THE HUNT IN FLORIDA

The Senie Douthit Letter

Edited with Notes by Patrick Scott

NOTES

While browsing in an antiquarian bookstore in St. Petersburg, I was intrigued by a letter labeled "Gator Hunt" and datelined "Lemon City 1894," which I purchased with the intention of learning something about the writer, Senie Douthit, apparently a teenage girl living on the south Florida frontier in the days before the railroad reached this area. An articulate nine-page hand-written story of a hunting trip by canoe through the "back route" to New River, its style and running word count suggest it doubled as a letter to a relative and a school report. Most interesting to me was not that the story is the earliest known account by a woman to traverse any portion of the Everglades, but that the story takes place almost entirely in what today would be Broward County, before settlers arrived.

I am indebted also to Senie's niece, Betty Jo Pye of Fort Pierce, for further information about her aunt.

The Setting

In 1894, Dade County extended north to the St. Lucie Inlet; all or parts of five other counties have since been carved from Dade County, and everything south of Lake Worth was regarded as "South Dade." Fewer than 300 whites lived in South Dade, nearly all men, and about the same number of Indians. Hamilton Disston's canal company and the Florida Coast Line Canal and Transportation Company [see note on "The Dredge," below] had laid claim to much of the public domain lands in south Florida, and several railroad companies had made similar claims, all based on legislative incentives from the preceding thirty years. However, an 1890 prospectus and map, jointly published by the canal and railroad companies and listing more than 500 square miles of lands for sale in south Florida, shows that none of the offered lands lay in what would today be Broward County.

While local, state, and national repositories contain a wealth of information on Broward County history, many valuable pieces to the "puzzle" remain in private hands and distant locations. The discovery and publication of these hidden treasures yield new details and insights to what is often regarded as a familiar story. In St. Petersburg Patrick Scott found Alphonson "Senie" Douthit's account of an 1894 expedition through the Everglades of what is today Broward County. The manuscript provides a colorful, delightfully personal view of a wilderness region on the brink of new settlement. In addition to the full text of the manuscript, Mr. Scott provides extensively researched notations identifying the people and places described and placing the document in its historical context.

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During the early 1890s, the recent completion of a stage road connecting the county's two population centers of Lake Worth and Lemon City (south of present Miami Shores) and the national publicity generated by a newspaper, which had relocated from Titusville to Juno, contributed to a "flood" of more than one hundred homesteaders to the pine woods and prairies along an eight-mile strip of high land stretching from Lemon City north. Under existing public land laws, most homesteaders were entitled to farm 160 acres, then purchase the land from the state for prices generally less than a dollar or two per acre.

The Stage Road

Dade County commissioners, sitting in Juno in 1890, authorized the construction of a "stage road," actually a sand path through the pine woods and cabbage palmetto, cleared wide enough — eight feet — for a wagon to pass. Crude wooden bridges crossed Hillsboro River, Cypress Creek, Middle River, Snake Creek and Arch Creek. The road connected Lantana at the south end of Lake Worth and Lemon City, a distance of about fifty miles. After it opened in late 1892, it was no longer necessary to walk the beach route, which crossed three inlets. Juno newspaperman Guy Metcalf bid successfully for the right to operate the "Bay Biscayne Stage Line," and sent his cousin, Frank Strahan, to operate the camp and ferry crossing on New River in January 1893. The stage ride, on a springless wagon drawn by a pair of mules, would take thirty-three hours, not counting the overnight stop at Strahan's "Adirondack style" tent on the north bank of New River. Ed Moffat of Lemon City drove the southern leg three times a week.

The stage line was frequently washed out, as it was in the latter part of 1894. The Tropical Sun, published by Metcalf in Juno, reported in October 1894 that "the Hack Line has yielded up the ghost as the county road is non comatus in swamp," and that Ed Moffat would be carrying the mail on the Bradley Brothers' schooner, Pearl, until the road could be put back in shape. By December, the road was still impassable.

The Coming of the Railroad

Henry Flagler had extended his railroad to West Palm Beach from 1892 to 1894, with the ultimate intention of extending the line farther south. After the disastrous freeze of 1894-1895, he determined that the mouth of the Miami River, where he had been offered lands by Julia Tuttle, would be an ideal place to build a town, featuring one of his trademark resort hotels and a railroad depot for truck farmers. His announcement of the extension in June 1895 assured the settlement of all coastal southeast Florida.

Although contemporary accounts indicate that Flagler had intended to construct his railroad down the entire east coast even before reaching West Palm Beach, most people credit Julia Tuttle, the "Mother of Miami," with convincing him to extend the line to the Miami River. Mrs. Tuttle, from Cleveland, had wintered on Biscayne Bay since the 1870s. She returned to the bay permanently in 1891, after her husband died, and began purchasing lands throughout the Miami area. She homesteaded 120 acres in Biscayne, and her grown children each homesteaded near the Douthits on the prairie north-west of Lemon City in the late 1890s. When the freeze of 1894-1895 destroyed most of the orange crop in central Florida, most accounts say she sent Flagler an orange blossom undamaged by the freeze, and that her offer of lands near the mouth of the Miami River persuaded the railroad magnate to make Miami the terminus of the railroad.

However, another name familiar to Broward Countians may have played a role in attracting Flagler's attention further south, though probably unwittingly. Hugh Taylor Birch, a Chicago attorney who represented Flagler's interests in Illinois, had traveled to New River in 1894 seeking a vacation spot beyond the reach of the ordinary tourist. On returning to Chicago May 7, 1894, he wrote to Flagler vice-president J. E. Ingraham, "Mr. Adams and I intend to have a little place at New River for a winter stopping place for fishing and flower growing, etc. etc. so you may expect to see me next winter early. I was surprised to find such delightful weather all along
the east coast of Florida — The only thing that could be said is that it was perfect.3

Broward County in 1894

Even in 1894, today’s Broward County was a vast unnamed wilderness in Dade County separating the Lake Worth and Miami settlements. The white population was as small—perhaps—as four men: Frank Stranahan, who operated the ferry and tourist camp on the stage line across the New River; Captain Dennis O’Neill, who kept the U.S. Lifesaving Station on the beach; William C. Valentine, a sometime surveyor who lived in the Harbor Beach area; and, possibly, “Count” James Nugent.3 The only lands in private ownership were a square mile centering on New River owned by William and Mary Brickell of Miami, and some scattered unsettled parcels owned by distant entrepreneurs.10 Flagler’s announcement the following June would bring many settlers, but Stranahan later said that in 1893 he would typically pass two or three days without seeing another person come down the road until the stage returned from Lake Worth or Lemon City. During the latter part of 1894, while the road was washed out, the stage did not appear for months, and Stranahan opened an Indian trading post.

Senie Douthit

Alphonsine “Senie” Douthit was a blue-eyed, fair skinned eighteen-year-old girl with light brown hair living in the pioneer settlement of Lemon City on Biscayne Bay. The youngest of five children of Edward and Martha Douthit, she was born in a Moravian farming community near Winston-Salem, North Carolina, on April 1, 1876.

When she was fourteen, her mother died.11

After Mrs. Douthit died, Mr. Douthit suffered from rheumatism and made several wintertime trips to Gulf Hammock, near the Suwannee River, for his health. He decided to move the family to Florida, taking the three boys and leaving the girls with their grandmother in the fall of 1891.12 Except as otherwise noted, the information in this segment is from the memoirs published sixty years later by Mamie Douthit, Senie’s older sister.13

In Gulf Hammock, Ed Douthit heard of the lands opening up in the southern part of the state, so he returned to North Carolina, where the two girls insisted on joining him for the move. They left in June 1892, with their most prized possession—a treadle Singer sewing machine—and their other property packed in crates, taking the train to Tampa. The boys had already gone ahead to Lemon City. From Tampa, Mr. Douthit and the two girls took a steamer to Key West, and then a sloop, the Emily B. (Captain Frow), to Lemon City. The trip on the sloop took five days.

Once the family arrived at Lemon City, the postmaster/storekeeper, Willie Filer, borrowed a horse and wagon to haul them and their crates five miles northwest of town, where the three boys were already camped out on the new homestead. The boys had walked to Lemon City from West Palm Beach, then the terminus of the railroad, paying the barefoot mailman a dollar a piece to let them accompany him and cross the inlets in his boats.

There were fewer than 200 people living in and around Lemon City in 1892, and even fewer in the Miami-Coconut Grove area. The Douthit homestead was
160 acres near an upper fork of Little River, barely a stream which soon “petered out into the Everglades” nearby. Springs near where the Northeast Second Avenue bridge is located today made the river clear and deep from that point to the bay. The Douthits’ nearest neighbor was Mrs. Pomeroy, who lived a half mile away and took the girls in until their house was built. During the next few years, other settlers acquired homesteads nearby, including Ed Knowles, Joseph Dougherty, Mary and Garry Niles, Samuel Mishler, Jim and James Dexter Hubel, Ed Moffat, Comstock Sturtevant, Fanny Tuttle (Julia Tuttle’s daughter), and Captain Stephen Andrews.

The Douthit home was built of pine logs, there being no sawmill in the vicinity at the time. The bark was removed from the logs, the cracks filled with a mixture of lime, sand and water, and the daubing then whitewashed with a thin mixture of lime and water. The house had two stories—a large room below and a ladder leading to the two rooms above: one for the boys and one for Mamie and Senie. The family made frames for the mattresses they brought from North Carolina and used the packing boxes to make cupboards and tables. The windows were covered with cotton netting to keep out the mosquitoes. Water was supplied by a pump on a pipe driven into the ground. In 1893, they built a freestanding kitchen, connected to the house by a breezeway, to replace the tarpaulin which served as their dining area the first year. Of course, few communities in south Florida had telephones or electricity in the nineteenth century.

The Douthits’ land was about half pineland and half lowland prairie, and the boys managed to grub and clear the palmetto stumps from ten acres the first year. As a result, they soon had plenty of oranges, lemons, other fruits, and sweet potatoes to share with neighbors. The roadway was seventy-five feet away, and they brought in soft rock and pounded it into a driveway to the road. The road itself was only a sand rut which wound through oak stands and pineland, skirting the open prairies of cabbage palmettoes. The only transportation was walking, so the five mile trip to the store in Lemon City was a major effort. The Douthits bought a dugout canoe from the Seminole Indians. Made of a single cypress log, they christened it “Old Crank,” because it was “as temperamental as a horse.” Mamie remembered, “We’d be gliding along smoothly and suddenly it would commence to roll out and out we’d spill.” William Freeman made them a sail, but generally they paddled or poled. When they traveled to town, they tied up at the springs on the river with the other Indian boats and walked the Indian trail into town.

If a boat was coming, it was usually from Coconut Grove, the only other commercial settlement in lower Dade County, although William Brickell operated a store at the mouth of the Miami River. Incoming boats would signal their arrival with a blow of the conch horn, and everyone within hearing distance would run to the docks to greet it, including the Indians.

The main necessity was food, of course, and the men of the family were to provide it. They hunted, farmed, and bartered with the Indians, and bought some necessi-
ties from William Filer’s store. The Indians sold huckleberries for ten cents a quart, but the girls could pick them, and wild grapes, in the woods themselves. Turtle eggs, oysters, clams, and many kinds of fish rounded out the menu. Coontie starch was used in place of flour. It was very cheap because so many farm families collected the roots, washed them repeatedly, and ground and dried them during the slack summer months.

The Douthit family, like the other settlers in the area, used as few staples as possible. These items, brought in from Key West, included dried beans, green coffee beans, potatoes (until the garden started to bear fruit), sugar, salt, grits and ham. The only way to get beef was from the Montgomery Ward catalog, which sold pickled beef by the case. Neither ice nor milk was available, although dried milk could be ordered from Montgomery Ward or from Key West. The Indians gave the family their first seeds for Indian pumpkins and sold them a flock of chickens.

Mrs. Pomeroy taught Senie and Mamie how to make hats from palmetto fronds. The Indians taught the girls how to make beaded belts and bracelets, weaving the beads into threads stretched on a homemade loom made from a cigar box, bright beads against a field of white. They copied Indian designs, mostly birds and animals, especially the diamondback snake. Brothers Bob and Jim went hunting with the Seminoles, shooting and skinning alligators and taking the hides the back route to Fort Lauderdale to trade to Frank Stranahan.

Violence was a part of frontier life. A boy to whom Senie was engaged, John “Osceola Jack” Peters, died in 1901 after he was impaled by a stick during a tornado which struck the Biscayne Prairie.14 Senie was a good friend of Rhett McGregor, a deputized posse member, killed trying to capture Sam Lewis, who had murdered two other men in 1895. Ted Smallwood lived in Lemon City at that time. Fifty-three years after he relocated to Chokoloskee Island, he still recalled that while he was digging a grave for one of the victims, “two pretty girls, Ceeen [sic] and Mamie Douthit” were at the Davis’ property on the bay.15

Boys always outnumbered girls at the dances, so Senie and Mamie never lacked for partners. Their first dance was at Lewis Pierce’s sponge warehouse in 1893, with Mr. Mettair on the violin and Bill R. Truett on the harmonica, and little Henry Filer beating a violin like a drum. Many early settlers remarked on Ed Douthit’s “two comely daughters,” and F. Page Wilson allowed that Senie adapted well to life on the prairie: “The younger girl, just as graceful with a gun as in a dance, opened the door one morning to spy a startled, fleeing deer. She got it.”16

Senie enjoyed dances and playing whist [a card game]. When the railroad was new, Henry Flagler sometimes stopped in Lemon City to speak a few words of encouragement to the farmers. He would give passes to Senie and Mamie for dances at the Royal Palm Hotel on the Miami River. Said the Miami Metropolis of the sisters, “These piney woods girls have pluck and beauty.”17

A rare diversion was a trip to the beach, where Captain and Mrs. William H. Fulford ran the House of Refuge; because of the difficulty of travel, it was an all-day
affair. Women and girls frequently had all day “work meetings,” which included pot-luck dinners. The work would consist of embroidery, sewing, bead work or hatmaking. The Douthits’ treadle sewing machine was a welcome addition to such meetings.

Senie never homesteaded on her own, but helped her father on his farm. The newspaper reported, “She has enterprise, energy and pluck. She is having a crop of eggplants, peppers and cucumbers, has all of the qualities of a good farm manager.” She and the other women in the area worked at William Freeman’s tomato packing shed during the tomato season, but she kept her independent spirit. She once followed Ed Freeman up a tree to try to collect a loose swarm of bees, and was badly stung.

Miami’s legendary educator, Ada Merritt, taught at the first Lemon City school from 1890 to 1897 and from 1900 to 1906. Senie lived with “Miss Ada” one school term to take a business course, which was not part of the school curriculum but special lessons. Sometimes Senie would bring Miss Ada home for a visit to her family on the prairie. It seems likely, from Senie’s interlineation of word counts in her manuscript, that her story was intended to be a school project for Miss Ada as well.

**Lemon City Fla**  
Jan. 1895

The Hunt

I will introduce you to our party — Mr. and Mrs. Soop are from Detroit, Mich. Have a homestead 1 mile & a half from here. They are real lovely, well educated, have traveled a great deal & have been very wealthy. They lost $60,000 in the west gold mining, a few years before coming here broke — we like them ever so much —

_The Soops:_ At the time of this story, Fino Soop and his wife, Lena, lived two miles west of the settlement near Little River which would come to be called Biscayne.

Pioneer F. Page Wilson later wrote that Mr. Soop was born in Marion County, Florida, but moved north with his mother when his father died. His father owned large hotels in Michigan and had expected young Fino to stay in the business, but the young man craved excitement and joined in the Cripple Creek gold rush before settling down in south Florida. “The snow was pretty,” he told Wilson, “but — well, the trees had no leaves. I could never get used to that.” He returned to Florida because his father had always wanted to, he said. He “managed to make a living by gator hunting, trapping, and odd jobs.” Ultimately, the Soops became planters.  

Wilson recalled that Mr. Soop was tall and rugged, Mrs. Soop “the reverse, but both good sports with a ready smile.” The few homesteaders in the piney woods would walk miles with a gift of bread or fish, or plant cuttings to share with their distant neighbors, and Fino Soop offered to help Wilson build his house with no expectation of repayment. He also helped Bob and Jim Douthit, Senie’s brothers, fight a large fire near the homesteads during the summer of 1894.

Because they lived on the northwest fringe of high ground in the “Piney Woods” (roughly Northwest 95th to 150th Streets, Northeast Second to Northeast 22nd Avenues), Mr. Soop had direct access to the Everglades during the rainy months, when the Indians would come down from Little Tiger’s Town and Aleck’s Town. The _Miami Metropolis_ wrote that “Mr. Soop’s house occupies a beautiful position overlooking the Everglades. In common with some others along the edge of the glades, Mr. Soop enjoys the privilege of water communication with the outside world, and from his back garden he can jump in his canoe and pole to Lemon City or to Palm Beach at will.” The homesteaders called this region “Sawgrass City.”

**Mr. & Mrs. Campbell are from Chicago. They are in partnership with Mr. Soop in the homestead and live in the same house. We just love Mrs. Campbell. They are also well educated & have travelled all over the U.S. & some in Mexico and Dominion of Canada.**

_The Campbells: Except for the Tropical Sun_ note reporting this expedition, Mr. and Mrs. George Campbell, mentioned in both Senie’s and Mamie’s accounts of the trip, do not otherwise appear in historical records of the area.

Mr. Harp is from several states, says he don’t know which to claim, but is a western man. He is very small, thirty four years old, has a home-stead near Mamie’s on Snake Creek. He was our pilot.

_Tommy Harp:_ Tommy Harp was about fifty years old, “spare but strong and lissom as the wild creatures he hunted,” according to F. Page Wilson. He came to Florida thirty years earlier to get out of the cold weather and into the sun. He kept a grove at Fulford (now North Miami Beach), and had traveled deep into the Everglades in search of rare plume birds.

In December 1895, the Wilsons joined the Soops and
Harp on a trip into the Everglades. Soop owned a cypress dugout canoe which he could pole into the glades from his property near a water trail which led to the Miami River. Tommy Harp also owned a cypress canoe. He was "reputed to be the one and only white man who knew the Everglades as the Indians did." Wilson in his memoirs, describes the water courses as intricate as a spider's web.

By the end of the 1895 trip, Wilson had noted certain traits in Harp similar to those of other "old-timers in long, close touch with nature in the raw. From a bubble in the water, the color or the bending of the blades of grass, from signs unnoted except by him, he would draw the right conclusion. The soundness of this judgment was apt to be equally striking in other matters. Like nature herself, he refused to be sidetracked by the merely plausible, but reaching for the crucial point, decided then and thus."25

Snake Creek: Snake Creek, in 1894, flowed from the Everglades into Biscayne Bay about a mile south of Dumphounding Bay, and is today called the Oleta River. In 1913, a major drainage canal connected the northwest branch, Little Snake Creek, to Lake Okeechobee. The other branch, Big Snake Creek, flowed south from present Broward County, running about one mile east of the rim of the Everglades. The next natural waterway to the north was the New River, and to the south, Arch Creek.

Marcellus Williams (with his thirteen-year-old son Arthur and a team of assistants) had surveyed the coastal areas of Dade and Broward counties as far west as the Everglades in 1870. They camped on Snake Creek for ten days, at a spot where the ruins of a Seminole War-era wooden bridge crossed the river on the Military Trail. They then moved to the head of the south prong of the river, a half mile from two Indian villages: Aleck's Town and Old Tiger Tail's Town. They had only the Ives map of 1856 for guidance, and so spent three days in the glades before finding the headwaters of the New River.26

![Snake Creek in the early twentieth century (courtesy of the Thelma Peters Collection).](image)

I will only say the rest were Mamie, Johnie & myself.

Mamie Douthit and Johnny Douthit: Mary Emeline Douthit was the oldest of the five children, born in 1870.27 She was nineteen when her mother died, and she helped take care of the younger children, who called her "Sister Mary," and sometimes "Mamie." She homesteaded forty acres on Snake Creek in 1898; it was the nearest home to Big Snake Indian Camp. Her father and brothers helped her build a house, and they traveled between the two homes and her brother Jim's nearby by "Old Crank" through the Everglades, which they called "the back way." Of it she later wrote, "The Everglades is not a dismal swamp as some might think. It was open and sunny, the water was clear, and there were many islands, with grass, vines, and wild flowers, some flowers, some hammocks with trees, and many water birds of beautiful colors."28

Mamie Douthit herself described the Christmastime trip of 1894:

Near our homestead, northwest of Little River, lived the Fino Soops, a very agreeable couple originally from Detroit. They had a neat cottage high off the ground, and surrounded by citrus trees. We used to lend them our horse sometimes. Usually though, they went by boat, for they were at the edge of the Glades and had easy access to the water trails. One time when the Soops had some visitors from the North, a Mr. and Mrs. Campbell, they got up a hunting trip and invited John Harp, Senie, my brother Johnny and me to go along. It was at Christmas time. We went in three canoes up the Everglades to the Hillsboro River...
and camped in two tents. The men got up at four in the morning and by daylight had some fine wild turkeys which we steamed in a Dutch oven. Later that day they came in with two deer. The next day they got a lot of ducks. The last night out, a norther nearly froze them, and they lost some of their orange trees.39

Mamie later ran a hotel in Lemon City and married Alex Conrad in 1904.30 They moved to south Dade in 1916 to work at Peters.31 Her recollections, published in Tequesta in 1957, provide much of the information in these notes.32

John E. “Johnny” Douthit was born in 1879. He farmed his father’s homestead and got a job as a cook on the Jacksonville-to-Miami mailboat,33 but went back to school at seventeen, in 1896, when a pretty schoolteacher of his own age began to teach there.34 In 1898 he was a tomato farmer, still on his father’s farm, and was reported to play the banjo as well.35

Johnny Douthit moved to Cape Sable in 1898. He married Carrie Irwin in Key West in 1905, and they named their first child Alphonsine. In 1920, they returned to south Dade, living in the Peters community near Mamie and Alex Conrad.36 He died in Peters in 1933.37

Little River: Little River flows into Biscayne Bay between present Seventy-second and Seventy-seventh Streets in the El Portal/Miami Shores area. The town that grew up around the mouth of the river was called Lemon City and was the largest population center on the mainland south of Lake Worth in the early 1890s. The river’s source was a slight break in the limestone rim of the Everglades, near I-95, but much of the lands east of the Everglades near Little River were swampy lowlands during the summer.

We all started with the intentions of having a good time at my cost — we carried enough provisions to last us, if we did not get any game. Mr. Harp carried the large canoe, with Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Soop, Mamie and myself in it. We called this the passenger boat. It was real comfortable. We could sit up or lie down as we wished. Mr. Soop and Johnie went in one. They carried grub & Mr. Campbell carried the bedding. All the boats had little pails; as the wind was not favorable, they had to pole the most of the way. Sunday 16 Dec. We left Marlborough Plantation, (Soop & Campbell’s home), went six miles. Camped at Isthpoga, Mr. Harp’s home —

Isthpoga and Arch Creek: Isthpoga was Tommy Harp’s house on Arch Creek. Arch Creek was shorter than either Little River or Snake Creek. Its mouth is at Biscayne Bay Drive and the bay, and branches extend west and southwest. The 1892 county road ran over a natural bridge of limestone which spanned Arch Creek.

Northwest of present-day Opa Locka, several miles west of Little Snake Creek and Arch Creek, were at least three Indian villages: Little Tiger’s Town, Alexk’s Town, and Tiger Tail’s Town, all of which appear frequently on maps of the period. Here, the tribal chiefs entertained government surveyor Marcellus Williams in 1870 and later visitors such as William Freeman. However, Charles Richards Dodge reported in 1894 that, although "it is not safe to enter the glades without a guide, on account of danger of bewilderment in pushing through the winding channels and tall grass and weeds [the Indians will rarely act as guides], and intrusion upon their preserves is liable to be resented."39

Monday 17 left north against a head wind until dinner, which we had at an Indian camp known as Tommy’s Boys (remember we are to name all of our camps). We continued our journey going 2 miles in the open glades.

The Glades: The Everglades, popularized by Marjorie Stoneman Douglas as the “River of Grass,” is a vast marsh in which fresh water courses slowly away from Lake Okeechobee and toward the southern and eastern coast of Florida. The Seminole Indians were driven into the Everglades to escape capture during the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). Partly in response to an 1847 Senate report which proposed the drainage of the Everglades to promote development and to bring white settlers into the Seminole Indian lands, Congress enacted the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act, transferring all “swamp and overflowed” lands to the State of Florida for distribution to settlers. The state enacted legislation which took title to the lands, but inadequate technology for drainage made it impossible for Florida to dispose of them except in large grants to railroad and canal companies which promised to build the internal improvements necessary to provide access to a future generation of south Florida settlers. During the 1870s, government surveyors marked the section corner lines (and sometimes quarter-section lines) of each square mile of land that was accessible.

Interest was so slight that the state offered the lands too freely, and by 1890 little land was left for sale to homesteaders. With a view toward the eventual drainage of the lands, Florida’s Internal Improvement Trust Fund recovered some of the lands at the turn of the century through litigation, and belatedly (in 1905) presented a final survey to the federal government for a patent. In today’s Broward County, U.S. Highway 441 would mark the eastern boundary of the Everglades District. In most of present northeast Dade County, the line was a mile further to the east, along Northwest Twelfth Avenue. This very roughly represented the rim of the Everglades. Lands to the east were dry most of the year, drained by the Hillsboro, Cypress (Creek), Middle and New rivers, Snake and Arch creeks, and the Little and Miami rivers.

Then came to a lovely branch all covered with everglade lilies leading to New River. It was nameless — they named it after me — “River Senie.” It is over one mile long. As we came into New River, we were all wild with delight.

The Headwaters of New River: The Indians had long known that, except in the driest season (winter), canoe travel was possible over the “back route” connecting the
Map of the lower east coast and eastern Everglades, as they appeared in the 1890s. Dotted line is traditional 19th century boundary of Everglades. (Map by Patrick Scott.)
rivers via the 'Glades. J. Lee Williams' 1837 map shows Rattones River (Snake Creek) connecting with the south fork of New River through the Everglades. John McLaughlin's Seminole War map of south Florida shows Miami River, Little River, and Arch Creek as well as the south fork of New River, all leading into the Everglades. Pine Island, a mile-long ridge two miles west of the rim described by several military officers during the war, was depicted as well. J. C. Ives' map from the Third Seminole War (1855-1858) shows Arch Creek, Rio Rattones, and the south fork of New River reaching the 'Glades, but the accompanying notes recommend the Everglades route only as a second-best choice from Snook Creek (see note below) north. An Endicott lithograph from the same era also shows Miami River, Little River, Arch Creek, Rio Rattones, and the south fork of New River all leading into the Everglades.

In 1883, Charles Pierce and several friends, traveling from Lake Worth, canoed the back route through the Everglades from New River to Snake Creek. They traveled without a compass, got lost in the sawgrass on the return trip, and took days to find the headwaters of New River. Later that same year, Pierce paddled up Hillsboro River until it became too shallow for his boat, and explored Snook Creek (Middle River) as well. House of Refuge keeper Jack Peacock's log for November-December 1883 notes men passing through by way of the Everglades several times a month.

Pierce tells the story of the 1889 election, when the Dade County seat was relocated to Juno. The Lake Worth constituents sought to sneak the county records prematurely north from the village of Biscayne. A. P. Quimby took them in a canoe up Snake Creek, through the Everglades, and down New River, knowing the sawgrass channels well. Quimby explained to his accomplices that they were miles away from any settler and that no one could traverse the woods along Snake Creek at night to catch them. On entering the 'Glades through a very narrow channel at the head of Snake Creek, they saw many small islands in the distance, and on reaching New River's headwaters, they reported that the current was surprisingly swift.

Other published accounts of travel by white men through portions of the Everglades are the New Orleans Times-Democrat expedition (1882), the Ingraham expedition (1892), the Willoughby expedition (1897), and the travel accounts of Arthur Williams (1870 and 1872), and James Henshall (1882). The author has been unable to locate any account of a white woman traveling the "back route" before Senie Douthit's trip.

Some of the party who had traveled through Rocky's remembers "They were grand, but this is beautiful." It is lined on either side with large cypress trees, all covered with moss and air-plants which are in bloom. It is about 100 wide deep and clear. The banks covered with many varieties of fern, and the water is fringed with lilies, all of which contrast lovely with the gray moss-festooned trees. We went 3 miles down this loveliest of all Florida streams. We made camp for the night, just on the bank, under a large spreading barge and cabbage palm tree. Pitched tent, made beds, ate supper. Mr. Harp shot a terapin after which we christened the camp, sat around the fire talked and sang until bedtime.

Tuesday 18. Up early. Mr. Soop & Mr. Campbell went fishing. Mr. Campbell, Mr. Harp & Johnnie went squirrel hunting. You see we wanted something fresh for breakfast. Soon after the hunters were gone, we heard three shots. All of them shouting & hollering—head us! Head us! Coming towards us & what should we see at our feet but a real deer. You can imagine our surprise & delight, as we did not expect any venison so soon on our hunt. You can talk of your good meat: but venison beats anything I have ever tasted. After breakfast & the deer was all dressed, we broke camp & thought ourselves lucky at Camp Terapin. Went
down the river, stopped, fished, without success. Mr. C. killed some ducks which Mrs. Soop & myself dressed, going down in the boat. Several miles brought us to where Snook Creek empties into New River & in sight of the New River Lifesaving station.

Snook Creek (Middle River): This name for Middle River appears throughout the second half of the 1800s. An 1893 account calls it both Middle River and Snow Creek. See note on "Coconut Trees Along New River Sound," below, regarding distinctions made by explorers between New River Sound and Middle River.

The Lifesaving Station: The "Fort Lauderdale House of Refuge," as it was more popularly called, was one of five frame houses built on the beach at roughly twenty-five mile intervals by the United States Lifesaving Service in the 1870s. An excellent history of this station can be found in volume one of Broward Legacy.

We turned up Snook Creek, which flows south. We were a little way up the river when we saw a small Red boat, coming towards us. We found it to be Mr. Hardee young man who had met Maimie not long before & fell in love with her. He was working on the dredge & had come down on some business for them. We all stopped under some coconut trees and fixed dinner, (the men I mean) while Mrs. C., Mrs. S., Maimie & myself went over to the beach, which was but a short distance. We got a few shells, came back, ate our dinners. I don't think I ever enjoyed a meal better, I was so hungry.

The Dredge (Mr. Hardee): U.S. Army Captain James Gadsden in 1824 first recommended that the only feasible means of safe transportation to southern Florida would be a canal cut from Indian River to Lake Worth to Biscayne Bay, taking advantage of such natural formations as today's Spanish River, Hillsboro River, Cypress Creek, and New River, each of which flowed north-south for some miles to their respective inlets (the Boca Raton Inlet had been closed for most of the nineteenth century). Hamilton Disston's Atlantic & Gulf Coast Canal & Okeechobee Land Company of Florida was the first to demonstrate, with the western leg of its cross-state canal in 1883, that a canal project was economically feasible, taking in return liberal grants of both overflowed and dry lands from the state. But Disston's original plans to construct a canal down the east coast never took shape. That project was initiated by the Florida Coast Line Canal and Transportation Company, which excavated a cut between the Mosquito Lagoon and Indian River in 1885 and began dredging the Lake Worth to Biscayne Bay route in 1893. The canal company deepened the existing waterways as necessary, cutting a route fifty feet wide and five feet deep. They completed the leg from New River Sound to Lemon City and Coconut Grove in 1895. For the first time, small steamers, like the Agnes, and deep-draft sailing vessels could travel between New River and Biscayne Bay without risking the perils of the open sea. This was especially important between February and April 1896, when the railroad had been completed to the deepwater dock on New River, but was still under construction to Miami.

During the twentieth century, the Florida East Coast Canal, later conveyed to the Florida Inland Navigation District and made a part of the Intracoastal Waterway, was widened and deepened further on several occasions. It is maintained today under the supervision of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Coconut Trees Along New River Sound: Explorers and mapmakers of the nineteenth century commonly failed to distinguish New River from Middle River (then called Snook River, Shark River or Opposum Creek). Prior to 1900, the mouth of New River was five miles south of Fort Lauderdale, near the present Dania Beach Boulevard. From the "Sound," the river ran south, parallel to the beach, bypassing Lake Mabel (where the turning basin of Port Everglades is today), along a narrow spit of sand. Brackish water entered New River Sound from the south (Lake Mabel), and the north. Fresh water flowed into the sound from the Everglades through two branches and the main river body. All three routes into the sound were framed by stretches of mangroves nearly a mile across.

The route from the north was actually a string of lagoons and mangroves until the inland waterway was dug out in 1894-95, but Middle River also flowed into New River Sound from the northwest. Coconut palm trees

had been planted along the beach by coconut growers in the 1880s, and they were the predominant landmark. Before Hugh Birch built a shack on one of the lagoons around 1895, the only building on the narrow beach “island” for twelve miles between inlets was the House of Refuge.

Mr. Hardee asked Maimie & Mrs. C. To go with him & they had to go. His boat was not half so comfortable as ours. One half mile up they had to commence to cut the creek deeper. We went 8 miles up the canal proper to Lettuce Lake. On the banks there is green grass. It is so straight & even!

Lettuce Lake: Lettuce Lake is today known as Lake Santa Barbara in Pompano Beach. Cypress Creek passed through Lettuce Lake.

There we stopped and waited for the little Red Boat which we had left far behind. With her two ladies & row boat he had a hard time but he would not own up that he was tired. When we got up to Hillsborough Inlet, which was three miles, it was dark and raining a little. The ocean was roaring just outside the bar. I tell you the scene was wild. We camped on the banks of the canal in a 2-roomed house. The men were cold & wet, but we were dry. Rested well that night. Named the camp Distress.

— Wednesday 19 — Went across the canal, got some fish & got out of our boats, walked across the ridge to the beach where we saw a ship, wrecked in the storm, the last of September. It was named Georgia Windsor of New York. It was not loaded, had sand ballast. Everything that was of any use had been taken off. I found some of the old log-books. I will send you a few sheets just to let you see them.

Hillsboro Inlet: There was no lighthouse at Hillsboro Inlet in 1894. It was first proposed by the federal Lighthouse Board in 1885, and was constructed in 1906-1907. Local residents knew well the tale of Ed Hamilton, the “barefoot mailman” who disappeared while swimming the inlet on his twice-a-week rounds between Lake Worth and Miami. The two-roomed house mentioned by Senie is a mystery. It is not mentioned in Charles Pierce’s accounts of his travels in the area in the 1880s, or in any of the three articles which have appeared in Broward Legacy on the Hillsboro River.57

Georgia Windsor Aground: Various news reports had the British barkentine George E. or Georgie aground two miles north of the Hillsboro Inlet in early October 1894.58 However, the official reports of the U.S. Lifesaving Service for 1894 do not mention it among the shipswrecks where lives were lost or where the lifesaving station keeper saved lives. The nearest House of Refuge at the time was eight and a half miles south, on the beach near the present location of Sunrise Boulevard.

Then we traveled three miles up the canal to where the south dredge is now at work. (If you remember looking at that large map that I sent Uncle Dock some time ago, you will see a canal marked out from Lake Worth to Bay Biscayne) — It was eleven when we got there. It was worth the trip up there just to see it work & see the machinery. Everything is on the boat, sometimes the men don’t go off for days. Things are made so strong. The dipper takes 3 1/2 square yards at a dip. They work day, night & Sundays. The Capt. Invited us to dine, but we did not accept, as we had plenty in our boats we told him we would stop as we were coming back. You will learn later in the story we did. You see we did not know how much good game we would have when we came back. We went one mile up the west fork of Hillsborough River, had dinner. The river is shallow & narrow in some places then before you are thinking of any water you are in a broad & deep stream — four or three miles, we saw a lovely place to camp & we stopped for the night.

Hillsborough River: Originally named by British surveyors in the 1770s, the spelling has been modified to Hillsboro over the years. One branch ran east from the Everglades along the present Broward-Palm Beach County line to within a half-mile of the coast, and another branch ran south from today’s Boca Raton to join the west branch, then paralleled the coast for another four miles, entering the ocean at Hillsboro Inlet. Today, heading upstream, it splits at Deerfield Island Park, the Intracoastal Waterway continuing north while the river meanders northwest and then west until it joins the Hillsboro Canal.

The portion of the Intracoastal Waterway running south from the inlet was long known as Cypress Creek. During the rainy season, Champ H. Spencer in 1883 traveled by canoe from the Orange Grove Station (present-day Delray Beach) through the swamp to Boca Raton and then to the “Hillsborough” River. Reaching its mouth at the inlet, he turned south up Cypress Creek to Lettuce Lake, and through an almost impassable marsh to “Hillsborough Creek.” Whether he meant that he had traveled to the north fork of Middle River, or back to the Hillsboro River, or to the western reach of Cypress Creek, is unclear.59

Mrs. C., Mrs. S., Maimie & myself, getting out first, Mrs. Soop said look! And to our surprise there, not far from us were three wild turkeys. Mr. Harp came with his gun & killed a hen, which was roasted the next day for dinner. They are exactly the dark brown tame ones. Later in the evening they killed several squirrels. They were running all around us. Mr. & Mrs. Soop, Mr. Harp & myself went to watch if the turkeys would not come back to roost. We were not there long before one flew across the River a short distance down from us; then one came & lit in a tree just above us, Mr. Soop shot it. I began to think hunting was a fine thing, which it is. Mr. Harp carried me “gator” hunting that night. I shined the eyes of a big one, we went up to it, I
put the pistol in a few feet of his head & pull the trigger it did not go off. Johnie & Mr. Hardee had shot out the load that morning & I did not know any thing of it. I was mad, for I knew I would have killed it. I can say that, so self conceited. We called this camp "Sufficiency." I think the name real suitable, don't you?

Thursday 20 — Three miles brought us to our journey's end just on the bank, among the large cabbage palmetto trees we pitched our tent. That evening fixed every thing around camps. That night big fire to make things look cheerful had an Indian dance & retired.

Indian Dances, Indian Talk: Senie makes light of Indian ways, but was familiar with their customs, and at least one of her party had some familiarity with their language. She encountered Seminole Indians frequently, for they traded at Lemon City. One of her neighbors, William Freeman, was a trader who befriended the Indians and attended their ceremonies in the Indian camps northwest of Arch Creek and Snake Creek. His collection of crafts and artifacts from the early 1890s enriches the collection of the Florida State Museum today.

Friday 21. All the men went out deer hunting before day. You have to hunt them by the moon & kill when feeding. They saw two but did not get a shot. Saturday 22. They went again & met with the same success. Indian say, “Go place, where deer many; — see um tracks plenty, but they no come up, so you shoot um —” Mr. Campbell shot 2 wild cats which he saw playing with each other. I shot a black bird & a crow, the first live I ever shot at, I was then very anxious to shoot a turkey or something big. I went with Mr. Harp two miles to roost some turkeys, but unfortunately they stayed away.

Wildcats: Florida panthers, bears, deer, terrapin, and many varieties of waterfowl were among the animals once plentiful in Broward County before hunting, drainage and development combined to eradicate them from this area.60

Mr. Harp named me "Billie the Kid," & I went by that name the rest of the hunt; some call me that yet. The young men in the Dredge call me Miss Billie.

Billie the Kid: Apparently the nickname stuck. The Miami Metropolis reported, “Senie Douthit known as Captain Billie was elected president of the Lemon City Whist Club. She is an exceptional player, and one of the charming and popular members of Biscayne Society.”61

Sunday 23 — Mr. Soop & Mr. Harp went deer hunting again. Did not get any. Mr. Campbell, Johnie and myself went duck hunting up the river & in the Glades. I know that I am the [first] white woman that was ever along there & will be for a long time to come. We did not see a duck coming back, we saw some alligators. I shot & killed five, with the shot gun & one with my pistol, but they were small. We got back at 2 o'clock in the evening. All the rest of the camp went hunting but killed nothing of course. — we all were getting tired of hunting & getting nothing. They were all good deer hunters but happened they were out of luck — the iron hand of fate was against us. We ate the last of our venison for supper. Mr. Hardee and Mr. Smith came. Mr. Hardee had left the boat to join us in the hunt. Mr. Smith has a homestead down here & wanted to learn the way through the Glades.

Mr. Smith: J. Alex Smith, another homesteader, cannot be further identified.

We all decided to go down to camp Sufficiency to spend Xmas. We named this camp “Holewagus Echaw & Penawa Suckcheyed.” (Indian for, No good deer & turkey. All gone”) — Monday 24 — Made the move that was decide. Every one went hunting that eve, & when we all got in & put things together we had water, turkey, squirrel & fish. We did every thing we could think of to amuse ourselves that night. Something was said of hanging up stockings. We all said that we knew that Santa Claus could never find us way up there in the woods. Johnie insisted that we should & took our hats & sat them out under a tree. It did not look much like the way I was used to setting for him — Tuesday 25 — To our surprise, our hats were full of candy, oranges & apples. Mr. Hardee had got them & hid them on the other side of the river. No one knew about it, but he & Johnie. Mr. & Mrs. Campbell went down the river & killed three ducks. After breakfast, we all sat around & read for some time. Mrs. Soop, Mrs. Campbell, Maimie & myself went down the river & went in bathing. It was so

The William Freeman family, ca. 1897. (Left to right): George, William, Ethel, Rebecca, Edison, Mrs. Freeman, and Cora (courtesy of the Thelma Peters Collection).
warm & pleasant. I had forgotten to remark that we had been having real Florida weather all the time. It seems a shame to stay in doors when the sun is so bright & a soft wind to fan your Sun Kissed face. Had a good dinner; I enjoyed it. Mr. Tom Harp, Mr. Cameron & Mr. Fenese came up, boys from the dredge boat. Mr. Harp & myself went on another hunt for turkeys; you see I was anxious to kill one. We watched till sundown & did not see any. The country is filled with tracks. I shot & killed a rabbit & squirrel.

Mr. Cameron, the homesteader: No information could be located on John Cameron/Cameron, other than that given in this letter, and the report of the expedition in The Tropical Sun.

Coming home — The boys left about 9. Mr. Soop took Mrs. C. and myself “Gator” hunting. I wore the headlight & carried the gun. Did not find but one little one & did not shoot at him — Wednesday 26 — Started home — got to the dredge boat about 11 o’clock — was invited to dine & we stayed this time. They had fresh Chicago beef & every thing in accordance. The company furnished the board & it is good too. There are no negroes, all nice & smart white men. Got acquainted with nearly all of them. We were the first ladies, some of them had seen in six months. We were took on more over than I ever was, or ever want to be again. It looked like they were sorry to see us leave at 2 o’clock, Capt. Hunt came down to Hillsborough Inlet with us. He was off duty — nice man — married though. We made camp for the night — pitched tent right near the sea — went in surf bathing. Oh! How I enjoyed it. I kept saying all the time I was there. I would love to dwell at a Surf Hotel. But the rates! that’s what breaks me.

Surf Hotel: “Surf hotels,” tourist resort hotels advertised for the healthful qualities which the sea air produced, were built by promoters along the eastern seaboard throughout the nineteenth century. Henry Flagler built at least seven, including the Hotel Royal Poinciana in Palm Beach in 1893-1894. Contemporary advertisements proclaimed that “Many prefer during the heated term these fine beaches and the cool sea breezes of this coast to Northern resorts.”

Mr. Evart came down from the dredge — stayed until 10 o’clock and took Capt. Hunt back. We left the door of our tent open so the sea breeze could fan us. I never slept sweeter, even if my bed was hard. We would cut a few palmetto fans, lay them down & spread a blanket on them for our bed.

Captain Hunt and Mr. Evart: Also unidentified.

Thursday 27 — We were up early, wading getting shells & fishing. Mr. Hardee & Mr. Campbell prepared breakfast. Soon after that was over, we went in bathing again. Mr. Campbell & Johnie went with us. We rested a little, for going in tires one awfully. Gathered some more shells — some pretty ones — will send you some. I looked up & saw a schooner coming in — it was the “Pearl” of Lake Worth, owned & run by the Bradley Bros, whom we were all acquainted with & were glad to see. They landed some freight there. We went aboard — they gave us some of the nicest fish I have ever seen.

The Schooner Pearl: The Bradley brothers, of Lake Worth, sailed the Pearl, carrying people, animals, and anything else between the settlements of Dade County. They carried the mail while the new county road was impassable in late 1894, and transported passengers from Lemon City to the railhead in West Palm Beach. No vessel larger than a schooner could pass through the Lemon City Channel, and even those sailing vessels made most of the trip from Lake Worth by sea, entering Biscayne Bay at Bear Cut. Guy Bradley, the skipper of the Pearl, later died as a game warden, shot by plume poachers near Cape Sable in 1905.

Mr. Cameron came down that morning to come with us. He also has a homestead. He said that he was bound to share some of our picnic. He is from Cumberland Co. N.C. — Our party was increasing fast. At 1 o’clock we broke camp.

The wind had sprung up fresh & cool from the north & was in our favor for the first time since starting. As the evening passed it got cooler. We stopped that night at New River Life-Saving Station—Capt. Throwburg was as nice as he could be to us. We had never seen him before.

Captain Throwburg: Senie’s acquaintance with the new House of Refuge keeper, whose name was actually John H. Fromberger, is the first mention of Captain Throwburg in any south Florida record. Eugene E. Wiley, in his article on “Lifesaving Station No. 4,” writes that “Captain Jack” Fromberger first arrived at Stranahan’s camp by stage on or about February 15, 1895, but from Senie’s record we know that he must have arrived by late

Christmas celebration at the William Freeman house in Lemon City, 1895. Edward J. Douthit is at upper left with the long, white beard. Bob Douthit is standing second from right (courtesy of the Thelma Peters Collection).
December 1894. Appointed to succeed Captain Denny O'Neill in 1894, Fromberger served until 1906. The Frombergers' baby was born at the house on February 1, 1896. By 1898, the captain was cultivating two small plots of farmland: a half acre of pineapples in Progresso and an acre of tomatoes south of New River. For more information on Captain Fromberger, see the manuscript "Personal Recollections of Fl. Lauderdale, 1895-1906," by Agnes W. Fromberger, at the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society.

Friday 28 — It is cold for Fla — we went up New River — had dinner at Terrapin Camp — traveled through that lovely place once more. I got some Cypress and Spanish moss — will send you some of that too. It got colder & colder. We camped near "Tommy's Boys" camp. Had a big fire that night — was comfortable. Saturday 29 — When we got up, we found ice on every thing — it was cold — there was ice along the edge of the glade. We learned after we got home that the thermometer was 26 — the wind was so hard that there was no frost. It damaged things considerably.

The cold front: Senie did not know that the cold front which passed into Dade County that night had destroyed most of the citrus crops throughout the state, but had left the lower Dade County oranges, lemons and limes undamaged by the frost. The historic freeze of 1894-1895 has been credited as the impetus for Henry Flagler's extension of the FEC Railway to Miami. It was followed in February by another devastating freeze.

We broke camp at 11 o'clock & never stopped till we got to Marlborough plantation at 1 o'clock. We had 4 pairs of blankets in our boat that day, so we could keep warm. I will own that we were too far north for our clothes. Some of the smaller boats got there before us, and when we landed they had fire & hot supper. We stayed up there a little while. Mr. Harp came home with us. When we got there, Pa. Akin, Jim & Bob were hugging the stove.

P'a Akin, Jim and Bob: Senie's fondness for using nicknames suggests that perhaps "P'a Akin" is her father — "Pa Achin'." In the Lemon City community he was known as "Sweetness," and he farmed with his children (cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, beets and cabbage) and sometimes with James Hubel (eggplants). According to Lemon City pioneer F. Page Wilson, Edward Douthit was a "strong agile old man, tobacco planter from the Tarheel State and veteran of the redoubtable Stonewall Jackson brigade." He was captured at the Battle of Spottsylvania Courthouse and imprisoned in Elmira, New York for the winter of 1864-1865. After he was released he and a companion walked home to North Carolina, and he took up farming. His five children were all born in North Carolina. Mr. Douthit died at his son Bob's home in 1919.

Jim and Bob were Senie's other brothers. James W. Douthit died of a chronic illness at age thirty in 1902. Robert Steven "Bob" Douthit homesteaded near Little River, and was one of the residents deputized in the search for killer Sam Lewis in 1895. He married Edith Sayer in 1899, farmed one season at Cutler in south Dade County, then moved to Cape Sable. He, Edith and their children returned to south Dade in 1911. Edith died in 1918, and Bob remarried. He died in 1958, survived by seven children from his first marriage and three from his second.66

Bob and his father appear in a photograph of a celebration at the William Freeman house in Lemon City at Christmas 1895. Perhaps Senie, Mamie and Johnny were off on another Christmastime hunt.69

So ends the hunt — the continual of pleasure — the picnic three times a day. Our motto was & is "We are the people & we must be fed."

Our Names
Mrs. Campbell = "Palmetto Inlet"
Mrs. Soop = "Lady Marlborough"
Mr. Campbell = "Gopher Charlie"
Mr. Soop = "Pistol Pet"
Mr. Harp = "Terapin Jack, the deer slayer"
Mr. Smith = "The Deacon"
Mr. Hardy = "Handy Andy"
Mr. Cameron = "The Nightingale"
Mamie Douthit = "Princess of Esperance"
Johnie Douthit = "Johnie Shure Shot"
Senie Douthit = "Billie the Kid"

AFTERWORD
On October 25, 1904, Senie Douthit married Allen B. Cleare, son of a Conch sea captain who had homesteaded near Lemon City in the 1890s. Senie delayed her wedding to Cleare until after the Lemon City Episcopal Church was rebuilt after a storm. They moved to Key West, where her husband was briefly mayor in the 1920s, and where Senie raised a family of four children: Allen B. Jr. (1906-1984), Dorothy (McCarthy) (died 1995), Alphonse (Eckberg) (died 1986), Joseph (1909-1977), and three grandsons. She died in Key West on January 31, 1961.

Mrs. Betty Jo Pye remembers that her Aunt Senie made delicious homemade coconut candies and gueva jelly tortes, and that she painted Florida scenes. Living a pioneer life in the pinelands near Lemon City, she maintained a carefree spirit which marked her personality throughout her life, and she never let anyone know if she had a problem. As Senie Douthit always told her family, "Life by the yard is really hard, but by the inch it's a cinch."72

Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Campbell, John Hart, John Douthit, Misses Mamie and Lenie Douthit, W.T. Hardee, J. Alex Smith and John Cameron, of the Biscayne Bay Country, lately enjoyed a camp hunt in the New River Section. Leaving Mr. Hart's place at Estapoga, they went to New river and up the Hillsborough, being gone about ten days. Miss Douthit killed a deer. Turkeys, ducks, quail were found in abundance. The trip was made in regular Indian canoes — with sail. Several Indian villages were visited. The party report a splendid time.

— The Tropical Sun, Feb. 7, 1895
(Clockwise from upper left): Senie Douthit's wedding portrait with husband Allen B. Cleare, 1904 (courtesy of the Thelma Peters Collection); Senie (left) during World War I; and Senie (seated at right) with sons Joe (dressed as Santa) and Allen Jr., grandsons Bruce and Henry, and Allen's wife Jessie, ca. 1950 (both courtesy of Henry Cleare).

NOTES

3. Henry E. Johnson, III, "The Many Faces of Guy I. Metcalf," Broward Legacy, vol. 9, nos. 3-4 (Summer/Fall 1986), 4-5. The standard history of Fort Lauderdale, August Burghard and Philip Weidling, Checkered Sunshine (Gainesville, 1966), suggests that Ed Moffat ran a camp on the stage line at New River for several months before the ferry (and Stranahan) arrived. However, no reference to a pre-Stranahan camp appears in Stranahan's papers, on file at the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society, or in extant issues of the Tropical Sun or in Charles Pierce's manuscript in the Broward County Historical Commission archives.
(Miami, 1976), 108. For more on the stage line, see several articles in Broward Legacy, vol. 9, nos. 1 & 2 (Winter/Spring 1986).
5. Peters, Lemon City, 108-109; Tropical Sun, October 18, November 29, 1894.
7. The various first and second-hand accounts of Mr. Tuttle’s involvement in Flagler’s decision are collected in David Leon Chandler, Henry Flagler (New York, 1986), 165-170.
8. H. T. Bisby to J. E. Ingraham, May 7, 1894, Box 21A(2), Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, Palm Beach. The Tropical Sun of June, reported on January 31, 1894, that Bisby had stopped in Palm Beach and was on his way to New River to put up a hunting lodge for temporary use.
10. For a history of this square mile, the “Lewis Donation,” see Patrick Scott, “The Many Heirs of Jonathan Lewis.” Broward Legacy, vol. 17, nos. 3-4 (Summer/Fall 1994), 2-23.
11. Interview with Betty Jo Douthit Pye, Fort Pierce, February 6, 1996.
12. The boys were James, born 1872; Robert, born 1874; and John, born 1879.
18. Ibid., November 18, 1898.
19. For further information on Ada Merritt, see her short biography, Ola C. Douthitt, Footprints on the Sands of Time (Miami, 1942).
24. Wilson, “We Chose the Subtropics,” 38.
25. Ibid., 40.
27. Jean Taylor, Villages of South Dade (St. Petersburg, n.d.), 65-66. Family member Betty Jo Douthit Pye records Mamie’s birthdate as 1870. However, Mamie, in her published reminiscences, wrote that she was sixteen when her mother died, which would make her birth year 1878.
33. Taylor, Villages of South Dade, 223.
34. Peters, Biscayne Country, 113.
35. Miami Metropole, October 2, December 9, 1898, January 9, 1899.
37. Interview with Betty Jo Douthit Pye, February 6, 1996.
41. Military Map of the Peninsula of Florida South of Tampa Bay, by Lt. J. C. Ives (1856), copy in collection of Broward County Historical Commission, Fort Lauderdale; “Inland Routes From Fort Jupiter to Fort Dallas via Fort Lauderdale,” Broward Legacy, vol. 4, nos. 3 & 4 (Summer/Fall 1981), 23-27.
46. The description is described in Hugh T. Willoughby, Across the Everglades (New York, 1898).
48. Willoughby, Across the Everglades.
49. Williams, “Memories,” 2-10.
51. The earliest account this author can find is of Julia Tuttle taking a party of men and women around the falls of the Miami River to view the Everglades. However, they traveled only a few hundred yards into the Glades, then “shot the falls” on their return.
55. Disston’s company purchased the Atlantic Coast Steamboat, Canal and Improvement Company to build a canal suitable for light draft steamboats. In the 1880s and 1890s, the company would receive from the state 3,840 acres of land per mile of canal, or 400,000 acres. Also included in the capital to be raised by the public offering of stock was $451,836 to dig a canal to connect the St. Lucie River to Lake Okeechobee to bring the lake and marshes and provide transportation. See William G. Crawford, Jr., “A History of Florida’s East Coast Canal: The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from Jacksonville to Miami,” Broward Legacy, vol. 20, nos. 3 & 4 (Summer/Fall 1997), 6-7.
56. Peters, Lemon City, 168. Flagler’s FEC Steamboat Company also operated an ocean-going steamer, the Biscayne, between Fort Lauderdale and Miami at this same time. See Edward A. Mueller, “The Florida East Coast Steamship Company,” Tequesta, vol. 46 (1976), 47. The Tropical Sun reported on January 31, 1895: “The possibilities of a long stretch of water travel will be extended some time in February by the cutting through of the canal to Biscayne Bay. Work on this waterway is being pushed rapidly.”
58. See James Dean, Shipwrecks of Biscayne County,” Broward Legacy, vol. 6, nos. 1 & 2 (Winter/Spring 1983), 17.
60. Fino Sopp and F. Page Wilson once went on a trip to the Indian Creek area of Miami Beach and encountered a crocodile, a panther, and a 300-pound loggerhead turtle on a single day’s trip. Wilson, “We Chose the Subtropics,” 19.
61. Miami Metropole, November 18, 1896.
62. Mrs. H. K. Ingram, Florida, Beauties of the East Coast (St. Augustine, 1893).
63. Peters, Lemon City, 124, 163, 168. The Tropical Sun, January 31, 1895, described the boat as “pretty as a peach and stanch as a house.” It is some indication of the rarity of women’s travel in south Florida that the Bradley family had lived on Lake Worth since 1872, but Mrs. Bradley made her first trip to Biscayne Bay only in December 1894.
65. Miami Metropole, November 25, 1898, reprinted in Howard Kleinger, “Among the Farmers,” Tequesta, no. 1, 50 (1990), 64.
68. Interview with Betty Jo Douthit Pye, February 6, 1996.
69. Peters, Lemon City, 143.
70. Ibid., 133-134, 149, 223-224.
71. Interview with Betty Jo Douthit Pye, February 6, 1996.
72. Ibid.