
Behind The Scenes . . .

Although concerted efforts to subdue and inhabit the wilderness which is today Broward County did not begin until the arrival of the Florida East Coast Railway, the years before 1896 were not a period of unbroken solitude. Indian villages dotted the area throughout the late nineteenth century, and transients and temporary settlers left their small but enduring marks on the region. Because several made the effort to record their experiences, these marks are now impressed upon the history of Broward County. This issue of *Broward Legacy* is devoted to several such accounts.

Arthur Tilman Williams of Fernandina first came to the Broward County area in 1870 as a thirteen-year-old boy, accompanying his father, noted United States surveyor Marcellus A. Williams. Between his arrival in Florida in 1847 and his death in 1888, the elder Williams surveyed much of the state. On his 1870 expedition he surveyed and produced section charts of the strip of land between Biscayne Bay and Lake Worth. In addition to recording measurements and natural features, Williams documented Indian villages and the sites of all three Fort Lauderdals.

Arthur Williams was apparently impressed by the land he saw during this surveying expedition. In 1883 he purchased property bordering Lake Mabel, and, while visiting the site, named the lake. That same year and in 1884 he purchased additional land on what is today Fort Lauderdale beach. In 1887, Williams bought from the Florida Land and Mortgage Company two sections south of New River which he platted as "Palm City." Although advertisements for Palm City lots appeared in Jacksonville's *Florida Times-Union*, and twenty-six were sold, the land was not developed and by 1900 reverted to the state for taxes.

In addition to his south Florida speculations, Williams was active

in real estate and banking in Jacksonville and Fernandina, and served in the Florida Senate from 1896 to 1904. In later years he was active in the Florida Historical Society, serving as president of that organization from 1921 until shortly before his death in 1932. Internal evidence indicates that Williams wrote his "Memories," reprinted in this issue of *Broward Legacy*, during the 1920s. In this privately printed volume, he recalled the adventure of his surveying days in south Florida, some fifty years earlier.

The reminiscences of a different sort of pioneer -- Charles W. Pierce -- make up Part II of "Broward County One Hundred Years Ago." This article, the first half of which appeared in the Summer/Fall 1985 issue of *Broward Legacy*, contains excerpts relating to the Broward County area taken from the large unpublished manuscript compiled by Pierce during the 1920s and 1930s.

The Pierce family came to Florida in 1872, residing in the Lake Worth region and at the Biscayne Bay House of Refuge, where Charles' father served as keeper from 1882 to 1885. On the 1880 federal census, the Pierces were listed as the only settlers living on the New River. Part II of "Broward County One Hundred Years Ago" covers the years 1884 to 1893, during which Charles Pierce roamed throughout southeastern Florida as a sailor, guide, hunter, and "Barefoot Mailman." As the region began to open to settlement in the early 1890s, he served on the Dade County road commission and in that capacity was instrumental in planning the county road from Lantana to Lemon City. Several of the incidents which he described in his manuscript, including the disappearance of Barefoot Mailman Ed Hamilton, the "Great Wine Wreck," and the troubled removal of the

Dade County seat from Miami to Juno, have become legends in the history of the southeast Florida coast.

The Dade County road which Charles Pierce helped design is the subject of "Stagecoach Visits Fort Lauderdale in 1893." Written by a correspondent for the *Titusville Advocate* who traveled the route on the "Bay Biscayne Stage Line," this article was reprinted in the *Juno Tropical Sun*, owned and edited by Guy I. Metcalf, proprietor of the hackline. Although never a resident of Broward County, Metcalf played a significant role in developing the area. As editor of the *Tropical Sun*, he constantly extolled the virtues of southeast Florida to current and potential settlers. As owner of the stage line, he established the overnight camp at New River, and installed his cousin, Frank Stranahan, as its manager. Although Stranahan was not, as has often been stated, Broward County's "first permanent white resident," the present city of Fort Lauderdale traces its origins to his riverside camp and trading post.

Copyright, 1986, by the Broward County Historical Commission. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or copied in any form by any means, whether graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or information and retrieval systems, without permission of the publisher.

Broward Legacy is published semi-annually by the Broward County Historical Commission. Location and mailing address: L. Clayton Nance Historical Building, 100 South New River Drive East, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301. Telephone: (305) 765-5872. Single price copy: \$3 plus tax; annual subscription: \$6 plus tax. Back issues are available.

Unless otherwise noted, photographs are from the archives of the Historical Commission.

Neither the Board of County Commissioners of Broward County, Florida, nor the Broward County Historical Commission is responsible for the statements, conclusions or observations herein contained, such matters being the sole responsibility of the authors.
