

The Spanish River Papers

MAY, 1975

VOL. III No. 3

"I have tried to live a decent honest life and hope the world is no worse for my having lived in it 85 years."

Frank H. Chesebro in a farewell message, 1936

A report to the membership of
Boca Raton Historical Society, Inc.
P. O. Box 1113, Boca Raton, Florida 33432

from Mrs. Russell W. Fisher, Mrs. Dorn Lee Redd, Mrs. Charles Vicinus

Property of
BOCA RATON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Chesebrough

FRANK H. CHESEBRO
1850 - 1936

His Florida Years - Part Two
1925 - 1936

Frank H. Chesebro, one of the earliest pioneer landowners in Boca Raton, engaged in pineapple planting and truck farming. He brought his family and household possessions to Florida in 1903, seeking a more temperate climate for his later years.

Although Boca Raton remained a small farming community throughout the early 1900s, Mr. Chesebro concerned himself early on with the establishment of a school for the children. As early as 1908, his diary notations chronicle his personal participation in the completion of the small schoolhouse. His daughter, Esther, would be a teacher at that school for two years prior to the arrival in 1914 of Mr. Lawrence Gould. Mr. Gould, who taught at the school until 1916, later would become a prominent member of the now famous Byrd Antarctic Expedition of 1928 - 1930. While teaching in Boca Raton, he lived with the Chesebro family and became a warm and close friend.

Mr. Chesebro, in 1915, joined with several other gentlemen living in Boca Raton to form the first civic organization "The Board of Trade". The accomplishments of that Board included the planting of Australian Pines along Palmetto Park Road (in conjunction with the Utility Club, a group of young teenagers dedicated to beautifying Boca Raton); a plan for the widening and deepening of the Boca Raton Inlet; and the supervision of the paving of the new Dixie Highway from Delray, south to the Hillsboro River.

Mr. Chesebro personally selected and deeded the land for the community's first cemetery. He remained the principal trustee throughout his lifetime.

In 1924, Frank Chesebro vigorously opposed the incorporation of the town of Boca Raton. In a letter to Judge Chillingworth, he protested the imposition of the tax burden, stating it would yield little benefit to those living south of the Palmetto Park Road community.

Mr. Chesebro's land, purchased in large part from the Florida East Coast Railway Co. and the Model Land Co. in 1903-04, was sold in part to the Mizner Development Corporation in 1925. The land was sold again in the assignment of the Mizner mortgage to Clarence H. Geist in November of 1927.

Mortgage Deed.

FROM CORPORATION

MIZNER DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

To

FRANK H. CHESEBRO

Date:

Abstract of Description

Mortgage

Recorded

Record Verified

Filed for record on the 25th
 day of May at 4:00 PM
 19 25, and
 recorded in Mortgage Book 108, page 415
 public records of Palm Beach
 County, Florida.

Fred E. Ferris
 Clerk Circuit Court,
 The H. & W. B. Drew Company, Jacksonville, Fla. 1-18-23

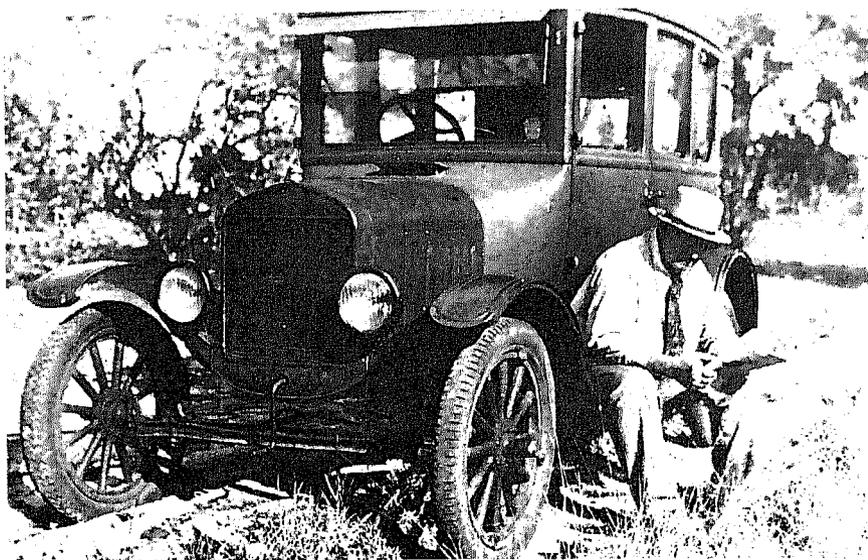
Paul J. Chesebro
285 Boca Raton.
2, 35
280

During the years 1925-1936, Mr. Chesebro continued to keep a faithful daily diary. The following excerpts highlight events important to both the Chesebros and to Boca Raton.

- June 24, 1925 : ... Election. John Brown Mayor.
- Jan. 22, 1926 : ... Out west ... to see new cemetery site.
- May 19, 1926 : Put Mizners notes in Bank for collection.
- Sept. 18, 1926 : A hurricane sneaked up in the night - the worst that ever was. Blew down garage, windmill, etc. etc. . . .
- Sept. 19, 1926 : Good wind. Dried out things. . . . Storm fierce south of here.
- Nov. 30, 1926 : Mizner's paid interest in all.
- Dec. 20, 1926 : Mr. Divers from Delray and a helper put electric lights in house. . . .
- Nov. 8, 1927 : ... Sold mortgages on canal land to J. D. Gedney for 10,000. 1,000 down.
- Feb. 10, 1928 : Went with Mr. Geist to see cemetery location N.W. of Pearl City.
- Feb. 19, 1928 : All to Longs in P.M. for cemetery trustees to sign deed to Geist.
- March 5, 1928 : Took Gedney the cemetery charter.
- Sept. 16, 1928 : Another hurricane began in the morning and got worse all day. Blew down tank, barn, garage roof on old part of house, packing house and trees.
- April 11, 1929 : Big dinner at Administration Building in eve. Mr. Geist gave a talk.
- April 16, 1929 : Mr. Geist started for home.
- Sept. 28, 1929 : A hurricane all day. Blew some paper off the roof and ruined most of the pepper plants in the field. A cyclone in Lauderdale.

Mrs. Chesebro's sister Libby Evarts, known to everyone fondly as Aunt Libby, came to Boca Raton in the early 1930s, after Frank had been widowed, to help her brother run his home and farm. Libby and her husband stayed in Boca Raton for several years before moving to West Palm Beach.

In the summer of 1935, Frank and Libby spent four harrowing days lost on a motor car trip in the flatlands west of Hobe Sound.



FRANK H. CHESEBRO

Excerpts from Mr. Chesebro's diary,
July 5 - July 10, 1935

- July 5 : *Lib and I to Ft. Pierce to see the Myers. Got stuck and lost in west of Hobe Sound. Lay alongside a pond all night.*
- July 6 : *Wandered for miles along an old road, prairies and ponds.*
- July 7 : *Same Sunday.*
- July 8 : *Monday. Found an old road and house and got darkies to bring me to W.P.B. Lib in woods yet. Sheriff took some men to look for her. I went with Joe and Harry to show them the way.*
- July 10 : *Sheriff and 100 men found Lib at 11. Brought her to hospital at 12. Home at 6.*

The following account by Libby of the ordeal is included in a long autobiographical manuscript entitled My Years, From March 10th 1854 to April 18th 1941. The manuscript is now in the possession of the Boca Raton Historical Society.

"Lost in the Flatwoods of Florida
From July 5th to July 10th, 1935."

by Libby Chesebro Evarts

I will first state that instead of being in the Everglades of Florida, as published in newspapers and broadcast over the country at the time, we were in the Flatwoods of Florida, a very different locality and a much safer place in which to wander, as the Everglades are a much worse place, more dangerous, in several respects. If we had been lost there, we probably would never have survived the ordeal. Besides being a more desolate and inaccessible country, it abounds in more wild animals, such as bear, panther, wild cat, alligators and no end of venomous serpents.

Although the Flatwoods are bad enough, we saw no snakes or other live animals. The Everglades are a vast expanse of swamp, forests, lakes and dense growth through which no one can penetrate without axe and saw. Only the Seminole Indians have been able to live and secrete themselves, in time of war, with the U.S. Government, in opposing the removal of the Indians to west of the Mississippi. The Indians knew the country so well, and could make a living in so much of it, where a white man could not, that they were able to make a successful defense for years.

In the Flatwoods of Florida, in which we wandered for four and five days and nights, there are vast stretches of prairie-like country dotted with many ponds and clumps or groves of trees, vines and palmetto, so matted together that one cannot penetrate them. When one tries to go in a certain direction, he is obliged to detour, this way and that, to get around the water. So much zigzagging soon causes a person to lose his sense of direction, and is soon lost.

I quote from a newspaper report of our experience:

"There are only three areas in the continental United States, in which such an unequal struggle for life could be waged - Florida's mysterious Everglades, California's deadly Death Valley and freezing Alaska." The same Writer further on, says: "Tortured by the living fire of buckets-full of mosquitoes, by thirst that sent her sprawling on hands and knees, to lap up the tepid water, by terrible exhaustion that caused her to drop and slumber in puddles of water, and with the menace of the deadly rattlesnake everywhere".

I will say here that neither my brother nor I saw any snakes or other animal in all our wandering. To account for this it has been said that probably the high water had driven them to higher ground. Had we been in the Everglades proper, we would not have fared so well. With this preamble I begin my story.

Friday July 5th. 1935, my brother, 84 years old and I, 81, left West Palm Beach for Fort Pierce, to call on friends from Detroit, Mich. On our way back, we left the Federal Highway at Hobe Sound, driving west, thinking to see some new country, and avoiding a detour at Kelsey City. This little used road was paved for a short distance, then turned into a good dirt road, which was very winding, around ponds and a creek or two, but no sight of habitations. After quite a while we came to a few mud holes, which we navigated well enough - but finally came to one so deep we could not get the car forward or back. We worked an hour, I believe, with no success, stuffed grass, bushes and weeds in the rut, but in vain. Brother would get in the car and work it, while I pushed from behind. Once the car made a sudden backward lunge which threw me on my back into black mud and water. I scrambled up, afraid the car would run over me, but it only settled deeper.

Near sundown, my brother decided to go for help, telling me to stay in the car. He was in no condition to tramp, or even walk, as his feet and limbs were swollen, and his heart was bad, but he started on ahead of the car, and disappeared in a mass of trees, shrubs and vines.

What the road was ever used for, I cannot imagine, for it seemed to end just ahead of where we were fast. The road might have led sometime to a "robber's roost" or a still and been abandoned.

I staid in the car that night and next forenoon, fighting mosquitoes with newspaper, etc. No sleep, of course.

From lack of sleep and worry, I suppose, over my brother's condition, my mind was not clear, and my vision distorted objects, back of me in the distance. I thought I saw a team of horses and a wagon with load of logs half a mile back, but they did not move. Another picture was of a man near a blackened stub, that I imagined was watching me or the car. Hour after hour I twisted my head to watch these objects, No wonder that my mind and sight was twisted, also. At last I plucked up courage to leave the car and go in the direction my brother had gone. Saw no sign of a road after a few rods, but a tangle of brush and vines on a little rise, which looked as if a building might sometime have been there. I climbed and got where I could see a great tract of land and tall grass, but no sign of life or habitation, and I wondered how my brother got through that tangle and how anyone could get through to help us.

I retraced my way to the car and left a note, saying I would walk back the way we came, to the place where we left the highway. Saying also that I could not stand the mosquitoes another night. There was food in the car, sandwiches and groceries, but I never thought of them. I was filled with dread of passing those people of my imagination, but when I came near, there was no one there.

In regard to the food in the car, I will say that in all the five days and nights of my wanderings, I never felt any hunger or thought of eating. My brother had the same experience.

After a mile or so of walking, I thought I saw some negroes working in the distance, and I began calling to them to direct me to a house and some water to drink. No response and after repeated calls as loud as I could, I became frightened, and decided to hide from them, so I turned toward a pond and grove of trees, etc. and circled them, putting them between me and the men, (if men they were.) Probably it was only another hallucination of my brain. I do not think I was more than a mile or two from the car then.

I do not know whether I walked in circles or not, as people do when lost, but I do not believe I was many miles from the car at any time.

Every night I slept under bushes and in tall wet grass. It rained nearly every night and I was soaked all the time. My clothes were torn and hanging, so as to trip me, so I tied the strips in front in knots. One night, in dusky twilight I thought I saw two eyes glaring at me. I imagined it to be a wild cat and a kitten beside it. It did not move, and I looked for a stick to defend myself, if it should attack me. Found nothing stout enough to be of use, and walked on a way when I fell down after a bit, and slept. I woke once thinking the car was near me, then I concluded it to be a house cat on a hunt, and so dropped off to sleep again after talking to the supposed cat a little.

Another night I thought I would go a little way into a jungle of trees and vines, and for a change, sleep leaning against some trees. It was raining and everything dripping, so I was not comfortable. I finally made my way to the edge of the pond, at the edge of the jungle to get a drink. It was hard to get but a few sips as the shore was so muddy, and I hated to stir the water, afraid to drink something harmful. Well, I struggled against the vines and bushes back to my roosting-place, but so many roots and bushes were so uncomfortable that I left the place, and went out in the open tall grass. I fell down and slept there.

One night I imagined myself in an immense room full of white frosty trees, plants and shrubs, the ground soaking wet with leaves and mud. I felt very sick and called for someone saying: "I am so sick, come and help me." I called this over and over. I thought too that the walls and ceiling were full of knot holes through which the lights shone from adjoining rooms, where people were living. Now I know those lights were the stars. Another night I found myself on comparatively high ground, with one pine tree. The grass was not tall there and I concluded to sleep leaning against the tree, instead of lying on the ground. Soon it began to thunder and lighten. I had sense enough to know that it was dangerous to be under a tree in a storm, so tried to get up and walk away, but I could not get on my feet, so after a few trials, I just rolled over and over, till I thought I was far enough from the tree to be safe. After a while I slept in a gentle rain in the wide spaces.

Many times I tried to wet my mouth with the water dripping from the bushes over me. The fine fern-like foliage, dripping with millions of pure water drops looked so tempting, but it was very hard to get enough to more than moisten my lips. But it was a beautiful sight of those diamond like drops. It was only an aggravation to get a few drops of pure rain water, instead of the nauseating water in the muddy edge of the ponds.

When I was too weak to walk, and it was difficult to get on my feet, I would crawl on hands and knees, through the tall wet grass and warm muddy water. Sometimes it seemed as if I went a long distance in that manner, but got nowhere - another figment of the brain.

The night before I was found, my pocket book felt so heavy, (not from its valuable contents, but from my weakness, I suppose,) that I laid it down in the grass, intending to return for it in the morning. I walked quite a way from it to the edge of a pond with a muddy shore. I finally selected a spot where I lay down with my face near the edge of the water, so that I could sip some water without too much exertion. When found next day my feet were in the water instead of my head.

The next morning when I woke I had no inclination to rise at all. I simply lay quiet, thinking if no help comes to-day I will just lie and rest, I am so tired. Partly in the sun and partly in the shade of palmetto and bushes, I lay, but now and then I would call as loud as I could for help.

About 11:30 A.M. a party of 60 or 80 searchers found my pocket book and fired a gun once as a signal, but I did not hear it. A few minutes later I was found barely conscious. The gun was then fired three times, they told me, but I did not hear that.

I was taken to Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm Beach, where I was an object of great curiosity. My clothes, soaking wet, were cut from me, and found to be full of little spiders. For weeks, my body was speckled like a turkey egg, I think from those spiders, for mosquitoes do not leave that sort of mark upon me. The itching was intolerable.

Sunburn cooked me well for my skin came off in thin white patches, for a long time. Skinned alive I was.

As soon as I was a little recovered at the hospital, reporters and cameramen swarmed for pictures and brief interviews. The doctor and nurses were wonderfully kind and attentive. Strangers passed by looking curiously at me. One lady I looked at questioningly. She said: "I'm no one you know, but I've been reading about you". I was a marvel to all that at my age I could survive such a horrible experience.

In a week I was able to leave the hospital for the home of my niece, where I had the same care as at the hospital, and in another week returned to Capt. Rowley's home north of the city, where my husband and I had been staying for some months.

My brother never recovered from the shock and strenuous efforts he made in trying to locate help. His walking and stumbling thro' the desolate country during those awful days and nights were too horrible for him. He told of sleeping under a log, with palmetto leaves over him to protect himself partly from the mosquitoes. He sometimes slept in the daytime when the insects were not so troublesome. At last on Tuesday afternoon he reached some negro cabins, where he got the men to take him to West Palm Beach. They had very little gasoline, so they made their way to a filling station by putting a small quantity in the vacuum tank. At Hobe Sound the car was disabled, so they changed to a truck, and reached W.P.B. to find that I had not shown up. Then matters began to move in a hurry.

At daylight next morning a party of 60 or 80 searchers directed by the Sheriff spread out in a fan-like formation, over the desolate country and about 11:30 A.M. found my pocket book and me a little later.

My brother made a brave fight for the months following, but passed away Jan. 19, 1936. We came back to him in August and remained with him to the end. He and I had many rides during those last months, he having to go to the doctor once or twice a week in Delray Beach. Instead of returning home after doing errands we often rode out west to see the country. We kept to good roads usually though not always paved. Were not anxious for another experience like the one in the Flatwoods. I was a little shaky once in going over the bridge across Lake Osborn, and once several miles west of Delray on a good dirt road, came to a deep rut filled with water that looked ominous. Brother was for going thro' it, but I objected. After looking at it for a minute, he turned the car about on the narrow road with a ditch of water on either side, and started back, much

to my relief.

We were both hard of hearing, so did not hold much conversation on these trips, but enjoyed them, nevertheless.

Sometime before his death, my brother told me he wanted no preaching or singing at his funeral, which was held in the cemetery under a canopy over the lot. Just as the services began, a mocking bird, near by sang his requiem.

Excerpts from Mr. Chesebro's diary, January 1936

- Jan. 12 : *Wrote to Clare* (Frank's brother). *Esther and Joe* (daughter and husband) *here afternoon and took Lib and all to some preaching in W.P. Beach.*
- Jan. 13 : *Aleck plowed and planted some beans*
- Jan. 14 : *Allen (son) chored around house.*
- Jan. 15 : (diary entries continue but not in Frank's hand) *Allen hoed . . . peppers. Called Dr. Davis for Frank.*
- Jan. 18 : *Allen helped Lee set pepper plants. Had Ethyl, Harry* (daughter-in-law and son) *and Margaret sit up with Frank.*
- Jan. 19 : *Frank died at 1 P.M.*

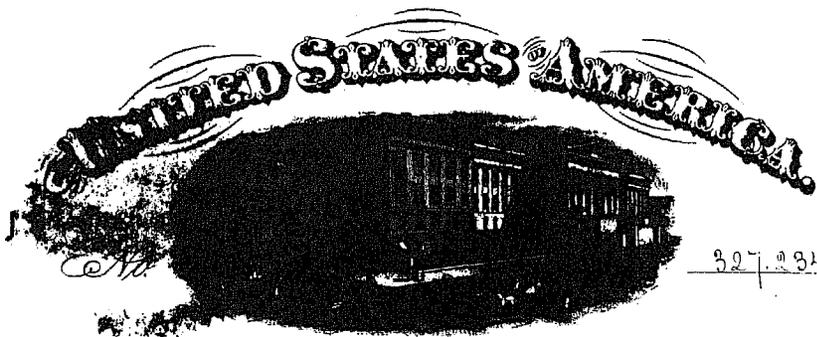
Farewell message read at Frank Chesebro's funeral,
January 1936

My friends and neighbors, I have a few things to tell you before you go I am going to leave you now, forever. We have lived together a good many years, and now I go the way of all mankind. It is better that it should be so. Old age is not always a blessing. It so often brings pain and sorrow and disease, and so often we are a grievous burden on the living.

You have all seen the quotation over the cemetery entrance in West Palm Beach, "That which is so universal as Death, must be a Blessing".

I have tried to live a decent honest life and hope the world is no worse for my having lived in it 85 years. *What the hereafter has in store for me, I do not know. No one knows. You will go home and leave me here alone to return to dust. But I will not be alone. My trees and shrubs will stay with me. On the north side of the lot is the precise and symmetrical Norfolk Island Pine. To the northwest is a Hamelia Sphereocarpa. To the northeast is a Posoqueria Latifolia, sometimes called Needle Flower. Near the middle of the lot is a Tabernaemontana coronaria or Crape Jassamine, and at the southwest corner of the lot is a Thunbergia erecta. Near the east side is an Ixora coccinea.*

Please pull out the weeds. Goodnight and goodbye, everybody. Now, Jeannette, My wife, my wife. I am here to stay with you, forever.

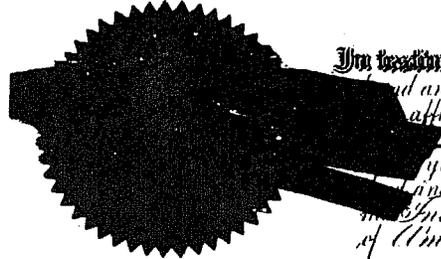


To all to whom these presents shall come:

~~Whereas~~ Frank Howard Chesbro
Frank Howard of Michigan
 has presented to the Commissioner of Patents a petition praying
 for the ~~grant~~ grant of Letters Patent for an alleged new and useful improvement in
Hand Seed Drills

a description of which invention is contained in the Specification of which
 a copy is herewith annexed and is a part hereof, and has complied
 with the various requirements of ~~the law~~ in such cases made and provided; and
~~Whereas~~ upon due examination made the said Claimant is adjudged
 to be justly entitled to a Patent under the Law.

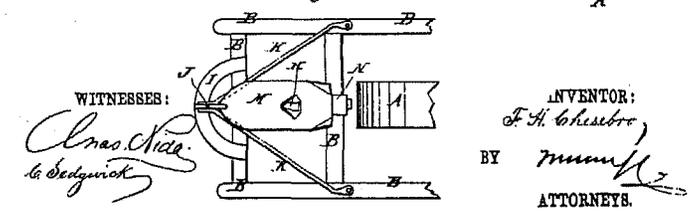
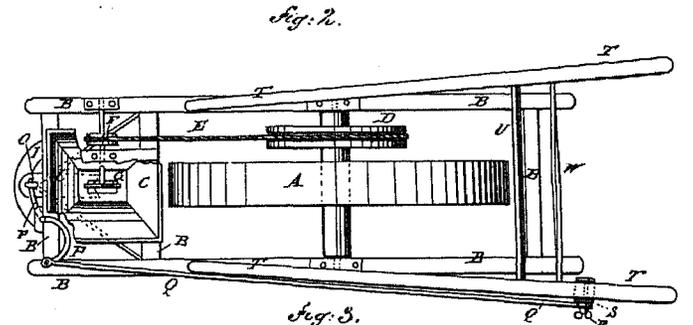
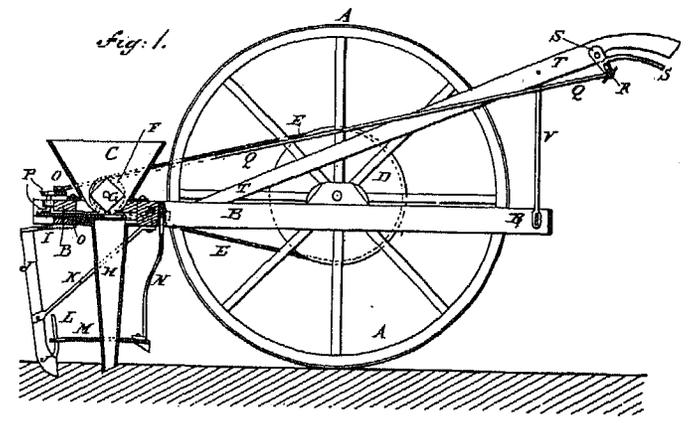
Now therefore these **Letters Patent** are to grant unto the said
Frank Howard Chesbro his heirs or assigns
 for the term of seventeen years from the fourth day of
November one thousand eight hundred and eighty four
 the exclusive right to make, use and vend the said invention throughout the
 United States and the Territories thereof.



~~I, the Commissioner~~ I have hereto set my
 hand and caused the seal of the Patent Office
 to be hereunto affixed at the City of Washington
 this fourth day of November
four year of our Lord one thousand eight hun-
 dred and eighty four and of
 the Independence of the United States
 of America the one hundred and tenth

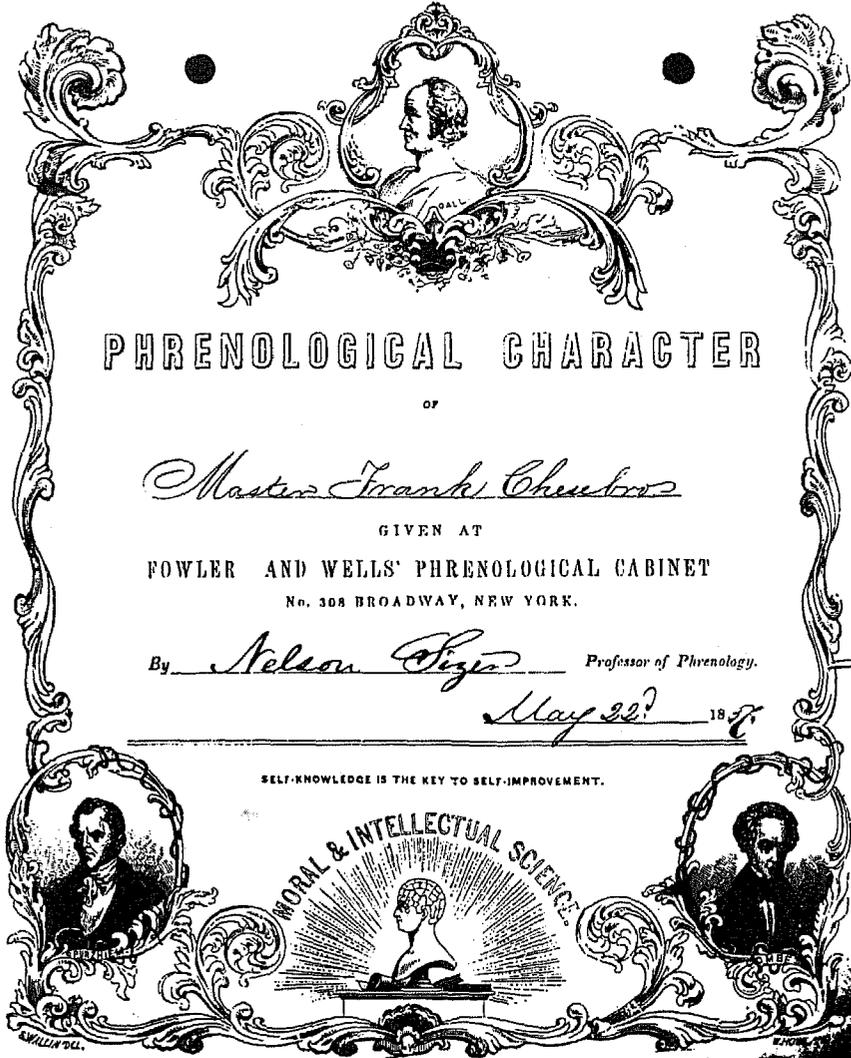
Countersigned: W. M. Woodruff
 Secretary of the Interior
 Commissioner of Patents

(No Model.)
 F. H. CHESEBRO.
 HAND SEED DRILL.
 No. 327,234. Patented Sept. 29, 1885.



WITNESSES:
Amos Child
W. S. Bedgwick

INVENTOR:
F. H. Chesbro
 BY Wm. H. ...
 ATTORNEYS.



PHRENOLOGICAL CHARACTER

OF

Master Frank Chestnut

GIVEN AT

FOWLER AND WELLS' PHRENOLOGICAL CABINET

No. 308 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

By *Nelson Sizer* Professor of Phrenology.

May 22? 18*77*

SELF-KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO SELF-IMPROVEMENT.

