

The

# VANISHED COMMUNITIES OF BROWARD COUNTY

From a Talk Delivered by

Dr. Cooper Kirk

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In over ninety years of settlement, the region which today comprises Broward County has contained many communities, each with its individual flavor, identity, and history. These communities have included incorporated municipalities, platted towns, real estate developments, and informal settlements which have grown around geographical or economic focal points and acquired their own names and identities. While many of these communities have grown and thrived, others have vanished from the scene. Some dwindled away when their economic bases disappeared; others saw their population siphoned away or their cohesion destroyed by shifting patterns of settlement. Still others were absorbed by larger neighboring communities, or broke apart because manmade barriers inhibited commun-

*"The Vanished Communities of Broward County" was first presented by Dr. Cooper Kirk at a Historical Commission program held at the Oakland Park Library on October 11, 1988. This article was transcribed from a tape recording of that oral presentation, and provides an excellent example of Dr. Kirk's tireless research efforts, and his abiding interest in locating previously unknown facts about Broward County's fascinating, but frequently obscure, past. Although the county is frequently perceived as an area lacking in substantial history because of the recent arrival of most of its current population, this article, like much of Dr. Kirk's work, demonstrates that many facets of its long past remain to be explored.*

*As most Broward Legacy readers know, Dr. Kirk served as Broward County's first official historian from 1972 until his death in 1989, and was the foremost authority on the county's history. In addition to his prodigious accomplishments in the fields of research, writing, preservation, and education, he was the founder, editor, and a frequent contributor to Broward Legacy.*

## PEMBROKE AND HALLANDALE.

Pembroke is  $8\frac{1}{4}$  miles west of Hallandale and has the best orange lands, with yellow sub-soil in Dade county. About 200 acres of tomatoes and other truck will be planted here this year.

Mr. Lettief of Orange River, west coast, will plant 11 acres in tomatoes. He has built a house at Pembroke.

Mr. J. S. Blackman, who came here from Snow Hill, Md., has built and will plant 6 acres.

Mr. Barlow, who was the Hallandale broker last year, will plant 10 acres, and will also have a large packing house and buy tomatoes.

Maners, Sjostrom and Netherland will plant 10 acres and will also have a large packing house.

Holding Bros., from Tampa, extensive celery growers, will plant 6 acres in tomatoes and 3 acres in beans.

Noble Padgett who had the brag crop at Fulford last year, will plant 15 acres. He has tomatoes and egg plants nearly ready to ship now.

H. D. Allison from Lakeland, will have about 20 acres in tomatoes. He has built at Pembroke and is planting 2 acres of pine land in tomatoes and is planting alligator pears.

E. H. Padgett, the first settler on this place, will plant 20 acres, and will also build a house.

H. W. Padgett has a fine crop of egg plants and peppers on his hammock and will also plant 5 acres of prairie.

Mr. Tate Wofford is busy preparing to plant a large crop.

Edgar Robertson, of Haines City, Polk county, has decided to cast his lot with us and will be found with H. D. Allison & Co.

R. K. Thompson has a fine crop of egg plants and peppers on the hammock and will plant 10 acres of prairie. He comes from Clay county.

S. W. Douglas, of Miami, is expected this week to break ground for 20 acres of tomatoes. He will have two teams and will haul vegetables for those who want him.

This section is bound to come to the front as fine orange land and splendid trucking lands are not found  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile apart in all localities.

The Law mill at Hallandale is kept busy now getting out lumber for new domers, packing houses, etc.

This column from the October 31, 1902, issue of *The Weekly Miami Metropolis* contains the first known reference to Pembroke and the names of several of the community's original settlers.

ication, transportation, and a feeling or spirit of community. The following are some of the more notable of the vanished communities of Broward County.

## Pembroke

The first one, proceeding in roughly chronological order, was Pembroke. Today there are cities named Pembroke Pines and Pembroke Park, both located in southern Broward County, but there is no community of Pembroke. The settlement of the southernmost portion of what is today Broward began in 1896, when Hallandale was settled by a group of Swedes from New York who came to south Florida after being recruited by Reverend Luther Halland of Brooklyn. Halland, a Lutheran minister, was paid by the Florida East Coast Railway to recruit Swedes to colonize a settlement in south Florida, and the settlement which resulted from his efforts was named Hallandale after him.

About three and one-half miles directly west of Hallandale's railway depot, a new community was settled in October 1902. News from this settlement appears suddenly in the Miami newspapers of that day in a column titled "Pembroke." Nine different families had moved into that area with no road to connect them to the railroad. In fact, there was not one surfaced road in the Broward County area, or for that matter in all of southeast Florida, at that time. In that same year of 1902, the Dade County Board of Commissioners voted to build a shell rock road from Biscayne Bay to West Palm Beach. The road took nearly four years to build, not being completed until January 1906. Dade County, until 1909, included everything from the upper Keys to the St. Lucie Inlet. It stretched for 175 miles along Florida's east coast and extended westward halfway across the state. Today, Martin County, Palm Beach County, Broward County, and Dade County occupy the territory that was originally all Dade County.

So there was no road in the region in the fall of 1902, just the railroad, but nevertheless a group of people moved up from the northern part of Biscayne Bay to this place three and one-half miles west of Hallandale, and there they established this place called Pembroke. The chief citizen of that community was Elijah H. Padgett, who had come to Miami in 1896 from Palatka. He had a large family, and several of his children moved to Pembroke with him. Other people came too, including James M. Holding, who later became well-known in Broward County until his death in 1947.

Mr. Holding, a graduate of Wake Forest College in North Carolina, had



Pembroke pioneer James M. Holding, as he appeared in 1916.

moved from Tampa to Pembroke and was known as a celery grower. At Pembroke he cleared four acres of palmettoes. At that time much of the dry land in south Florida was covered with runner palmettoes, which spread by running along the ground and sending up shoots of fronds and fans. Holding, a bachelor, cleared that four acres by himself and planted it, a pretty good-sized plot for one man's labor. In 1909 he became a member of the Dade County School Board and served for six years. In 1915 he became the first Superintendent of Public Instruction for Broward County.

The Pembroke settlers raised a variety of crops, including cabbage and peppers, but their main crop was tomatoes. They had to use wagons and mules to pull their produce to the Hallandale depot. The Pembroke community also acquired a sawmill, a necessity if people wanted to construct houses and other buildings. A man named S. W. Douglas came up from Miami to operate the mill, and he moved into the community. Douglas Road in today's southwestern Broward County is named for Mr. Douglas, since it passes through the area where he had his farm.

By 1912 there were enough people in the community to form a school. In those days, the school board furnished the lumber and had it hauled to the site. The expense generally amounted to about \$150. Then the people of the community built the school building and an outdoor privy, and later the school board would have the structure painted. After the schoolhouse was completed, the Dade County School Board assigned Ruth Dowling to be the first teacher at Pembroke.

Where did Pembroke get its name?

That has been a matter of a good deal of research and investigation through the years. To this day, no one is certain, but it is believed that it took its name from a British nobleman, Sir Edward Reed, whose title was the Earl of Pembroke. Reed's involvement in the history of Broward County is, in itself, an interesting story. Between 1880 and 1914, at least fifteen British companies were chartered to operate in the State of Florida. In 1881, Florida was on the verge of bankruptcy, and, in order to raise enough money to stay afloat, state officials sold 4,000,000 acres of "swamp and overflowed land" to Hamilton Disston of the Disston Tool Company for twenty-five cents an acre. This \$1,000,000 transaction, known as the Disston Purchase, was the largest sale of land to a private individual in American history. Sir Edward Reed, who served in Parliament from 1874 to 1895, led a group of British investors who assumed one-half of Disston's obligation, putting up half the money and taking over 2,000,000 acres of the land. In 1883, Reed's group formed the Florida Land and Mortgage Company. Abstracts of much of the property in Broward County, including the land in Fort Lauderdale where the county courthouse now stands, show the Florida Land and Mortgage Company as owners during the 1880s. Overall, the company owned land in twenty-nine counties in the State of Florida. Since they owned property in the Pembroke area, supposition is that the region was named for the company's leading investor, the Earl of Pembroke, Sir Edward Reed.

By 1915, the year that Broward County was created, the Pembroke school had fifteen pupils, which was about average for a one-room school with one teacher teaching all eight grades, an average of two students per grade. The longtime mayor of Pahokee, Duncan Padgett, was born in Pembroke in 1905, and in his reminiscences he recalls that in 1912 he accompanied his grandfather, community leader Elijah Padgett, in a wagon pulled by a six-mule team, conveying a huge load of lumber to Davie by way of a sand road. Mayor Padgett also remembered his grandfather letting him drive that wagon part of the way through the woods.

Mrs. Dorothy Crippen Stanley came to Dania in 1917, and she described traveling out to Pembroke in 1918 or 1919 to pick huckleberries. By that time, Mrs. Stanley recalled, all that was left were a few dilapidated buildings almost covered over by the palmettoes. No one lived there, but a big pile of sawdust remained. The sawmill had moved away, and thus Pembroke passed out of existence about 1916 or 1917. Today, two cities in Broward

County take their names from the original Pembroke — Pembroke Park and Pembroke Pines. Pembroke Pines is a large city, with a population of over 35,000 on the 1980 census.<sup>1</sup>

## The Dania District

Another early community which has since disappeared was the Dania District, which was roughly bounded by what is today Stirling Road on the south, State Road 84 on the north, the Florida East Coast Railway on the east, and present-day U.S. Highway 441 on the west. Actually, the Dania District was not a single community, but the location of several farming settlements and even platted towns which have all passed from existence.

In 1899 the Marshall family came to Fort Lauderdale from Lowndes County, Georgia. They were a large family, and several members became very prominent in Broward County. One brother, William H. Marshall, became the first mayor of Fort Lauderdale when that town was incorporated in 1911. Another, Elias Marshall, was a barber, and his wife, Myra, taught for many years at the Fort Lauderdale High School. Yet another brother, A. D. Marshall, was for many years the Broward County jailor. In addition to their other accomplishments, these brothers were great farmers. In 1903, a newspaperman visited the farmers in the Fort Laud-

erdale area and wrote an article about their activities, which was published in the Miami paper. One of the farmers he visited was Matthew A. "Mack" Marshall, another of the Marshall brothers and the one who figures in the history of the Dania District. The reporter wrote that when he met M. A. Marshall on his farm, Marshall was working with a mule and plow. He commented that Mr. Marshall was such an imposing man and of such physical stature that if the mule could not have pulled the plow, he was sure that Mr. Marshall could have taken his place. The Marshalls were all big people. Altogether there were eight brothers and two sisters, and in 1916, the local newspaper ran a story about them having a Christmas party and said that all ten of them together weighed 2,650 pounds.

M. A. Marshall farmed in the general area of Tram Road, south of present-day State Road 84 and west of today's I-95, part of the Dania District. In fact, Tram Road, which still exists today, takes its name from the fact that Mack Marshall secured a charter from the Dade County Board of Commissioners in 1904 to run a tram from the New River to Dania. These trams were built by cutting lumber and crossties and nailing them together like a railroad track, but using lumber instead of rails. An animal could then pull a wagon loaded with produce, with the wheels turning along this track. Trams of this sort were common in Davie and in the mucklands, where normal wagons would bog down in the muddy soil.

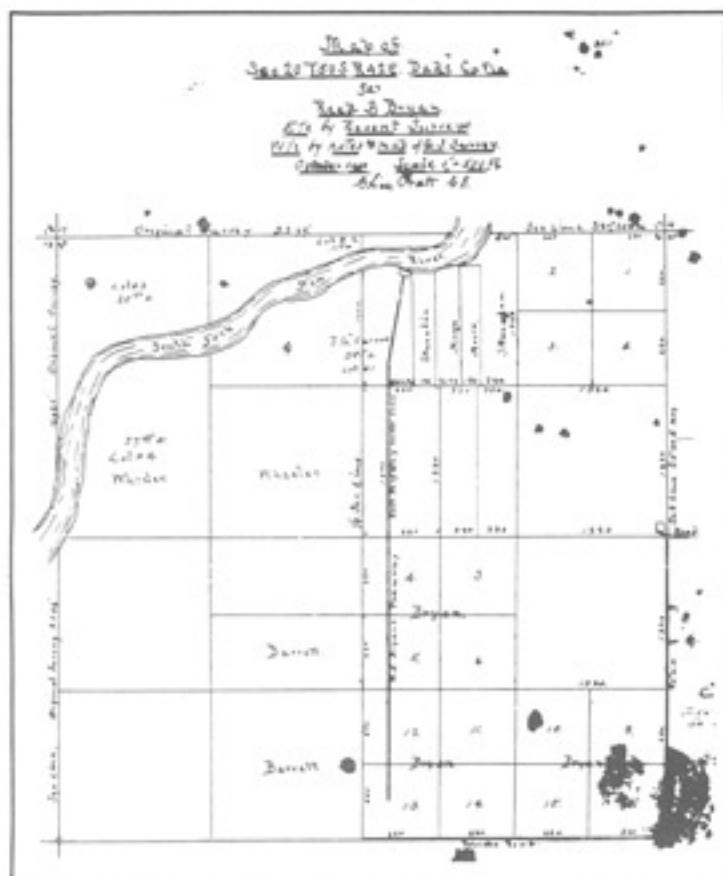
Today, twelve blocks south of State Road 84, Tram Road intersects with Thirty-sixth Street, also known as Collins Road. Heading west, Collins Road runs into the Alandco Property, a 319-acre tract owned by the Florida Power and Light Company. The Alandco Property is virtually a wilderness, although Florida Power and Light has plans to develop it over a ten year period. It is a beautiful place with tremendous oak trees, and on that property is an old concrete bridge, just wide enough for one car to get across, a remnant of one of the early settlements in the area. The Alandco Property is in the heart of the Dania District as it was described in the newspapers of 1910, 1912, and 1914.

Mack Marshall, one of the first settlers of the district, had over 2,000 acres of land there. A square mile — 5,280 feet each way — contains 640 acres, so Marshall's 2,000 acres amounted to more than three square miles of land. Anyone who has ever tried to clear just one acre of palmettoes knows that that is a tremendous job in itself.

In addition to Mack Marshall, a number of people who became famous



Matthew A. "Mack" Marshall (center) in a 1911 photograph (photo courtesy of Fort Lauderdale Historical Society).



At left is a plat of a section of the Dania District, showing the tram road and the names of early district settlers. Above, Mr. and Mrs. Reed A. Bryan and an unidentified friend visit the Bryan grove in the district, c. 1912.

in the history of Broward County farmed in the Dania District. Reed A. Bryan and his brother, Tom M., were there, as were H. G. Wheeler, the great merchant of Fort Lauderdale in the early period, and Fernando A. Barrett, who later became a banker. At the time they farmed in the Dania District, these were just ordinary people trying to grub out a living; later they became the pillars of the community, men of wealth and position. As these people and others began producing crops, Mack Marshall built a packing house on the north bank of New River where Davie Boulevard now crosses. Completed in 1904, the packinghouse was the largest on the south fork of the river. Marshall called his packing venture the Osceola Fruit and Vegetable Company, and his idea was to transport the produce from his packing house on his Tram Road to Dania and load it aboard the trains there to be shipped north to market.

In 1910, a man named A. J. Bendle, who owned the Miami Printing Company and the *Miami Metropolis*, an outstanding newspaper in south Florida, and who had been associated with R. P. Davie in the development of Everglades land, bought one square mile, which was 640 acres or one section, near the eastern edge of the present Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. There he started a city called Lauderdale. It is interest-

ing to note that Fort Lauderdale was not incorporated until March 1911, and by that time Bendle had already started a neighboring town called Lauderdale. By the end of January 1911, he had streets in and had 200 homes built, as well as a "tent city."

Shortly afterward, the Everglades Land Sales Company, which had also been associated with R. P. Davie in the development of Davie, established an unnamed community directly east and south of Bendle's Lauderdale. By the end of 1911, the company's town contained homes, rock roads, and 7,000 ornamental plants and trees. The Everglades Land Sales Company owned 26,000 acres at Davie, which it was selling to farmers, but most of this land was not yet drained well enough to be built upon. The company therefore gave land purchasers a lot in this community so that they would have a place to live while the Davie land continued to drain. Purchasers of property from the Everglades Land Sales Company were also advised that they could live on their town lot and travel each day to the South New River Canal, where they could take a boat out to their Davie land to farm. Within two years, however, no mention of this community can be found. Fort Lauderdale was incorporated in March 1911, but A. J. Bendle's community of Lauderdale faded away, and by 1913 the Everglades Land Sales Company's community was also out of existence.

The next big effort to develop the Dania District came with the establishment of the Reed Tract. In 1911, Mack Marshall sold most of his 2,000 acres to Colonel Robert J. Reed and his son, Will J. "Cap" Reed. They were from Chicago, and "Cap" Reed was born in 1871, nine days after the Chicago Fire. "Cap" served as mayor of Fort Lauderdale from 1916 to 1923, and then on the city commission in the late 1920s and 1930s, and he was famous, locally, as a baseball coach and umpire. He was one of the most colorful characters in Broward County's history. He had spent eighteen years in the army, where he acquired the nickname "Cap," and was a veteran of the Spanish-American War. He and his father came to the Fort Lauderdale area in 1910 and invested heavily in real estate.

When the Reeds bought Marshall's property in the Dania District, they started a community called the Reed Tract. The main road of that tract remains today — Ravenswood Road. It took its name from the home the Reeds established there, which they named Ravenswood Grove. They divided much of the property up into ten acre and twenty acre tracts, and "Cap" Reed frequently made trips to the North to sell those lots. In 1914, for example, he spoke to groups in Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio, and sold twenty-six tracts. He wrote back to the



Portion of the 1910 plat of the Town of Lauderdale. Note "Bendle Blvd.," named for town founder A. J. Bendle.

newspaper in Fort Lauderdale that many, many people would be coming down to live on the Reed Tract. He was right — subsequent issues of the newspaper tell of many different people living there. That beautiful wooded place where the Florida Power and Light property is now located just south of State Road 84 is part of the Reed Tract.

Mack Marshall did not sell all of his land to the Reeds. He kept 500 acres which he called a plantation; he named it Fair Acres. One of the first moving pictures made in today's Broward County was *The Idol Dancer*, directed by the famous filmmaker D. W. Griffith, and part of that movie was filmed at the Fair Acres plantation in 1919.

As "Cap" Reed and his father developed their land, they drilled their own wells and put in their own electrical and telephone systems. They also put in about eight miles of rock road in that area, and they probably built the concrete bridge mentioned earlier. In addition to selling real estate and constructing public amenities, they raised hogs, and "Cap" Reed started a ranch which he called the "Circle R." The newspapers of the 1910s are filled with references to people who had groves in that area.

Eventually, by 1915, the Reeds had acquired 3,200 acres, or approximately five square miles. The portion of the Dania District south of the Reed Tract

City Property Suburban Property Farm Property	Life Insurance Fire Insurance Bond Insurance
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## Rob't J. Reed & Son Co.

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS EXPERIENCE

The Best is the Cheapest      We Handle the Best

We have listed with us and  
own nothing but some of the

Choicest Property, Improved and  
Unimproved in Broward County

Newspaper advertisement for the Reed real estate firm, 1916.



"Cap" Reed (center, with suit and tie) with members of Fort Lauderdale's town baseball team, 1921 (photo courtesy of Florida Photographic Archives).

was developing too. The Bryan groves were located there along Bryan Road in what is today part of the City of Dania, and a number of other big farms covered the district. Then, in 1917, something happened which hurt the entire area.

At roughly the northern edge of the Dania District, the New River forks, and from each fork a drainage canal extends into the Everglades. The North New River Canal reaches all the way to Lake Okeechobee, while the South New River Canal runs through Davie and then continues westward until it joins the Miami Canal, which also runs into Lake Okeechobee. These canals are all part of the Everglades drainage system designed under the leadership of Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward. Eastward, in 1917 and 1918, the people of Dania had started to drain the East Marsh, a vast wetland just east of the town and west of the beach ridge. They dug twenty-five miles of ditches from northern Hallandale to Lake Mabel, site of today's Port Everglades. Between these two drainage systems — the state's Everglades system and Dania's East Marsh system — much land, including portions of the Dania District, suffered from lack of drainage. So in 1917, the state began work on a new canal designed to connect the South New River Canal with the coastal area.

The problem with this new canal, the Dania Cut-off Canal, was that it split the Dania District in two, destroying the homogeneity and transportation routes necessary to maintaining the Reed Tract as a self-contained community. Before the canal was completed in 1918, the tract contained approximately forty to fifty homes and was serviced by ice and grocery deliveries. In 1915, rural free mail delivery had begun, with the mailman Fred Jacques covering the area from the Reed Tract to the western limits of Dania on his motorcycle and side car. The construction of the canal changed all of this, and soon the people living south of the canal began to think of themselves as belonging to Dania and to conduct all of their business there, while the people north of the canal gravitated toward Fort Lauderdale. As an individual community, the Dania District was doomed.<sup>2</sup>

## Colohatchee

Although its name lives on in a park and is still associated with the Wilton Manors area, another community which has disappeared from the map of Broward County is Colohatchee. Colohatchee was first laid out in 1910 by three men — Frank R. Oliver, T.C. Moody, and S.H. Weaver, but its

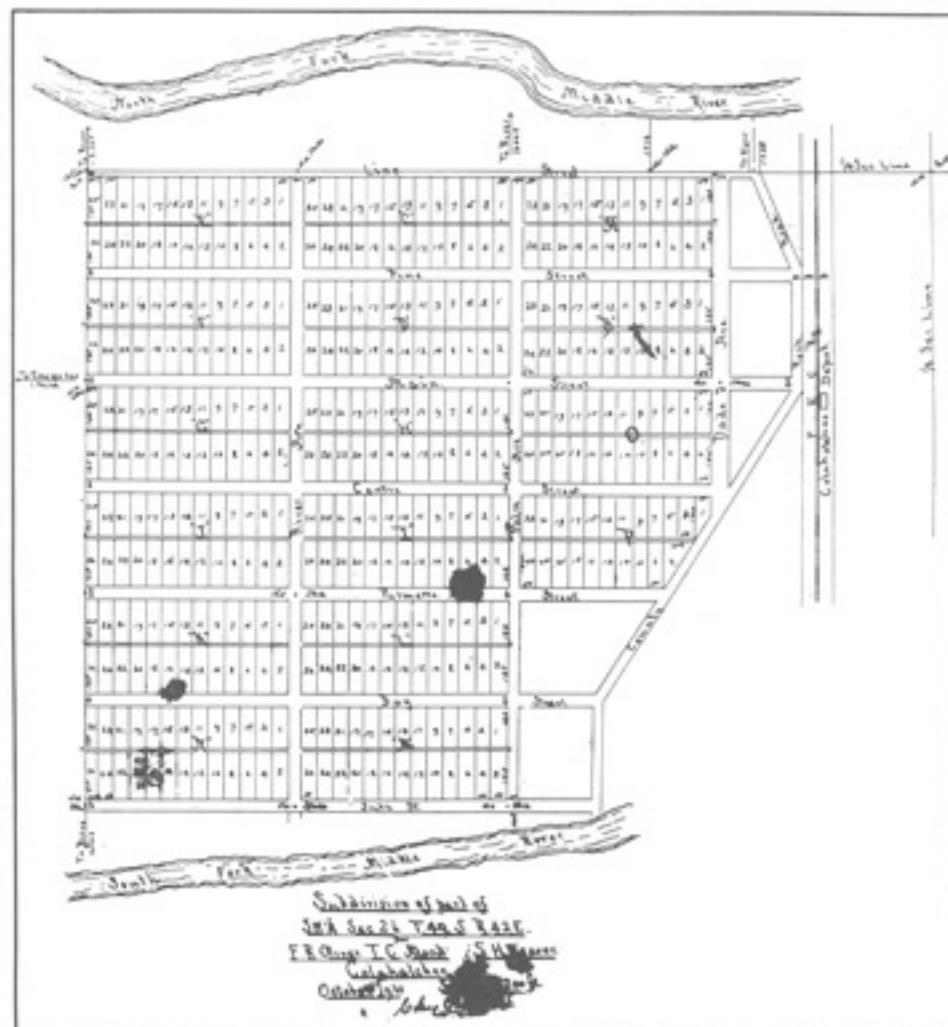
history goes back much further. In 1893, a man named William C. Collier moved to the site on the north fork of the Middle River where the Kiwanis Building now stands. The Indians often came there, and their name for river was "hatchee," and they shortened Collier to "Colo," giving the area the name Colohatchee — "Collier's River." Collier was born in Alabama in 1847. After the Civil War he lived in Texas and New Mexico, where he worked in the cattle business until he was wiped out financially by the Great Blizzard of 1888. By 1890 he was in Florida, and he taught school for two years in Lemon City, just north of Miami. He purchased the Middle River property in 1892 and moved there permanently the following year to establish a grove. That grove was still producing at the time of his death in December 1922.

For approximately a decade, Collier was the only resident in the area, but as transportation and farming opportunities increased in southeast Florida in the early twentieth century, the area slowly began to develop. Among the first residents of Colohatchee were the

Umstead brothers, who came from the Orlando area, and the Lewis family, who came from Georgia in 1904. In 1911, the Bras family moved from Oklahoma, and about that same time the Brock family, also from Oklahoma, moved into the area. These people were all farmers.

Colohatchee was a geographical expression, encompassing a far greater area than the town of Colohatchee, which was platted in 1910. It really extended from the present site of Fort Lauderdale High School, which is where the Brock family lived, northward to today's Commercial Boulevard, and it stretched from the Florida East Coast Railway westward to the general area of Powerline Road. So, in addition to today's Wilton Manors, it included the northernmost portion of Fort Lauderdale and a good deal of what is today Oakland Park.

The Colohatchee children attended school in Fort Lauderdale, and in 1912 E. A. Bras got a contract with the Dade County school board to drive the children of that area down to the Fort Lauderdale school, located where the Florida Power and Light building now



Plat of the Town of Colohatchee, as laid out by Frank R. Oliver, T. C. Moody, and S. H. Weaver in October 1910.

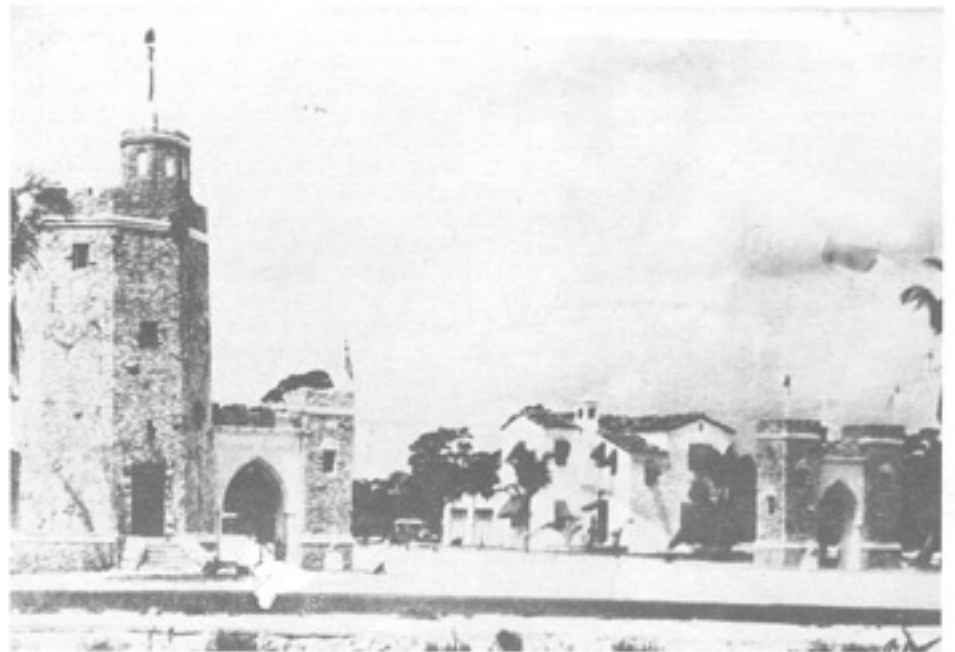
stands on South Andrews Avenue. He had a canvas-covered wagon and ponies which he used to take the children to school every morning and pick them up every afternoon. One of the children who used to ride on that wagon was Mark Mahannah, and he remembers going to school as a lark. The children would jump off the wagon and run into the woods to chase a rabbit or find a nice tree to climb, and then jump back on the wagon. In 1914, children living in the northern portion of Colohatchee began attending a new school known as the Prospect School, which was located first on the Raulerson farm and then in a converted barn belonging to M. T. Whidby.

In 1914, Iris Kinsey's family moved into Colohatchee, settling near where the Parker Electronics building is now on the Old Dixie. Around 1921, the Kinseys moved up the Dixie to what is today Oakland Park. Iris's daughter, Darleen Chadwick Mitchell, who is now city clerk for the City of Oakland Park, was born there. The Windham family also moved to Colohatchee in 1914, and the newspaper tells of Mr. Windham's marriage that year.

A center for that community in the early years was the Colohatchee Woman's Club. A man named "Old Uncle Billy" Johnson had come there in 1912 and lived on the corner of Old Dixie and Twenty-fourth Street or Mahannah Road. He gave the women the land for their club at the present site of Parker Electronics. They dedicated their building on Thanksgiving Day 1916, and the speaker was Colonel George G. Mathews, owner of the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel* newspaper and a real spellbinder. The building stood at that location until approximately thirty years ago. Mrs. Lewis, who had come to Colohatchee in 1904, died in 1918 at the age of seventy-five, and she was the first person to be buried from that Woman's Club building.

Colohatchee remained lightly populated and entirely based on farming until 1924. That year a man named E. J. Willingham, who had developed Lauderdale-by-the-Sea and by 1924 had sold his property there, came to Colohatchee and bought 345 acres of land between the forks of Middle River. There he began a new subdivision which he called Wilton Manors. Wilton was his wife's maiden name.

Willingham was really the one who destroyed Colohatchee by establishing Wilton Manors. He constructed two castle-like towers at the entrance on Wilton Drive, which replaced the Dixie Highway as the main thoroughfare through that section. Wilton Drive was planned to have no businesses on it, only large, beautiful homes. It crossed the south fork of Middle River on a bridge which still stands, just north of



Wilton Manors gates shortly after their construction in 1925. Developer E. J. Willingham used the large tower at left to give prospective land buyers a panoramic view of the area.

Fort Lauderdale High School. That bridge was twenty-six feet wide, and the local newspaper noted that it was believed to be the widest bridge in Florida at the time it was constructed. It was also said that by constructing Wilton Drive, Willingham cut off seven turns on the old Dixie Highway.

## Floranada

As noted previously, today's Oakland Park was originally part of Colohatchee, but in 1922 two events took place which marked a change for the area. First, a twenty-two-year-old man named Dewey Hawkins moved there from Live Oak, Florida. He quickly became a leader in the community and eventually became the mayor of Oakland Park, serving twenty-eight years in that position. Secondly, the Southeast Packing Company constructed a large slaughterhouse and packing plant alongside the railroad tracks. They brought animals, particularly hogs, down from the Lake Okeechobee area by boat, slaughtered them, and shipped the meat north on the F.E.C. Railway. In 1923, when the packing company formally opened that slaughterhouse, 5,000 people came all the way from Fort Pierce to Miami to attend the barbecue. The Dixie Highway was lined with cars for miles. The packing company generators furnished electricity for the people who lived in the vicinity, and their pumps furnished water as well.

Then, in 1923, a different kind of activity took place in the area. Barkdull Investment Company of Miami

bought 810 acres extending from the north fork of the Middle River all the way to the Intracoastal Waterway. They laid out a development, put in streets, and announced that a movie company from Miami was coming and planned to build a Bohemian village for the movie actors and actresses. The Barkdull Company named this subdivision Oakland Park, and that is where the present-day City of Oakland Park got its name.

Out on the beach and extending westward near Oakland Park, a man named Arthur T. Galt owned 3,600 acres — three quarters of a mile on the beach south of Lauderdale-by-the-Sea and three and one half miles on the west side of the Intracoastal Waterway from present Commercial Boulevard down to the south fork of Middle River. That property extended over to the railroad track in places, and then, right about where Oakland Park Boulevard is today, Galt's property went about three or four blocks west of the railroad track. Hugh Taylor Birch was a friend of Arthur Galt; he it was who had interested Galt in leaving Chicago and coming south to buy oceanfront property in Broward County.

The people who lived in the vicinity of the Oakland Park subdivision wanted access to the beach, and in January 1925 a group from the Oakland Park Improvement Association went to the Broward County Commission, and the Commission told them that if they could raise \$7,500 they would build a road to the beach. So the county built Oakland Park Boulevard, which was originally called Ocean



**Southeastern Packing Company barbecue at Oakland Park, February 14, 1923.  
(Photo courtesy of Oakland Park Historical Society.)**

Boulevard, and they moved the old one-lane turnstile bridge from Las Olas Boulevard, which was being replaced by a new bridge, and they had it installed at Oakland Park or Ocean Boulevard. Flynn Construction Company moved the bridge from Las Olas and reinstalled it at a cost of \$7,500. It remained at Oakland Park Boule-

vard until 1955, when the magnificent Dave Turner bridge they have today replaced it.

In the meantime, the city of Fort Lauderdale was expanding rapidly as a result of the Florida land boom, and wanted to take in all of the land northward to Pompano. In 1925 they did annex Wilton Manors and spread

westward to beyond the West Dixie Highway, today's U.S. 441. The city limits covered over sixty square miles. Pompano was also expanding and wanted to come south and block Fort Lauderdale's path by annexing what was left of Colohatchee. But this action had to be approved by the Florida Legislature, and this gave the people



**Removal of the old turnstile bridge (right) over the Intracoastal at Las Olas Boulevard, and installation of the new bridge (left), 1925. The old bridge was moved to Oakland Park Boulevard (photo courtesy of Fort Lauderdale Historical Society).**





# Floranada Club

*Just north of*

*Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

American-British  
Improvement  
Corp.

*A community development—small,  
smart, exquisite, with definite  
restrictions, definite  
privileges.*

Advertisement for the Floranada Club, 1925-26 (courtesy of Oakland Park Historical Society).

of Oakland Park and nearby areas of old Colohatchee time to organize. On October 29, 1925, the people of Oakland Park voted to incorporate and decided to hold an incorporation meeting on November 30 at the Colohatchee Women's Club.

Then, like a clap of thunder and lightning, came the word that on November 26, 1925, a new city called Floranada had been incorporated, taking in Oakland Park and the surrounding country north of the north fork of the Middle River. Its boundaries were what is now Commercial Boulevard, the beach, and on the west what is today Northwest Twenty-first Avenue, and it occupied twelve square miles. The name Floranada presumably came from a combination of Florida and Canada. The community was

founded by the American-British Improvement Corporation. The head man was James Cromwell, the stepson of E. T. Stotesbury of Drexel Investment Company and a son-in-law of Mrs. Horace Dodge, who, three years before, had sold the Dodge Motor Company for \$146,000,000 in cash. What Cromwell's group had done was to buy Galt's 3,600 acres, paying him \$8,000,000 for it. Galt had not wanted his property annexed into Fort Lauderdale, so he was happy to sell to the American-British Improvement Corporation, which was incorporating its own city. The corporation called Galt's 3,600 acres or six square miles the Floranada Club. It was to be a city within a city, and very exclusive. They had the King of Greece buy property there, and the Countess of Lauderdale, and Pillsbury of Pillsbury Mills, all members of an elite group of people, most of whom had winter homes in Palm Beach and wanted to move further south.

The corporation made plans for a beautiful clubhouse located at Floranada Road. The road was to be sixty feet wide with a canal in the center. They also planned to build a plaza hotel for \$6,000,000, designed by Cass Gilbert, one of the foremost architects in the United States.

So the City of Floranada catered to people of great means, and they cared very little for the wishes of the "red-neck farmers" of Oakland Park. Before they had incorporated, the American-British Improvement Corporation had already selected the names of the Floranada commissioners. They did put Dewey Hawkins on that city council, and he was supposed to represent the interests of the farmers in Oakland Park. For the next few months, Floranada's city government was in a turmoil. They took in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, and M. I. Anglin, who had founded that community along with E. J. Willingham, was mad and wanted to get out of Floranada. Floranada had also annexed a small community called Pelham, which stretched for three blocks between the Old Dixie Highway and the railroad tracks. The Johns family were among the leading residents of that area, and the Pelham people objected to being part of Floranada.

Amidst all of this bickering, the American-British Improvement Corporation continued planning their Floranada Club. They intended to have lagoons, two golf courses, and even a railroad extension. They did get their administration building completed, and they also finished a Floranada Inn. But then, suddenly, in the first week in June 1926, the newspapers announced that the American-

British Improvement Corporation had declared bankruptcy.

Despite the collapse of the company, the City of Floranada lasted until 1929. By July 1926, all of the company officers were off the city commission, and the people of Floranada elected J. D. Johns and some of the other area farmers to the city commission. Dewey Hawkins became the mayor. The city bought the Southeast Packing Company's machinery, so they now had their own water works and their own electric works. But the fighting and charges of skullduggery persisted. During the three years following the demise of the American-British Improvement Corporation, Arthur T. Galt paid \$11,400 in taxes on the 3,600 acres that reverted to him when the company folded, but during those same three years the City of Floranada only took in a total of \$21,000. Finally, in 1929, the people voted Floranada out of existence and voted to reincorporate as Oakland Park, but they reduced the size from Floranada's twelve square miles to Oakland Park's three-quarters of one square mile. So Floranada joined the ranks of Broward County's vanished communities.

## Progresso

Yet another Broward County community which has disappeared is Progresso. In 1890 and '91, the Florida Fiber Company bought 1,310 acres of land reaching from the south fork of the Middle River down to what is today Fort Lauderdale's Northwest Sixth Street. There they started a fiber plantation, growing sisal or century plants. In those days, most stores around the country had a large ball of twine which ran through eyelets near the counter. The storekeeper would wrap food in paper and then wind this string around it, cut it off, and tie it. The Florida Fiber Company wanted to grow century plants to produce sisal hemp, from which this string was manufactured. They brought machinery down to their property and planted five to ten acres of sisal, but for various reasons this enterprise never got off the ground. When Henry Flagler extended his Florida East Coast Railway through the area in 1896, the fiber company platted part of that property, called it Progresso, and tried to sell lots, but had no more success with their real estate venture than they had with their agricultural plans.

Then, in 1908, after the state's Everglades drainage program began, R. J. Bolles of Colorado purchased over 500,000 acres of land, which the state had promised to drain, for \$2.00 an acre. Encouraged by the attention that Everglades drainage was giving south

Florida, the fiber company began advertising Progresso again in 1909, but still did not have much success. Even though Bolles' land was not yet drained, he began selling lots all over the United States. He had agents in almost every state in the country, and they sold his Everglades land in ten acre tracts. Many of these sales were to people who had never been to Florida, and even if a prospective buyer came, there was no way to get out to the land. The newspapers commented that Bolles was selling acreage "by the gallon."

Bolles had another problem. He could sell tracts, but he could not provide deeds to the property he sold until the land was surveyed, and the state would not survey it until it was drained. Until deeds were awarded and recorded, sales were not legally recognized. But Bolles was a sharp businessman, and he had a scheme to remedy this "catch-22". He planned a lottery to award specific Everglades tracts to the purchasers by chance, and he threw in a town lot as part of the bargain. The town lots were to be located in Progresso, which Bolles had purchased from the Florida Fiber Company and then enlarged by buying substantial pieces of the surrounding country. Altogether, his enlarged Progresso stretched from today's Northwest Sixth Street up to the south fork of Middle River and from the Intracoastal Waterway westward to present Northwest Fourteenth Avenue. Bolles divided that land into over 9,000 twenty-five by 135 foot lots and over 3,000 fifty by 135 foot lots.

The big lottery took place in March



**Richard J. Bolles, Everglades land investor and originator of the Progresso land drawing.**

1911, and over 3,000 people came from all over the United States, some as land purchasers and others acting as surrogates for those who were unable to come. The names of all contract holders, as the land buyers were called, were put into a big hopper. The actual drawing consisted of a man reaching into the hopper and pulling out a name. Then he would reach into another hopper and pull out a description of a ten-acre piece of land in the Everglades. Then, from a third hopper, he would draw a slip containing a lot and

block number in Progresso. Contract holders who bought ten acre tracts in the Everglades received twenty-five foot lots in Progresso, and those who bought twenty acre plots or more received fifty foot lots in Progresso. In that way the lottery determined without surveys how to apportion that land to all the purchasers. It took six days to complete the drawing, and 11,972 contract holders received land. The Everglades land was located along the Miami Canal, stretching from a point northwest of Miami northward to a point opposite Lantana.

In 1911, Miami had a population of only 6,000 people, and Progresso already had 11,972 property holders. But Bolles' plan never worked out. The state never drained the Everglades land, and most of the contract holders left the area. A few stayed on and made their homes in Progresso, hoping that their land in the Everglades would eventually be drained. Bolles' Florida Fruit Lands Company had given them a park and they had dock space on Middle River, so that if they had a boat they could go up the canals to try to find their land along the Miami Canal.<sup>3</sup>

For several years there were big articles in the Fort Lauderdale paper on June 7, "Today Is Progresso Day," inviting people to come to that area. These accounts appeared in 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1914, and then they disappeared from the paper. The few people who stayed on in Progresso organized the Progresso Improvement Association, and several members of that association became well-known in the Fort Lauderdale area. One was J. K. Gordon. His son, Watt Gordon, was the great athlete of Fort Lauderdale High School from 1915 to 1917. Some think he was the greatest athlete to ever come out of Fort Lauderdale High School. George Hinkel, who ran Hinkel's Restaurant on First Avenue, was a member and an officer in the improvement association. E. C. Parker was the early mainstay of the association, however around 1912 or 1913 he deserted Progresso and moved into Fort Lauderdale. In 1914 he was elected to the Fort Lauderdale Town Council, and that same year he wrote a letter to the newspaper telling the people of Progresso that, although he sympathized with them, he felt they should be annexed into Fort Lauderdale. Finally, the Progresso Improvement Association dwindled away, and Progresso ceased as an organized community, although it maintained a degree of geographic identity.

By the 1920s and '30s, the Progresso people were still struggling, and Progresso was considered "the other side of the tracks," both literally and figuratively. By that time, Progresso



The Florida Fiber Company's sisal plantation on Middle River as sketched by Carlton T. Chapman for an article on "Subtropical Florida," which appeared in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in 1898.

was, and still is, considered to begin on the north side of the F.E.C. Railway tracks, although it actually begins at Sixth Street, several blocks to the south.

There were other Broward County communities which appeared and then, for one reason or another, disappeared, but these were the ones which had the greatest impact on the history of the county. Although they no longer exist as individual communities, the names they left on maps, the settlers they attracted, and the economic activity they fostered each contributed to the course of the region's development. Broward County owes much to its "vanished communities."

## — FOOTNOTES —

1. Census figures for 1990 show a population of 65,692 for Pembroke Pines.
2. For a complete, scholarly, and fully-documented history of the Dania District, see Cooper Kirk, "The Historic 'Dania District': A Vanished Settlement," *Broward Legacy*, vol. 11, nos. 1 & 2 (Winter/Spring 1988), 14-23.
3. More detailed and documented information on Everglades drainage and land sales in general, and the Progresso land lottery in particular, can be found in Cooper Kirk, "The Abortive Attempt to Create Broward County in 1913," *Broward Legacy*, vol. 12, nos. 1 & 2 (Winter/Spring 1989), 2-27.



Aerial view of Progresso, looking southwest, c. 1940.  
Andrews Avenue crosses the F.E.C. Railway tracks in the center of this photo.