



PEOPLE, PERSONAGES AND PIONEERS BROWARD HUNT FOR HERITAGE: JACOB FREDERICK BUNN

L. CLAYTON NANCE

County Judge (1933-1968) Boyd H. Anderson, Sr., the late, beloved "Silver Fox" of all things governmental and political, and the writer maintained an informal but dedicated search for more than twenty years for a court-house portrait, photograph, painting or rendering of Jacob Frederick Bunn. There were leads from the Fort

Lauderdale Historical Society, the Public Records of Broward County, the office of the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Florida and there were communications from Pioneer Broward Countians. However, there was no picture portrait of any kind.

Jacob Frederick Bunn, magistrate's son, patriot,

college graduate, possessed 44 years of legal experience and "know how." An 1870 graduate of Ohio's Heidelberg College, Jacob Bunn "clerked" for his legal education under preceptor Judge George E. Seney and was admitted to practice in Ohio in 1871. This procedure was common if not traditional throughout America from Colonial Times into the Twentieth Century.

With distinction and great public respect, Bunn served as a member and clerk of the Seneca County Board of Education in Ohio and as Judge of the Probate Court for six years in the same County.

Left as a childless widower upon the death of his first wife Laura Groff Bunn in 1880, he married Eugenia Horton and raised two fine stepchildren who moved from Broward County years ago. Arriving in South Florida in 1913, Bunn was admitted to the Bar that year and became associated in practice with Twentieth Century pioneer attorney Carl P. Weidling. Upon the creation of Broward County as a legal entity, he brought into one new office mature governmental experience and legal-judicial expertise from a "foreign" jurisdiction. At 68 years of age, he was not a young man when he assumed the bench.

County Courts, County Judge's Courts and Probate Courts were much the same in jurisdiction and tradition from state to state until fairly recent times, i.e., until 1973 in Florida. Supervising probate and guardian estates, presiding over small claim, misdemeanor and juvenile cases, serving as committing and issuing magistrate, empaneling coroner juries, issuing such licenses as those for marriage and hunting, performing weddings and the functions of listening post, father confessor and learned friend of the citizenry, the "Old Court" required a good man, a learned scholar, a well balanced personality.

Jacob Frederick Bunn served as Broward County's first resident judicial officer from 1915 to 1920. There was only one known earlier resident magistrate in the Broward County area which was then a part of Monroe County. William Cooley was Justice of the Peace during Florida Territorial years but it is certain that Bunn was the first resident official Broward County Judge created, effective October 1, 1915. A family man who had bicycled over Europe, "sailed" down the Mississippi and over a wide part of the Globe, and who had studied people and problems seriously, Bunn "filled the bill" as County Judge for our new County.

In 1975, Cynthia Rush Hunt, Secretary to the Broward County Historical Commission, sent a shot-in-the-dark-letter to the Ohio Historical Society and obtained two of the missing pictures as well as biographical information that was unknown to Florida neighbors and constituents.

Thus, at the conclusion of a successful search for the courthouse portrait of an official, we had a clearer picture of the man, Jacob Frederick Bunn, our first County Judge. We look upon him with pride.

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LETTERS: Honorable Allen Morris
Clerk, Fla. House of Representatives;
Honorable Philip Weidling,
Author, Fort Lauderdale;
Charles A. Isetts, PhD.
Ohio Historical Society.

COMMUNICATION: Honorable Bernice Saunders,
Deputy Supreme Court Clerk
(Florida).

JUDGE L. CLAYTON NANCE, AA, U. of Cinn.; LLB, (JD), U. of Fla.; a long time Broward Circuit Judge, Florida's first Public Defender, a "high sheen history buff," a resident of Broward County since the age of two, is the "founding father" of the Broward County Historical Commission.