pump the plant waste – phosphate slime – for storage and eventual use as fill in reclamation of the mining area.

According to its DRI application, a substantial portion of the area to be mined and then turned into holding ponds for phosphate waste is within the Big Slough watershed.

However Wilson Austin, project manager for the mining operation, said there is almost no possibility of any of the phosphate waste contaminating Big Slough due to a dam break.

Before retention dams are built in the Big Slough Watershed, he said, a 900-acre lake will be constructed from an area to be mined in the southwest portion of the Phillips property.

The waste product from this phase of the mining operation will be stored in the Horse Creek watershed area, not Big Slough.

In order to protect the city's water supply, Austin said Phillips plans to build ___ holding ponds in the Big Slough Watershed, mostly underground.

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When the clay slime is pumped into the storage ponds, it will be mixed with _____ to form a thick mixture which, should the dam break, will not flow any further than “you can throw a rock.”

If a massive rupture _____ to flooding should occur _____ said, and the thick phosphate slime were to wash into the Big Slough, it would, for the most part, settle out in the 900-acre lake.

The possibility of a slime spill ever reaching the Big Slough at all, he said, is remote. “I’m convinced the water quality of the Big Slough will remain satisfactory. We’ve done a lot of thinking about North Port,” Austin said.

Phillips will build 10-foot-high dams in the slough watershed, but phosphate mining waste will be stored only to a level five feet above the ground; most of the material will be stored underground.

If the mining application is approved, it will be four or five years, Austin said, before Phillips begins constructing slime pits in the Big Slough watershed. Conventional slime pits, he said, will be used in the Horse Creek watershed.

Each pit there will be built to state Department of Pollution Control specifications and will be 25 feet high. Phillips will fill the Horse Creek area pits to the 20-foot level. All of the dams holding the phosphate slime will be equipped with mechanical monitoring devices to detect leaks, he said.

The Horse River empties into the Peace River near Fort Ogden in DeSoto County.

GDU plans to withdraw up to 30 million gallons of drinking water a day to serve its holding in southern Sarasota and Charlotte County from the Peace River.

In the past, the Peace River has been thought to be an unreliable source of fresh water because of spills from upstream phosphate mining operations in Polk County.

Austin said no phosphate waste impounding dam constructed to state specifications has ever ruptured.

Recently, the City Commission gave it unofficial approval to GDU’s plan to withdraw water from the Peace River to serve a planned, large development – Myakka Estates.

The City Commission said it agreed with GDC-s consultants, who found the Peace River an adequate source of drinking water in spite of the occasional phosphate pollution from upstream spills. As a backup, GDC plans to construct a well field capable of being used during times

Notes on North Port, Florida History

of low river flow or phosphate pollution. (Sarasota Herald Tribune, June 11, 1975)

1977 Warm Mineral Springs added to National Register of Historic Places

1979 Little Salt Springs added to National Register of Historic Places

1982 GDC gives 112 acres site of Little Salt Spring sinkhole to University of Miami for archeological research. (Herald Tribune, 2006)

31 May 1982

EXCERPT FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: "Historical Indian Village Located Near North Port.

The remains of a prehistoric Indian village has been located in an isolated portion of southern Sarasota County.

John Scarry, supervisor of the archaeological research section of the Florida Bureau of Historic Sites and Properties, said the state is aware of the discovery and is attempting to learn more about the site.

Portion of pottery, animal bones, Indian middens and burial grounds dating from the archaic period which ended about 2,000 B.C. have been located on the site which is about 1,200 meters long and 600 meters wide.

It is located in the eastern part of North Port and was uncovered early this year by General Development Corp.'s road building crews.

Joy Satterley, a spokesman for General Development, said that University of Miami archaeologist Carl Claussen has been asked to evaluate the scientific worth of the site for the company. Claussen heads the group studying Little Salt Spring in North Port which was given to the University of Miami by General Development.

Ms. Satterley said General Development was made aware of the find by Bob Carr, president of Florida Archaeological Council.

A portion of the site was damaged, she said, by General Development work crews when roads were cut through the area in March. The road is complete except for some paving. The rest of the site will not be altered, she said. General Development was not aware at the time that it had uncovered an archaeological site. The company is willing to cooperate with those wishing to study it further.

Scarry said Sarasota archaeologist Marion Almy, president of the Florida Anthropological Society, was asked to look at the site.

Mrs. Almy said she thinks it is great significance. The artifacts uncovered range in age across a broad period, approximately 4,000

Notes on North Port, Florida History

years. Because of the evidence of such long use, the significance of the site may be great.

Much of the preliminary information has been gathered from projectile points and pottery shards, she said.

George Luer, a Sarasota archaeologist and pottery expert, said data from inland sites is fairly scanty. It is a large site with evidence of a circular earthworks.

Luer said he was taken to the site by Travis Gray, an archaeologist at Little Salt Springs. It was Gray who notified the Florida Archaeological Council.

A portion of a point has been uncovered at the site. (Herald-Tribune, May 31, 1982)

1990

GDC files for bankruptcy – land fraud. (Herald Tribune, 2009)

16 February 1991

EXCERPTS FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: “A new business has adopted the historic name of a century-old local enterprise.

The Murdock Mercantile Company is building a large service station, convenience store and Dairy Queen on the northwest corner of U.S. 41 and S.R. 776.

J.M. Murdock and Son operated the original store until the 1920’s, when it was acquired by cattle and timber baron A.C. Frizzell. The store, which held general merchandise and housed the post office, eventually became the DeSoto Groves store.” (Sarasota Herald-Tribune, February 16, 1991)

5 November 1991

North Port amends charter and does away with mayoral position. (LaHurd, 181)

23 January 1992

EXCERPTS FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: “However, the old Florida Southern wasn’t the only railroad to come to Charlotte County. In 1912, phosphate magnate Peter O. Bradley decided to build his railroad from Bradley Junction, in Polk County, 99 miles south to the natural deep water port of Boca Grande on Gasparilla Island.

This line became the Charlotte Harbor and Northern (CHN) – often dubbed the cold, hungry and naked – and operated depots at Boca Grande, Placida, Southland (west of El Jobean), Murdock (now Port Charlotte), Pratt, Arcadia and other points north, Peebles says.

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The old wood-burning locomotives hauled long trains carrying millions of tons of phosphate ore to the port for shipment by oceangoing freighters to ports around the world. It also transported mail and passengers, and provided freight service to the southern Sarasota and northern Charlotte County areas.

In 1925, the line was sold to Seaboard Air Line Railroad (SAL) for a reported \$25 million. SAL merged with the Atlantic Coast Line in 1968.

The SAL discontinued its passenger and freight service along the former CHN's "Boca Grande Route" in the late 1950s when a private toll bridge was completed to the island. The line was abandoned and the tracks removed between Arcadia and Boca Grande in the early 1980s." (Herald-Tribune, January 23, 1992)

12 March 1992

EXCERPTS FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: "Murdock Colony Farms was an unsuccessful land sales scheme of the Chicago based Murdock Land Co. around 1910, although the company's sales techniques - \$10 down and \$10 per month - were adopted 44 years later by General Development Corp."

"A.C. Frizzell arrived in 1914 to work for the railroad as Murdock's agent/telegrapher. In those days, the agent and his family lived upstairs over the depot."

"Frizzell soon opened the town's first general store...in no time, he was buying land around tiny, isolated Murdock."

"Using profits from the store, Frizzell bought large parcels of land, cheap, from people who couldn't pay the taxes or needed cash..."Murdock was a one-man town. A.C. Frizzell owned it lock, stock, and barrel. Its residents worked for him. They lived in his houses and bought most of their supplies from his store. Mr. Frizzell even issued script (money) to pay his workers during the darkest days of the Depression. Jobs were non-existent, and no one had any money. Frizzell's workers could use script to shop in his store or trade for cash at the end of the month."

"For more than a half-century Murdock remained a sleepy village between Venice and Punta Gorda. A farming, pulpwood, sawmill and ranch center, Murdock had a post office, Frizzell's Store, a freight and

Notes on North Port, Florida History

passenger depot and a handful of employee houses owned by Frizzell. It was also capital of Frizzell's 100,000-acre ranch."

"Most of his land remained natural. There was a lot of wilderness. With the exception of a fence here and there, some cattle pens, a few crude roads, and cows, his land appeared much like it did 100 years ago."

"Frizzell's ranch straddled the Sarasota/Charlotte County line, spilling over into what's now North Port and extending west across the Myakka River."

"But in 1955, shortly after the death of his wife Pattie, Frizzell sold most of his holdings for \$3.5 million. The General Development Corp. later used the land for its planned retirement city."

"Frizzell died on Jan. 6, 1961, after seeing two small cities and 4,000 people on his former land. Murdock remained undeveloped while neighboring Port Charlotte and North Port boomed. Slowly, the signs of A.C. Frizzell's little town disappeared."

"The railroad was abandoned and removed six years ago. Two company houses survive, but they've been moved. Even Frizzell's modern brick home was razed several years ago and replaced by the Days Inn." (Herald-Tribune, March 12, 1992)

1993

Toledo Blade Elementary School opens with 425 students. (Herald Tribune, 2009)

8 July 1993

EXCERPTS FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: "Seems like the little guy just can't get a break.

What with Big Brother out to tax you to death, and big business and the bankers grappling over what's left, how's a person to get what's his?

Well, that must have been how Abe Nightingale felt when he took on A.C. Frizzell almost 50 years ago.

Back then, before the Mackle Brothers and General development Corp. arrived to dredge canals and build retirement homes, A.C. Frizzell was a well-to-do cattleman and land baron. In fact, much of what is now Murdock and Port Charlotte belonged to him. Frizzell had arrived in the area around 1917 as telegrapher for the railroad. He

Notes on North Port, Florida History

began buying land almost immediately. During the land bust of the late '20s and into the next two decades, he took advantage of his fellow citizen's misfortunes by buying up huge parcels of land for back taxes.

Well, residing in the area was a young black preacher of the Holiness Church, Abe Nightingale, and his 17-year-old bride, Mary. In 1935, they settled in McCall, which is across the Myakka River from El Jobean, where Abe worked as a grove tender. It wasn't long before the preacher was taking on the wealthy Frizzell.

The problem had to do with a bull.

"He (Frizzell) had his cow hands come down here... You see we had cows and hogs and all, said Mary Nightingale in a recent interview.

"He had his hands come down here and castrate one of my bulls without telling us anything. When my husband went to find out about, the cow hands told him, 'Mr. A.C. told us to put the emasculators on him.'

"My bull was a mixed Brahma and he (Frizzell) didn't want my bull with his cows," she continued. "Back then there wasn't no fences. You just turned 'em loose in the woods. And he was afraid it'd mate with his cows. But he should have told us about it.

Back then it wasn't considered proper for a black man to approach a white man, but Abe Nightingale did just that.

"Oh, my husband got onto Mr. A.C. You know what he did? He paid Abe for that bull and gave us a full-blood Brahma bull to make him shut his mouth," Mary said and laughed.

In the end, though, Frizzell may have had the last laugh. According to Mary Nightingale, Abe's predecessor at the Murdock Holiness Church, the Rev. Wallace Evens, had made a deal with Frizzell for the church to buy the land on which the sanctuary was built. But when Frizzell sold out to GDC, the church got evicted.

"We was supposed to be buying the building from A.C. Frizzell, but I don't know whatever happened, because before we knew anything, it still belonged to Mr. Frizzell though we was paying for it," she said.

Notes on North Port, Florida History

“My husband was a good man, help anybody he could, but he didn’t take no punches off nobody,” said Nightingale. “Not off nobody.” (Herald-Tribune, July 8, 2000)

16 August 2000

EXCERPTS FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: The business of turpentine processing attracted a man named Luke Grubbs and his brother Clyde, Back in 1937. Luke Grubbs moved his family from Sumter, Ga., to Sarasota in 1937 to open a turpentine camp. Sidell Inc., as it was called, included tow stills and camps, identified as Bee Ridge and Sidell. Brother Clyde ran the Bee Ridge camp at McIntosh and Clark roads, a site that is now identified with a historic marker. Gum was collected at both, but most of the turpentine was distilled at the Bee Ridge location because of the better quality of the water. The Grubbs formed a partnership, a percentage type deal with another old-timer named B.T. “Buster” Longino. When Luke’s son Lou took his new wife Edna to Sarasota to work with my father at the Sidell camp, she had no idea how primitive conditions were. The young couple moved into a house that didn’t have electricity, telephone service or refrigeration, and tap water was obtained from a pipe that Grubbs installed to allow water from a well 100 yards away to run into the kitchen. “We had kerosene lamps, and I was thrilled when Lou gave me a Coleman lantern for Christmas,” Edna laughs. The Sidell camp closed down in 1949. (Herald-Tribune, August 16, 2000)

2001

North Port High School opens. (Herald Tribune, 2009)

2005

Development proposal – “15,000 homes for Thomas Ranch on 7,800 acres in North Port, complete with different types of neighborhoods with offices, parks and shops.” (LaHurd, 134)

6 December 2005

EXCERPT FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: North Port should help protect archaeological site

North Port is less than 50 years old, but archaeological evidence shows that indigenous Americans occupied its terrain 10,000 to 12, 000 years ago.

The evidence, including human remains, stone tools, rope and other artifacts, exists in and around Little Salt Spring, a 200-foot-deep sinkhole south of Price Boulevard.

Preserving a place with such an ancient history would deepen the character of North Port and Sarasota County and contribute to the historical record of Florida and the nation.

Notes on North Port, Florida History

Everything possible should be done to protect that remarkable heritage. Efforts to ensure that protection are under way, but more needs to be done.

“The site contains information that is unique in the country. You’re not going to be finding it anywhere else,” Dan Hughes, the county archaeologist, told reporter Liz Babiarz of the Herald-Tribune. Fortunately, the University of Miami owns and protects Little Salt Spring, and the county government and school district own an ancient burial site nearby.

Not in public ownership are six platted lots where an Indian village existed more than 6,000 years ago.

Two of the lot owners reportedly are willing to sell, and the county is searching for the owners of the other lots. But finding the money to buy the lots might be problematic, county officials say.

The interest of the Archaeological Conservancy, a national group, is encouraging.

The role of the north Port City Commission is crucial. We urge the commissioners to do what they can to help preserve all evidence of the city’s ancient history. (Herald-Tribune, December 6, 2005)

28 March 2007

EXCERPT FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: NORTH PORT – In an effort to protect one of this city’s most valuable natural resources, the City Commission gave the green light this week to buy more land along the Myakkahatchee Creek.

City commissioners instructed staff to pursue the purchase of more than 220 lots along the creek’s banks. The acquisition is expected to cost the city about \$4.1 million.

But city planners said North Port could qualify and get about \$2 million reimbursed. The commission also instructed staff to apply for the grant.

“We’re high on the point scale,” said city planner Teresa Payne. “So, while we can’t guarantee the award, we’re in a very good position.”

The Myakkahatchee Creek winds through the heart of the city and is considered by some to be the jewel of North Port.

The creek is one of the city’s sources for drinking water. Areas along the creek have been deemed habitat for Florida scrub jay and a gopher tortoise.

Meanwhile, mountain bikers for years have used the bank’s rough terrain for scenic morning or afternoon rides.

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Efforts to protect the creek have been ongoing for more than a decade. Already, the city owns 279 of the 530 creek side lots.

So far, the creeks' banks have been safeguarded from the city's explosive population growth, which doubled in the last six years. Only 15 lots have been improved upon.

Many of the commissioners say now is the time to buy.

2009

North Port celebrates 50th anniversary. (Herald Tribune, 2009)

The first of the post-Archaic cultures to be significantly represented in the watershed is the Manasota culture which dates from 500 B.C. to A.D. 800. Manasota peoples were primarily coastal dwellers with their material culture dominated by sand-tempered ceramics and shell and bone tools. During its later stages, the Manasota culture was influenced by the extensive Weedon Island socio-political complex, which is best known in northern Florida. Mound burial customs, artifactual evidence of an extensive trade network, and the outstanding Weedon Island ceramics characterize this stage of the Manasota culture. Whereas many culture periods are represented at the important Myakkahatchee site (SO00397), this site may contain the best evidence of Manasota utilization of the watershed. The site contains seven components including a lithic reduction area, an extensive midden, a burial area, a curved earthwork, a sand mound, and a borrow area. The site demonstrates the considerable use made of the extensive wetlands located in the Myakka River watershed.

The final prehistoric cultural manifestation found in the watershed is the Safety Harbor culture, which was geographically centered around Tampa Bay. This period, beginning about A.D. 800, is typified by ceremonial centers with truncated temple mounds, and open village plazas surrounded by middens. The Wrecked Site (CH00075) located in Charlotte County consists of a Safety Harbor period burial mound and two linear shell middens. The burial mound was destroyed by vandals in the early 1980s, and today only spoil remains. The shell middens are composed primarily of Carolina marsh clams and oysters. One of the middens extends 375 feet along the Myakka River. Whereas several European expeditions may have reached the Myakka River, including Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513 and Bernard Romans in 1771, the watershed was not occupied by new groups until the arrival of the Seminole Indians, originally members of the Creek Nation, during the early 18th century. The Myakkahatchee site (SO00397) shows evidence of Seminole Indian occupation, making it important because there is little other evidence of Seminole occupation in the watershed.

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Miscellaneous Notes

Charlotte Harbor was a cattle loading station in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Tater Hill – Arcadia (Williams, 51)

Talahkchopko Hatchee - Indian name for the Peace (or Peas) River – named for the black-eyed peas that grew along its banks. (Williams, 43)

Hickory Bluff (in Charlotte Harbor) was the residence of Thomas Knight, who was known as the “Cattle King”.

El Jobean was originally called Southland (Williams, 128) El Jobean was named for Joel Bean. The town was established when Mr. & Mrs. Daniel and Jane McPherson bought government lots 1, 2 and 3 from British investors of the Florida Land and Mortgage Co., Ltd. (Williams, 166)

William Goff homesteaded land near route 776 and Tringali Community Center. There was a turpentine logging camp at Keysville and the town of McCall (now part of Englewood) was established at the intersection of routes 771 and 776. (Williams, 149)

Myakkahatchee Creek also known as Big Slough (Myakka Wild)

Sidell, Florida – small farming community, now within the city limits of North Port.

Charlotte County

There have been remains of ancient Floridians found in the CharlotteHarbor area dating back 8000 years. After 700 B.C., the ancient Floridians even had created a shellfish farm in Turtle Bay.

Cash Mound in Turtle Bay shows that the area was a major tool manufacturing site. Weather and erosion in recent years destroyed the mound.

The Calusa Indians built several mounds in the Charlotte Harbor area. There was also a complex series of mound cities at Big Mound Key with canals connecting the different villages.

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In the first quarter of the 20th century, the forest industry began operations in the watershed. Florida slash pine was predominant in the river watershed and a good source of pulpwood and resin for turpentine. Several turpentine camp sites, run with convict labor for higher profit, are known to be located in the watershed, such as the Turpentine Camp #2 (SO00426). (Myakka Wild)

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The Charlotte County area has a sad history of wholesale destruction of Calusa sites. Looters destroyed a large mound complex by bulldozers in 1980. There are no treasure stashes in these mounds; only bones, shells, and bits of charcoal. What the looters are looking for do not actually exist in the mounds, and what they destroy makes us lose a lot of knowledge about the Calusa. Development has also destroyed mounds in the area.

Unfortunately there are no Calusa sites in this county open to the public that you can visit these days.

Juan Ponce de Leon landed in the area of Charlotte harbor on May 24, 1513. Over the next several years he tried to establish a colony here. But after trading with the Calusa went sour, de Leon received a fatal wound in a battle with the local Indians. After the Spanish defeat, the colony was abandoned.

Miccosukees and Seminoles moved into Charlotte Harbor area and worked with Cuban fisherman by 1813. They became very friendly with the fishermen that they worked with, and sometimes intermarried. These Indians became known as the Spanish Indians. Many Indians and Black Seminoles lived near Negro Point in Sarasota Bay. It is known that the Cuban Fishermen traded with the Seminoles as late as 1834, but after the Second Seminole War started, it is doubtful that this trade continued. The Spanish government was having a lot of trouble holding onto Cuba in the 1830's, and would not have wanted the United States to have an excuse for removing one of the last Spanish holdings in the Western Hemisphere.

Fort Casey at Charlotte Harbor was established during the panic of 1850.

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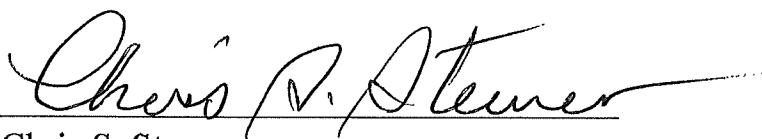
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Researched, documented, assembled by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chris S. Sterner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right. It is positioned above a horizontal line.

Chris S. Sterner

11 July 2024