The Spanish River Papers

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OLD CITY HALL, HOME OF BOCA RATON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Jeanne Nixon Baur, Artist

A report to the membership of
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Dear Sir:—I should have written to you sooner but have had so much work to do, and was so anxious to push forward, that I wrote to no one but my wife. Now that we are in the sand I can sit in the wagon and write as we go, which I am now doing. You wished me to report in regard to prospects for business in different localities. The only cities which hitherto have struck me as being particularly active and thrifty, were Nashville and Chattanooga, in Tennessee; and Dalton, Marietta and Atlanta in Georgia. I will take each in turn. Driving through the heavy timber of western Kentucky, we passed through three or four poor little towns which reaped a richer harvest from us than they had for weeks. In west Tennessee the people seemed as a general thing poor, very little trade in the towns and poor stocks of goods. In middle Tennessee, the country improvest from the time you cross the Tennessee river (which we did at the mouth of Cypress near Reynoldsburg) until you reach Nashville. The land for fifty miles around Nashville is very productive, with fine farm residences and splendid farms. The owners are very wealthy, and seem to take pleasure in showing us their stock and farms. Nashville is well built and situated, about as large as Quincy, it commands and supplies the wholesale trade for a radius of a hundred miles. There are very many good business men and houses, and the merchants I met answered my many pertinent questions freely and satisfactorily. This city is the center of several heavy railroad lines, among them the Memphis & Nashville, Louisville & Nashville, Nashville & Chattanooga, a central southern line and some others. Situated as it is between the north and south and on a navigable river, showing prosperity on every corner, with the position she has reached, compared with other cities, with 35,000 inhabitants and a rich country around; her future is certain. The main roads leading over southern Tennessee are mostly turnpike. Chattanooga owes her present standing not, I think, to any energy or intelligence of her inhabitants, but to her geographical position, and the impetus given her by the war. Situated in a gap of the Cumberland mountains, on a bend of the Tennessee river, she is fast becoming a leading manufacturing point. The Tennesseans are a wholesouled, generous, hospitable people, with, as a general thing, medium intelligence and little enterprise. In Georgia, things are somewhat different. The first good town we struck was Dalton, in the western part of the state. There are about 2500 inhabitants. What I like about Dalton is the general appearance of neatness, and the lack of signs of poverty. The houses are good and well built, with an eye to taste as well as endurance. The grounds are all beautified with flowers, shrubs and ornamental work. The store houses, all retail, are filled with goods, good in quality and quantity. The men are affable, sociable and well dressed, and the women plentiful and pretty. The surrounding country is productive and well cultivated. Marietta is a well built town, on a high table land, 1100 feet above the level of the sea. Trade seemed to be active (d—n the roots) but I did not like the surrounding country, being very hilly, though full of iron mines, from which I suppose the most wealth is derived. Atlanta, the capital of Georgia, has a large rolling mill and iron works, is a railroad center, and has 35,000 inhabitants. The central part of town is devoted entirely to wholesale trade, and

"From Georgia," Near Vienna, Georgia, May 4th, 1876. To H.D. Callin, Kirksville, Missouri.

Among the recent acquisitions of the Boca Raton Historical Society are letters, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, and photographs of the T. M. Richards family. From this collection, a gift of T. M. Richards, Jr., of West Palm Beach, it is possible to gain a clearer picture of Boca Raton's "first" settler. In this issue of the Spanish River Papers will be found a series of letters telling of the first T. M. Richards' earliest years in Florida.

Thomas Moore Richards was born in Ohio in 1845. As a child he was taken to Missouri where he lived until 1876 when he migrated to Florida to escape northern winters. Although Missouri was a slave state and is often considered a southern state, Richards always described himself as a "Yankee." The first series of letters, sent to a newspaper in Missouri, tells of Richards' 1876 trip to Florida with specific references to the economic conditions in the southern states he passed through. At the time of his removal to Florida, Grant was still President of the United States and Reconstruction had not yet ended. Thus many people were interested in conditions in the South.

The second series of letters tells of a trip down the Withlacoochee River in 1880. A trained civil engineer, Richards made a survey to determine if the river was suitable for navigation. The letters were also published by a Missouri newspaper, as was the last letter which describes a trip to America's "last frontier," the southeast coast of Florida. Traveling by boat, Celestial Railroad, and on foot, Richards visited the area that would become his future home. Although these letters do not deal specifically with Boca Raton, they do allow the reader a glimpse into the life of a man who played a major role in the city's earliest history. A later edition of the Spanish River Papers will publish additional items from this collection.

The second part of the Spanish River Papers is designed to document the history of the Boca Raton Cemetery and present a record of the early burials. It is hoped that this will be an aid to those interested in genealogical research.

Donald W. Curl, Editor
Dear Register:—We crossed the line between Florida and Georgia a week ago today. We had already driven through one hundred and fifty miles of heavy pine woods, and still there was no change. We entered the state at Belleville, in Hamilton County. My report of the country may not be a correct description of it, but it is a true report as I see it. The country through which our road runs is light sandy soil and heavy pine woods in Hamilton County. The soil, I think, is poor, the crops look as if they needed an inch or two of prairie around the stalks and a shower of rain to revive them. The timber is excellent, all pine, pitch and yellow, trunks 60 to 80 feet to the first limb and two feet through, standing so thick that a wagon could not be driven through. We crossed the Suwannee River at its junction with the Withlacoochee, near Ellaville. These two streams are very swift, deep and dark, being stained by pine straw and cypress roots. The Suwannee was choked up with pine logs, being drifted to the saw mills at Ellaville. These mills are the largest in the state, the proprietor, a Yankee, owns a special engine and ships five car loads of lumber every day, using his own train, but there is enough lumber on the yard to keep him shipping for four years to come. We camped our first night in Florida “way down upon the Swanee river, far, far away.” (The mulls were not at Ellaville river and caught first a gar, then a turtle, and lastly an eel two feet long, he squirmed so much that I gave-up fishing in disgust, and told the boys I wouldn’t fish where I could catch nothing but snakes.) Leaving Camp Suwannee we passed by a small swamp and near the roadside was an alligator about four feet long, calmly watching our approach. The Withiacoochee, near Ellaville. These two streams are very swift, with some curiosity and inquiry of the natives, especially the patent lock or brake on the wheels. It is a stunner in their eyes. I will tell you how we manage through the day. We start at five in the morning, drive steadily until 11:30, water the horses at some spring or stream, (the country is full of them all the way from Columbus, Ky.) feed them and eat our dinner, which consists of coffee, bakers bread, batter cakes and corn dodger, as the case may be, bacon fried, an occasional squirrel, duck or quail, eggs till you can’t rest, onions, potatoes &c. We start at one p.m., and drive steadily until 5, after which we take our tea, if we get the chance, and makes batter cakes, corn dodger (as aforesaid) &c. We eat supper, light three pipes, wash the dishes, talk about “home, love and kindred,” tie our horses among the leaves, make our own bed and sleep the sleep of the jolted, just and jolly. You must excuse the many errors as I write while Jim and Newt are driving. Give my respects to Dr. Swetman, to our chaplain, Rev. Theo. Miller, Jim Claggett and other friends who inquire. Should any one wish any particular inquiries answered, I will cheerfully do so through the columns of the Register, they directing to me at Gainesville, Florida. Yours truly, T. M. Rickards.

"From Florida," Camp Hawkins near Gainesville, Florida, May 17, 1876. To the Register, Kirksville, Missouri.

The soil of Suwannee county is an improvement on what we have seen. Land here is divided into several grades. The best is called hammock land, and on this is a heavy growth of Magnolia, Live Oak, white oak, sweet gum, hickory and swamp pine, matted together with vines. The first class pine land comes next and has pine and hickory, with some oak, covering it. Second class pine land is perfectly flat, with a heavy growth of pitch and yellow pine. The third class pine land has a stunted growth of pine and is covered with scrub palmetto and wire grass. Suwannee county, as far as we saw it, has a large proportion of first and second class pine land.

We came through Live Oak, the county seat of Suwannee, and the junction of two or three railroads. Seen to be a very good place, with some very admirable citizens, some very large, barn-like buildings, a tar factory, and the streets well macadamized with pure white sand six inches deep. The main industry here is in the tar and turpentine interest.

We camped last Saturday evening on the bank of the Santa Fe River, a quarter of a mile above where it sinks into the sea. On
Sunday Newt and I went down to see the natural bridge. The river banks are low, probably twelve feet high above the low water mark. At the point where it disappears the bank merely continues across the river, being no higher or lower, and the river seems to go so far and stops, showing no commotion or fall, excepting when an alligator (and it is full of them) drops off a log and disappears. After running under ground a distance of three miles, the Santa Fe rises, full size and proceeds on its way to the Gulf. We visited Jehatuknee Springs, a few miles from the natural bridge, and were amply repaid for our trip. Here a full grown river rises from no one knows where and flows full size, six miles, into the Santa Fe. Where it rises the spring is about 100 feet in diameter, is very deep, clear and cold, and full of fish, mostly bream. We could see fish full 30 feet from us, the water was so clear. The spring is surrounded with dense hammock, full of game.

Alachua county is better, as far as soil is concerned, than anything we have yet seen. There is more hammock and good pine land and less scrub palmetto. Here the planters raise from fifteen to forty bushels of corn to the acre, 1000 to 1500 pounds of sea isalnd cotton in the seed, 300 bushels of sweet potatoes, sugar cane, rice, oats, rye and peas are staples, oranges, figs, bananas, plums, peaches, blackberries and strawberries all pay well, oranges, plums and blackberries are now ripe and plentiful. Around the low places are a great many whortleberries and the hammocks are full of grapes, though we have found none ripe. Still there is so much sand that we Northerners cannot understand how things grow so profusely. The corn is as high as my head and tasseling out. In Gainesville today I saw watermelons, cabbage, cucumbers, peas, beans and many other vegetables. The cucumbers were not ripe! We camped here on account of our horses. The grass is very fine and water good. The county is full of springs of clear, tolerably cool water. Jim has a good deal of trouble with "Greeley" our near mule. He jumped a fence today into a field and mowed down the young cotton, worth 4 cents a stalk.

Yesterday I visited a sink hole called the "Devil's Hopper." It is six miles from Gainesville, on the Newnanville road. It is a hole in the ground, 100 yards wide at the top, circular, and 100 feet deep. Of course I went to the bottom and looked up. The sides of the cavern are covered with a heavy growth of Magnolia, live oak and white oak, some of them four feet through, and an undergrowth of fern and scrub palmetto four feet high. Ranged around the sides, about half way down are seven springs, rushing down the bank into a deep, clear pool in the bottom. One of these springs is sulphur water, one iron and the others limestone. The pool at the bottom is circular, and about forty feet in diameter. Around the edges of the pool were suck holes leading down deep, to some unknown place in mother earth. There were large rocks and caves around the bottom, and tracks of animals at the entrance of the caves.

This is an excellent stock [country as] the grass is knee high and never [dies] there being very little cold weather. The cattle are never fed and depend [upon] the hammocks for shelter. I have [seen] more cattle here than I ever saw at any other place and they are all fat. [One] man a few miles south of here, has a drove of 60,000 head. The cattle are much smaller than our Missouri cattle. Milk and butter is plentiful but families milk from nine to fifteen cows and have then no more than two or three of our Missouri cows will give.

From the heavy growth of grass and weeds I think the sand is somewhat different from other sand which it resembles. A gentleman told me
today that it would not scour knives or floors, said it would dissolve in water; I suppose he is right, but I know by experience that it tastes like sand and I think it is healthy in batter cakes and gravy! People here don't clear land as we do in the north. They do no grubbing, merely girdling all trees over ten inches in diameter and letting them stand. Some fields have tall, dead pines standing thick and ghostly like as they have stood for thirty years. I saw a field yesterday which was cleared in 1836. It has a crop of corn and cotton growing finely though it has never been manured.

The country is rapidly settling up with people from the north. The crops are so varied, climate so agreeable and healthy, and soil so productive, that hundreds of homesteads are entered every month. Men fresh from Michigan and Illinois, work every month in the year, every day in the month, excepting in July. They quit then, not on account of heat, but rain, this being the rainy season.

The weather would now be warm were it not for a constant ocean breeze, springing up every morning at 5 or 6 o'clock and blowing from the coast until four, at 7 p.m. It commences again and the nights are very cool.

I have not yet seen a flea, tick, red bug or sand fly, against all of which I was warned by people who jumped at conclusions. There are a few mosquitoes, but they don't bother at night except in the hammocks near lakes and streams. I have seen one snake, killed him, a coach whip snake six feet long. The swamps we have seen so far are mere pools of clear water, free from scum, full of cypress-trees and alligators. I suppose there are larger swamps further south. The parts, thousands of mocking birds; one has chosen a tree fifty feet from our camp and comes there regularly, four times a day and sings. There are bright plumaged birds of various size, generally in the pools and low lands. I have spun this hammock out longer than I intended, but you can shorten it if it occupies too much space. From here we go to Ocala, county seat of Marion.

I will write you from there next week.

Yours truly, T. M. Rickards.


We commence the publication of the accidents and incidents attending the survey of the Withlacoochee River, in Florida, now being made with a view to navigation on that stream, as described by the Surveyor, Mr. T. M. Rickards, in a letter to his brother, William C., of Jeffersonville, which will be concluded in next week's Republican.

Lake Weir, Florida June 27, 1880

I send you in answer to your request, a detailed account of my survey of the Withlacoochee River—giving results, but only the accidents, mishaps, etc., of the trip. The object of the survey was to find the practicability of navigating the river, of opening some easy steamer boat route. The Withlacoochee River rises among the lakes of Polk County, in South Florida, and is many hundred miles in length—if the crookedness is considered, and forms a county line throughout its whole length; first between Polk and Sumpter counties, afterward with Hernando to the west and south, and Sumpter, Marion and Levy on the east and north. Being comparatively, an unknown region to the civilized world, it came suddenly into excited notice when our project became known.

On the morning of June 13th, Capt. A.N. Edwards, of the steamer Tuskavilla, Ocklawaha River; Admiral S. G. Searing, of Federal Point, St. Johns River; and myself, left my place on Lake Weir, with our camp equipments, instruments, guns, etc., one two-horse spring-wagon and one buggy, and drove via Whitesville, Rutland's Ferry, on the lower Withlacoochee. Left my two-horse buggy at Mr. Rutland's, as we could not cross both vehicles on the little flat at one trip. We crossed the river, from Sumpter county, into what is known as "The Cove," in Hernando, a tract of land lying between Lake Chalo-Apopka, on the south-west, and the river on the north-east; drove two miles down the river, to Shell Mound Orange Grove, our headquarters for the trip, where we arrived about 5 p.m. Here we arranged our plans and equipments, took a good night's sleep in the neat cottage in the grove, and next morning embarked on the"Annie," a beautiful Whitehall boat which the Admiral had forwarded from New York for his use. The members of the party were as follows: Capt. A.N. Edwards, Admiral S.G. Searing, T.M. Rickards, John Carlsson and L.A. Sparkman. The duty of the Captain was to guide the boat, not an easy task on this unknown water of many rocks, rapids, logs, etc. The Admiral kept soundings, and my duty was to take bearings and distances of bends, keeping a register of the same, together with depth of water, width of stream, location of channel, etc., with remarks pertinent to subject.

We rowed down stream in a north-west direction for several miles, passing in succession swamps of cypress draped with the long gray moss hanging pendant from the limbs, sometimes 50 or 60 feet in length; wild and improved orange groves, masses of vines, towering oaks, etc., until at 7 miles we arrived at Vincent's Landing. While the Captain and Admiral, myself, Mr. Vincent, my gun and Carleson mused awhile agreeable to the family, and received an addition to our dinner in the shape of a three-quarter pail of fresh milk, but alas for our hopes, the Captain and Admiral on inspection, put every drop under their vests before we reached the boat. Passing two men in a small bateau we ask them, "Do you know this river?" They say, "Yes, for 10 years." We ask, "How far is river?" They say, "From here to Blue Springs." "About 20 miles." "How far to the mouth?" "About 40 miles." (We found by measurement, it was just 76^ miles.) "Any trouble on account of shoals?" "No, your boat will pass any where." In about 12 miles, as the Annie was making about 5 miles an hour, and the soundings were: Eight feet, five feet, four feet, three and a half—look-out! Three feet, h—1! Two-and-a-half, by golly! Steady! and thump, s-c-r-a-p-e, and the Annie stuck on a rock in the middle of the river, the first we had come to.

Plying off we wondered if this wasn't the shoals we had heard so much of. But soon a roaring, rushing sound of water reached our ears; the current became swifter, and presently in rounding a point, the bare rocks and foamy waters of the first rapids lay before us, with our boat swiftly drifting into danger. Pulling to shore, we examined the rapids; and, after some debate, Sparkman, an old river man suggested that we lighten the boat, by all getting out, save him, taking out valises, guns, etc., so that if the boat upset they would last a little longer. We took our stand at the foot of the rapids on the right with our guns, etc., at our feet, to see the "Annie" come, when suddenly the Captain called, "Sparkman!" and ran up the river to where Sparkman was pushing off. "What is it, Captain, any rocks I didn't see?" "No, But before you go, got a big hand-me-that-a quart flask?" On came the Annie, her bow high and saucy, dancing over the bolting waters with Sparkman in the stern, paddle in hand—Indian style—
guiding her carefully around a fallen tree, he steered her bow into the narrow opening and down she came like an arrow over the first rapids. Passing a few more loose rocks, and some shallow places where we could find but 2 feet of water, we come to Michels' Ferry, on the Alafia and Brooksville road. An old gentleman came down to the flat, of whom we asked: "How far to the mouth of the Withlacoochee?" "About 40 miles by land." "And by water?" "A hundred." "Any shoals?" "Yes, but none to stop that boat." Before we got out of sight of his house we ran into the worst kind of shoals, with rocks scarcely six inches from the surface. We had chosen a time for our survey when the river was at its very lowest stage, and he probably, had not been down lately. Carefully moving down the river, in five miles more we again heard the roar of rapids, and, lightening the boat, Sparkman shot them as before. We reached Camp Edwards at dark, a knoll in a cypress swamp, 35 miles below Shell Mound.

One the morning of the 15th, after stencilling the names of party, date, etc., on the smooth, white bark of a magnolia, we left Camp Edwards, and in five miles entered the mouth of Blue Spring Run. Although the waters of the Withlacoochee are comparatively clear, those of Blue Spring are crystal, very deep, current five miles per hour, and bottom of rock. The water is so perfectly clear that the old sunken logs and rocks seemed immediately at the surface, and often we were startled at the seeming danger, when we really had ten feet of water under us. The "pull" up the run was very laborious. Three miles up the run we encountered our old friend, the rapids, caused partly here, however, by the debris from an old saw-mill, abandoned since the war. Lightening the boat, the Admiral steered and Sparkman waded around via a bayou, and with a bow-line, worked the "Annie" above the falls. The beauty of the bottom of this stream is indescribable. A perfect aquarium of plants, and fishes of many kinds. Shells seemed bright as silver shining through the limpid stream in the sunlight. Grass and moss, rocks and sand, logs and alligators, were scattered, indiscriminately, over the bottom. Some deep places we could not sound with our measuring-pole, though the bottom was plainly visible. We arrived at the head of the spring at 11:30 a.m., where all hands proceeded into ecstasies over the beauty of water, land and woods; and the Admiral, planting himself on a 30-foot bluff, unconsciously favored us with the following impromptu: "For a summer residence, for Florida people and folks from Savannah, and other Southern places, this will surpass anything in Florida, yes, or in the United States. I'll bet $50 to $1! Good gunning and fishing. That spring of ice water—a hotel here, with piazza there. I've been to resorts, North and West, and never saw the beauty of that water and this hill equalled. High pines behind us; this magnolia hill; that spring—it is incomparable! You never saw anything like it, d—d if you did! Its elegant! Cut your name here if no one ever sees it! Gentlemen, let's bathe! Well sir, I've been all over the North—Cooperstown you know, why man! this comes out all round, under the rocks, everywhere."

From the foot of every hill, with scarcely any interruption throughout the whole circle of bluffs surrounding the spring, came innumerable fountains of crystal water—icy cold—all joining in one circular basin about 200 feet wide and from 10 to 25 feet deep. After dinner we proceeded down the run, took up our bearings from the north, seven miles from the head, and on towards the gulf. We
caught several fine trout (black bass) weighing from three to eight pounds each, by means of a troll and "spinner," and Capt. Edwards shot an alligator and an otter. Beautiful bluffs, dense forests of cabbage palmetto, pine openings and swamps, where thousands of the star lily, and other flowers abounded, were constantly passed until we arrived at Camp Searing on a thirty-foot bluff, at sunset. Next morning a line was laid, and rain awoke the party, who had nothing between them and the clouds but a mosquito-net. After a pull of half a mile, we came to Darbey's turpentine distillery. A few miles further we passed over more rapids.

The weather had been threatening rain all morning, and after ten minutes a thunder storm came suddenly up driving us under shelter of the broad leaves of a cabbage palmetto, on the bank. After an hour's rain we again started and kept on our way, though we had several heavy showers on us. The river gradually became broader and deeper, the banks on each side being covered with a dense growth of palmetto, cypress, etc. About 1 p.m. we came to mark our position on the south side, and our last bearing gave us three cabbage palmettos, for an object, one mile ahead. We were now in two channels; we took the left and found our object stood on Chambers' Island, and immediately on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. We camped here for dinner, after pulling our boat over the shoals by hand, the tide being out. All hands got out to lighten the boat. We pulled up, an old alligator moved majestically in the shoals, overgrown with beds with a grating noise, which sounded dangerous to us. TheCaptain tried to shoot a porpoise, several being in sight, playing in the shoals, but they became frightened and ran out to sea. Once we tried to pass to the lee of an island to avoid a heavy sea, and the Captain first taking a slight preventive from the quart flask, against a possible shark. About 3 p.m. we started north, in Wacassassee Bay, bound for Dr. Hodge's place, on Hickory Island. The tide had not come in enough to float the Annie, and we were prevented from getting out in deep water by a heavy wind from the Gulf, which, at the exact moment, caused the water to be very rough, though shallow. Poling, pushing and lifting, we moved slowly to our destination.

The Captain wished us to land him on the island until our return, as his two hundred weight out, might save the Annie from a heavy rain was coming up, we did so. His grove consisted of 3000 wild stumps newly budded, worth three years ago $32, and now $10,000. On the 23d we found the river broad, deep and beautiful for three miles, when we entered a narrow, crooked pass almost choked with water, then a broad lake, and for eight miles it continued until we reached William's mill, at 11:30 a.m. We ate dinner, and in the afternoon we went up as far as Kay's Ferry, finding no serious obstacles.
obstruction except at one place, where General Jackson bridged the river during the Seminole war. While here a heavy rain set in and poured steadily down on our devoted heads for two mortal hours. We, tired of waiting for it to cease, and with umbrellas up paddled slowly down the stream, homeward bound. Stayed at Mallard's mill that night, and reached Shell Mound next day at 4 p.m., having traversed twice 132 miles of river, sea and lake, taking copious notes of land and water, stopping at all settlements, fighting our way through bayous clogged with lettuce, rocky rapids, and shallow sandy flats, taking sunshine, dew and rain in swamps, pine woods and orange groves. The health of the party, not the best at starting improved each day as the provisions decreased proportionately, and on Friday, June 25th we parted at Rutland's Ferry, Mr. Searing en route for Acala, myself for home, after planning a continuance of our survey when the rainy season is over.

You asked me to describe the growth of the banana. The main stalk, at maturity, is about 15 or 20 feet high, a foot in diameter at the base, and is merely a succession of leaves. Each stalk will throw out from five to eight suckers; these will each bear at 12 months. The fruit bud when it first appears resembles a gigantic ear of corn, and takes four months to ripen. I have an acre of them which have constantly borne and furnished ripe fruit for the last 12 months; some bunches will weigh from 80 to 100 pounds and the stock requires propping, else the wind will break it at the ground. The leaves are 6 or 8 feet long and 2½ broad. The fruit comes out at the top, and on removal the stalk dies and gives room for a younger one. Our bananas will sell here at the price you state they bring with you, limes and lemons also.

Guavas are a purely tropical fruit, growing on a shrub as large as a lilac bush; the fruit is in size and shape like an orange, but the pulp is soft, like a persimmon; it has a peculiar, musky taste and is eaten raw with sugar, or is made into jelly, marmalade, etc. The shrub is a very ornamental evergreen. I have some 500 plants to transplant, but am too busy now to attend to them. They will grow in large clusters if allowed, but do not yield well.

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acre of any kind of land. Wind being unfavorable and a fog setting
don the coast line we beat about until daylight before attempt-
ting to land. When the sun came up and the fog lifted we found our-
ourselves in sight of the government House of Refuge No. 9, or Ft.
Lauderdale, our destination. Here we ran in as near shore as the
shoal would allow and without anchoring slackened sail and came to
a stop. Our baggage consisted of camp outfit and iroon, a folding boat,
a wooden boat and five miles to the inlet at the mouth of the
New River. I sat in the bow of the boat with a heavy five pronged spear.
Burkhardt met us here. My canvas boat consists of folding gunwales,
bottom pieces and ribs of wood with steel joints and clasps, and
canvas skin and folds up in a four foot package weighing 45 pounds,
unfolding in a boat 12 feet long and 45 inch beam, capable of
carrying 500 pounds. We put it together here. The vegetation has
entirely changed, the timber consisting of sea gum trees, some two
feet across the stump, immense banian or rubber trees, palm, mastic
entirely changed, the timber consisting of sea gum trees, some two
feet across the stump, immense banian or rubber trees, palm, mastic
gumbo limbo, with its oily looking snaky bark. We pulled up
Middle Run to the "Fiber" plantation where a company is planting out
and gumbo limbo, with its oily looking snaky bark. We pulled up
feet across the stump, immense banian or rubber trees, palm, mastic
gumbo limbo, with its oily looking snaky bark. We pulled up
to the next government station here at Biscayne. The sea, getting
immense quantities of sisal hemp. This plant takes kindly to the
sea getting immense quantities of sisal hemp. This plant takes kindly to the
water. We pulled 22 miles on the Atlantic ocean in a canvas boat
to the next government station here at Biscayne. The sea, getting
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In January 1879, Richards' nephew, W. R. Underwood, visited his
uncle's Lake Weir farm. The following is from a letter to an
Oto newspaper.

...[On] the 7th, I started to Lake Weir on foot, leaving my bag-
gage at the hotel [in Gainesville]. Seven miles from town I stop-
ped at a log house and took dinner with the proprietor, a native.
He did as much as any man in Adams county could do, GIVE ME HIS
BEST—no charge—bill of fare, corn dodger, fried bacon and black
coffee. I hired him to bring me here to my uncle's six miles
further on, mule back for one dollar. One mile before I reached
my destination I came to Smith's Lake, the beginning of a success-
ion of lakes which run to the Southern part of the State. I
found my uncle, T. M. Rickards, trimming banana trees; as he had not seen
me for several years he did not recognize me. I told him I was
from Kentucky, name Johnson, looking for a location; made earnest
inquiries about the growth, time of bearing &c, of the banana and
orange. He lit out on a general description of the genus musa,
giving a scientific description of the mode of cultivation and
crushed me laughing at him, when he soon identified that I was his
little nephew. Uncle Tom has been here two years; emigrated from
Missouri with family by wagon. Has a good location on the Ocala

...
and Lake Weir road. His homestead consists of 125 acres lying on
Smith's Lake and surrounding a beautiful clear water lake of twenty-
three acres. He has 300 orange trees set out in grove, some of which
will bear this year, fifty lemon trees just beginning to bear and
bananas by the hundred; one bunch I counted eighty-five bananas on.
The fruit grows in clusters of from sixty to one hundred pods to the
bunch. South of his place is Bower Lake, two miles wide and connect-
red with Smith's Lake by a ford called "Interlachen." These lakes,
large and small, are filled with the finest of fish, black bass. They
are caught at this season of the year with a "spinner," which
is an instrument made of German silver and formed like a minnow, with
two hooks attached and fastened to a short line on a long pole.
The fish strike at the "spinner," probably mistaking it for a small
fish. These black bass weigh from three to fourteen pounds. Two
miles south of here is Lake Weir, said to be the prettiest lake in
Florida; five miles wide, nearly circular in shape, clear, sweet,
soft water and a white, hard sand beach....There are a great many
deer and turkey here and some bear, panther, wild cats, and other
animals. The fox squirrels are large as a good sized cat and of as
accidental color, some black, some white and some are spotted black
and white. The land is covered with heavy timber of two grand
divisions, pine and hammock. The pine land is of three grades—first
class, second class and third. The first class consists of a red
or mulatto colored soil, full of lime rock and is very productive,
timbered with tall pitch and yellow pine trees. Second class, lighter
soil, more sandy, and with oaks mingled with the pines. Third class
is flat, sour gray soil, scrubby pines and ground covered with scrub
palmetto. The hammock land is a heavy, clay soil, immensely product-
ive, growth magnolia, bay, ash, hickory, white oak, orange and palm
trees. The magnolia is a magnificent tree, some of them four feet
through and one hundred feet high, evergreen large waxy, dark green
leaf and large fragrant white bloom. The redbay is a fine close
grained wood, suitable for furniture, admitting of high polish and
called here "Florida mahogany."...There seems to be a nice settlement
around Lake Weir—first on the North side are Missourians, Tennessee-
anis, Georgians, and South Carolinians. On the South and East are
people from Indiana, New England and Pennsylvania. All are deeply
interested in the raising of orange groves about which there seems to
be something so fascinating that when a man once begins he never
quits, like gambling or chewing tobacco....There is a postoffice,
school house and church on the North side and two stores and a post-
office on the South. The land immediately on the lake is nearly all
settled, but back from them a short distance there is still govern-
ment land which can be bought at $1.25 per acre or entered by home-
stead....The houses here are very ordinary, generally log with stick
chimneys. One would be surprised to enter some of them, as I saw
two very fine looking pianos in log houses. The lake people all
seem to be well educated and are very hospitable, kind and sociable.

The following burial list is taken from the original hand-
written record in the archives of the Boca Raton Historical Society. The
first twenty-five burials are in the original cemetery. Most
of these were reinterred in the second cemetery near what is now
Glades Road and Northwest Second Avenue. Numbers twenty-six to
sixty-seven were buried in the second cemetery and then all were
reinterred in the final cemetery on Sunset Hill. The list ends in
1948 when the Town of Boca Raton took over the management of the
Cemetery association.

1. Cochran Baby
   Died November 24, 1916. Age 1 1/2 years.
   Buried partly in road. To be moved.
2. Martha F. Carroll, wife of James M. Carroll.
   Died February 13, 1917. Age 37.
   Died March 11, 1917. Age 51.
4. Frank Baron, born Quebec September 22, 1855.
   Died Deerfield November 12, 1917. Aged 62.
   (Taken to Ft. Lauderdale)
5. Elizabeth Baron (nee Routledge) wife of Frank Baron.
   Born Liverpool, England, April 11, 1864.
   Died Deerfield November 14, 1917. Aged 53.
   (Taken to Ft. Lauderdale)
6. Mr. E. Woodard
   Died about November 17, 1917.
   Age about 52.
   Died November 24, 1917. 12 yrs.
   Died May 17, 1918. Age 1.
   Daughter of Lucas Douglas.
   Died Deerfield May 20, 1918.
    Died at Deerfield, June 20, 1918.
    Died at Deerfield, July 4, 1918.
    Died at Deerfield, July 5, 1918.
13. Baby Purdom
    Born Boca Raton November 29, 1918.
    Died December 3, 1918.
    Died at Yamato Aug. 31, 1919
    Died at Yamato July 11, 1920.
17. Frederick Akins. Aged 3 1/2 years.
20. Infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. G. Nichols. Died at Deerfield Nov. 11, 1923.
29. Billy Brenk, son of Wm. and Louise Brenk. Died Sept. 8, 1928. Age 5 days.
30. Ida Ruth Gaskin, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Gaskin. Died and buried Feb. 22d, 1929. Aged 10 mos. 23 days.
32. Nicholas Champia died March 16, 1929; buried March 18th. Aged 19 yrs.
33. Infant child of Mr. and Mrs. John L. LaMont. Died March 29th, 1929.
34. Infant child of Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Smiley. Died July 12th, 1929.
37. William W. Oglesby died Nov. 22, 1931 at Deerfield, buried Nov. 26th. Aged 60 yrs. (Moved to Deerfield)
39. Mrs. Abbie L. Pope, died Aug. 6, 1932 at Boca Raton, Fla. Aged 66 yrs. 11 mos. 15 days.
40. Smith baby, buried May 3, 1933.
41. James Ward Campbell born Dec. 24th 1862 in Province of Quebec, Canada. Died Nov. 28, 1933 at Lake Harbor, Fla. and buried Nov. 28, 1933. Aged 70 yrs. 11 mos. 24 days.
43. Orson R. Arnold, Age 35 yrs. died Nov. 3, 1934 at W. Palm Beach, Fla. and buried Nov. 5, 1934.
45. Mrs. Eliza A. Townsend died June 26, 1936 buried Feb. 10th.
49. Clarence Boyce, Age 51 yrs, died Feb. 11, 1938, buried Feb. 13th.
51. Swan E. Stenander, Age 45 yrs. 11 mos. 17 days. Died June 8th 1938, buried June 11th.
54. George S. Akins--Age 77 yrs. 1 mos. 12 days. Died Dec. 18, 1938, buried Aug. 19th.
55. Marion Cox--Age 10 yrs. Died Aug. 30, 1938 and buried Sept. 2d.
57. George A. Long Jr. -- Age 46 yrs. died November 6th, 1939; buried Nov. 8th.
58. Charles Oscar Journigan -- Age 23 yrs. 4 mos. 20 days. Died Nov. 11, 1939; buried Nov. 12th.
59. Mrs. Eva Grace Tate -- Age 66 yrs. 11 mos. 15 days. Died Dec. 19, 1939; buried Dec. 21st.
61. Amy M. Fiske -- Age 60 yrs. Died May 2, 1940; buried May 4th.
64. Ira Henry Davis, Age 77 yrs. 1 mos. 12 days. Died Oct. 20, 1941. Buried Oct. 22d.
66. Infant Brenk (Female). Died and buried May 4, 1942.
68. James Fiske -- Age 60 yrs.  

69. Infant child of Lt. and Mrs. Reginald S. Davis. Age 21 hrs.  

70. Nancy Moseley, Age 72 yrs.  
   Died at Boynton, Fla. Dec. 1st, 1942, Buried Dec. 2d.

71. James Boyce, Age 12 yrs.  
   Died at Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Sept. 20, 1943  
   Buried Sept. 24th.


73. Charles H. Brown, Age 69.  
   Died Feb. 4, 1944. Buried 2-6-44.

74. Infant Sellers (Paul Sellers)  
   Died Feb. 18, 1944. Buried 2-18-44

75. Mrs. Ellen Stokes, born Dec. 23, 1858.  
   Died Nov. 3, 1944, Buried 11-5-44.

76. Phillip Hardy Sellers, Age 70 yrs.  

77. Mrs. Vertie Davis, Age 79 yrs.  
   Died Aug. 3, 1947, Buried ?

78. Mrs. Marie Kristine Andelfinger  
   Died Sept. 2, 1947. Buried 9-6-47. Age 42

   Died April 8, 1948. Buried 4-12-48.

80. Mrs. Reba Peery Ball. Age 75 yrs.  

81. Mrs. Elvira Combs. Age 81 yrs.  
   Died Aug. 22, 1948. Buried ?

82. William Copeland Cox. Age 57.  
   Died Oct. 23, 1948. Buried ?

* * * * *

"Affidavit" by Harry M. Chesebro. Removal of bodies from the first to the second cemetery.

I, Harry M. Chesebro of Boca Raton, in the County of Palm Beach and State of Florida, being duly sworn, deposes and states, that,

Frank H. Chesebro, my father, donated the lands named in the cation hereof for cemetery purposes in the year 1916 and had active charge thereof until the year 1928, at which time the Boca Raton Cemetery Association was chartered by the State and that the said Frank H. Chesebro was then elected President of said association and acted continuously as such until his death January 19, 1936.

Deponent further states, that during the year 1936 I succeeded Frank H. Chesebro as President of said association, and have continued to act as such to the present time.

Deponent further states that, the said records show that a total of 25 bodies were interned on the said lands, and further show that, on May 22, 1928, 24 bodies were exhumed and removed to be buried elsewhere, and that, on May 23, 1928, the last and remaining body was removed from said lands.

Deponent further states that, he personally assisted in the work of removing said bodies and knows that all of the bodies ever interned on the said lands were removed therefrom and reinterned elsewhere, during the two days cited above.

Deponent further states, that the removal and reinternment of all of said bodies was done under State Permit by an authorized undertaker, one Mr. Karnatz, then of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and that the certificates of removal, required by law, were properly executed and are a part of the Cemetery Association's records, and are now in the possession of Miss Audrey Purdom, Secretary to said Boca Raton Cemetery Association.

(Signed: Harry M. Chesebro)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 15th day of March A.D. 1944 at Boca Raton, Florida.

(J. C. Mitchell  
Notary Public)

* * * * *
From Frank Chesebro's Diary [Boca Raton Historical Society].

September 4, 1925: "Finished Cemetery"

January 22, 1926: "Two loads plants. Out west with Ballard to see new cemetery site"

February 9, 1928: "Mr. Geist talked about moving cemetery"

February 10, 1928: "Went with Mr. Geist to see cemetery location N. W. of Pearl City."

February 15, 1928: "Mr. Geist here about cemetery."

February 19, 1928: "All to Longs in P. M. for cemetery Trustees to sign deed to Geist."

March 5, 1928: "Took Gedney the cemetery charter."

March 6, 1928: "Denegan and a gang of men began grubbing new cemetery."

April 9, 1928: "Met Mr. Geist at Harry's and talked over cemetery job."

May 21, 1928: "Up to cemetery and picked out some lots for the long dead in old cemetery."

March 20, 1929: "At cemetery Harry and Prowns setting out Australian Pines."

March 11, 1930: "Annual cemetery meeting in P. M. Esther, Purdom, Hattie Deigo, and Harry here."

March 10, 1931: "Annual Cemetery meeting."

Deed, transferring land for second cemetery. Mr. Gedney was an attorney and an agent of Clarence H. Geist.

THIS INDENTURE, Made this 23rd day of April, A.D. 1928, between Jerome D. Gedney and Madeleine P. Gedney, his wife, of the City, County and State of New York, hereinafter referred to as the Grantor, and the Boca Raton Cemetery Association, hereinafter referred to as the Grantee:

WITNESSETH: That the Grantor, for and in consideration of the sum of Ten Dollars ($10.00) and other good and valuable considerations to him in hand paid by the Grantee, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, has granted, bargained and sold to the said Grantee the following described land, situate, lying and being in the County of Palm Beach, State of Florida, known and designated as:

Northwest Quarter of Northeast Quarter of
Northeast Quarter (NW¼ NE¼ NE¼), Section
Nineteen (19), Township Forty-seven (47)
South, Range Forty-three (43) East, Palm
Beach County, State of Florida.

This indenture is made subject to the following reservations, restrictions, covenants and conditions, which the Grantee accepts as a part of the consideration thereof and which shall run with the land for the benefit of the Grantor and be binding upon the Grantee, its successors and assigns.

Neither the Grantee, nor its successors, shall sell, convey, or lease said premises, or any interest therein, or any portion thereof, by deed, lease or otherwise, without the consent in writing of Spanish River Land Company, or its successors or assigns.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD, the same, together with the hereditaments and appurtenances, unto said Grantee.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The said Grantor has hereunto set his hand and seal the day and year first above written.

(SIGNED)
To the People of Boca Raton and Deerfield:

The Trustees of Boca Raton Cemetery have adopted the following rules and regulations:

No lots will be sold but a charge of $5.00 will be made for each burial. This is done to provide a fund for the improvement, beautifying and maintenance of the cemetery and to avoid having the grounds disfigured by neglected and uncared for lots and graves.

We intend to make a beautiful little park of the place and to care for it as long as we have friends there. The land has been deeded to us and can never be used for any other purpose. Everyone can have their choice of location for a grave or family group providing it does not interfere with our general plan. Relatives can erect headstones and plant flowers as they choose. An accurate record of all graves will be kept. The Superintendent and Trustees get no pay for their services—only for actual labor performed.

(Helen Long.
TRUSTEES (Viola Purdom.
(Elizabeth M. Chesebro."

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[In 1916 one acre was set aside near the Boca Raton Hotel as a Cemetery. When C. H. Giest purchased the land he wanted the one acre and traded ten acres near the waterworks for a cemetery. During World War II, the government took over the 10 acres and deeded another 10 acres on the ridge where the present Boca Raton Memorial Cemetery is situated. Mr. Chesebro was head of the Cemetery Association and instigated the idea of having a memorial monument there, designed and built it.

Mr. Chesebro formed the inscription on the monument. The inscription reads: "A memorial dedicated to the memory of those buried here who served in the military forces of our country in all its wars. At the rising of the sun and at eventide we will remember them and dedicate ourselves to the cause of peace for which they served and sacrificed.

Mr. Chesebro was a retired farmer and a noted horticulturist and nurseryman. He was noted for his giant hybrid amaryllis."

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To the Boca Raton Town Council, August 17, 1949:

Gentlemen:

We, the undersigned members of the Boca Raton Cemetery Association do hereby make request of the Town Council as follows:

As you know, we do not have funds to maintain the grounds at the cemetery, therefore, we are asking that the Town maintenance crew be allowed one day a week, or at least one day every two weeks, to keep the grounds free of unsightly growth and work with us for the beautification of this project.

We feel that the cemetery is one place that should be considered by the Town at large as a civic project.

Any consideration that you can give us toward the improvement of our cemetery will be appreciated.

Respectfully yours,

BOCA RATON CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

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The Town Council answered on September 15, 1949:

Gentlemen:

Your letter of August 17th was presented to the Council at its regular meeting, September 13th, for their consideration.

This is to inform you that by motion of the Council the Superintendent of Public Works has been instructed to devote two or more days per month in the maintenance and beautification of this property, as requested in your letter.

I trust that this fulfills the wishes of your Association in this matter.

Very truly yours,

Wm. H. Lamb, Clerk

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The dedication of the Chesebro monument May 10, 1962. Left to right: Col. Arnold MacSpadden, Dr. William G. O'Donnell, and Mrs. Harry Chesebro. "The ceremony dedicated the memorial marker to the Chesebro Family who gave the land for Boca Raton's first cemetery. Also to Dr. Lawrence Gould, world famous explorer who composed the second paragraph on the War Memorial monument. Col. MacSpadden spoke about the Chesebro Family and told of the history of the cemetery. Dr. O'Donnell is a member of the Cemetery Association which presented the marker." Boca Raton News, May 17, 1962.

Henry Warren: The purpose of this occasion is to dedicate a memorial marker to the Chesebro Family of Boca Raton whose name is identified with the giving of the first land for Cemetery purposes in the City of Boca Raton - and more particularly to Harry Chesebro who designed and administered the construction of the War Memorial in 1953. At this time the Cemetery was given over to the City for their operation. Incidentally the City has continued to make the Cemetery a beautiful Park under the capable hands of our Sexton, also Fire Chief, assisted by the Cemetery Committee consisting of Helen Mann, Dorothy Eubank, Dr. O'Donnell, Helen Roadman, and Audrey Purdon. To review some of the early days of the Chesebro Family in Florida I will turn the program over to Arnold MacSpadden who has had considerable contact with the Chesebros along with a look at some very revealing writings of Frank Chesebro from the early days - MacSpadden.

Col. Arnold MacSpadden: The patriarch Frank Chesebro and his family arrived in Boca Raton in 1903 - but only after Frank had made an earlier trip the same year by a small boat down the intra-coastal waterway from Titusville to Miami and return - examining the land as he went to determine where he was going to settle. Frank Chesebro was an inveterate diary writer and as he was making the trip he would write a few lines every day. Some of the remarks about the numerous landings he made along the way were not too complimentary of the area - such as his reference to the sand flies and mosquitoes around Stuart and Jupiter - he stated that they were so thick he couldn't stand them - I know you just can't get away from them no matter how hard you try. When he reached Boynton he said, "It is a stinking hole in a muck swamp." His first landing at Boca Raton he said, "They are even trying to grow Citrus in the White Sand." He talked at some length with Tom Rickards who was living here then and had land to sell. However, he went on to Miami - got some supplies and returned back up the Canal bound for Titusville. When he reached Boca Raton he made a profound statement in his diary, "It looks better this time." He had made his decision. He wrote his wife that night thirteen pages as I remember the entry and in this letter he must have asked his wife to send him some money - for he picked it up in the mail when he got back up to Titusville. After completing his trip - selling his boat and getting his clothes mended, he boarded a train and returned to Boca Raton - Bought sixty acres for $12.50 per acre less five per cent for cash. He lost no time building a house after stumping the plot. After closing in the house he returned to South Haven in Michigan for the Summer to prepare for the move to the South - which in those days was more of a chore than it is today. Frank Chesebro upon his return to Boca Raton with his family lost no time getting a garden and fruit trees and from all accounts was never sorry that he moved to his choice of all the East Coast of Florida. As the years went by he was moved to give the Town a plot of ground for a Cemetery, which according to Audrey Purdon was in or near the present Cloister Patio of the Club [The Boca Raton Hotel and Club]. When the Bocn came to
Boca Raton and Addison Mizner bought up all the land for the Cloister Inn. The Cemetery had to be moved to what is now about 15th Street and Northwest Second Avenue. There the Cemetery grew in size until it held sixty-five bodies. Then along came the Corps of Engineers to build the Boca Raton Army Air Corps Base and it became necessary to move the cemetery once again to its present location. Harry Chesebro with loving hands helped move the bodies and administered the move as the president of the cemetery association. It seems every Town has its Frank and Harry Chesebro in spirit but I believe Boca Raton is indeed fortunate to have had such dedicated workers with the ability to envision good works for the City we live in. I will now turn the dedication back to Henry Warren who will have Mrs. Harry Chesebro escorted to the marker for its unveiling.

Henry Warren: Requests the Mayor of the City, Jack Brandt, to escort Mrs. Harry Chesebro to unveil the Marker.

While unveiling the marker Warren remarks: "We assembled, witness the unveiling of the Memorial Marker dedicated to a Pioneer family of Boca Raton who has done so much toward commemorating those who have passed on and thereby preserved the history of our Town and its people.

Henry Warren: Then asks Mayor Brandt to formally accept the marker for the people of Boca Raton.

Henry Warren: Then dismisses the meeting by thanking all those who have had a part in the dedication.