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# Behind the Scenes

There is an ironic twist in the history of the Hillsboro River/Canal, located in the most northern part of Broward County. The waterway really is of local significance only, and few of the several farming establishments which sprang up along its banks and within its environs have survived. This situation, however, merely replicates the history of southeast Florida's freshwater conduits. Coastal sites, alone, along these waterways provided the resources and attractions essential to the evolution of modern cities while upland regions experienced difficulty in supporting and nourishing even small agricultural communities where growth was hampered by obstacles imposed by the very existence of the Everglades.

Now that upland conditions have been ameliorated by contemporary drainage and reclamation techniques, densely populated cities still do not dot southeast Florida's waterways and environs. Ironically, water management issues, and not agricultural demands, are the preemptive concerns in this region. Thus, the development of large-scale upland communities must surrender to water conservation measures that are designed to accommodate an increasing coastal population.

The first part of an illuminating article about the history of the Hillsboro, written by Kenneth Hughes, appears in this issue. The second and final part will be published in our next one. Hughes is engaged in several historical enterprises which include, *inter alia*, research into the history of south Florida's military forts and the recovery and preservation of artifacts.

Another native Floridian, Bill Raymond, is not only a graduate geologist but he is an activist in local marine affairs. In a professional capacity, he has assisted in the restoration of Broward County's beaches. These activities led to his appointment as chairperson of the Historical Commission's Marine Archaeology Advisory Council. Raymond presided over the council's first undertaking, the exploration of a marine site which, possibly, has encapsulated the remains of the brig *Gil Blas*.

In his article, which details the exploration of the site and remains, Raymond traces the history of the historical brig, explains the council's investigations, draws some conclusions and closes with salient recommendations for marine preservation.

In the 1890s G.B. Hinckley and his wife owned and operated railroad restaurants in Savannah and Waycross, Georgia, in addition to participating in other enterprises. But they needed a place in the balmy climate of southeastern Florida for relaxation. The reprint of an article from *The Miami Metropolis* describes the hide-away and tropical paradise which they created. For two generations, south Floridians flocked to the Hinckleys' place to ogle the magnificent tropical nursery, in general, and the tremendous banyan tree, in particular. That banyan was known as the "two million dollar tree." A local resident once asserted that he would pay that amount of money to have the tree in his own yard when, in fact, he hardly could pay his meager property taxes.

The Hinckley place, located on the north bank of the Dania cut-off canal, today faces destruction or alteration because of the expansion of the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

B.B. Tatum visited Hinckley in 1900 and then authored our reprinted article. Tatum had purchased *The Miami Metropolis* in December 1899. Several years later he became one of the greatest real estate entrepreneurs in all of south Florida. Among his dealings was a 1908 transaction where he associated with R.P. Davie in one development of 30,000 acres of land. That association led to the founding of Davie, Florida. Tatum was among a large number of Bartow, Florida, citizens who had emigrated to Miami, Hallandale and Dania during 1898 and 1899. Another emigrant was merchant William Burdine.

In 1898 F.J. West and A.W. Beed of Iowa settled a quarter of a mile from the Dania depot. They planted a citrus grove on their land holdings on Tigertail island, which now is bordered by Bryan Road. West sold his holdings to Beed in 1900 and, two years later, Beed sold out to the Honorable John Milton Bryan, Sr. Bryan, Sr., was a Civil War veteran, a former Florida State Senator and Representative and, most recently, a citrus grower extraordinaire and the Chairman of the Florida Railroad Commission. George D. Brossler visited Bryan in August 1910, seven months before the latter's death, only to find the aged Bryan in the midst of harvesting 7,000 crates of citrus fruit which commission merchants would snap up at \$3.50 to \$5.50 per crate.