Hillsboro River

A River Of Many Names io Seco or Daniel F. Austin Examination of any modern map will show that Florida has only one Hillsboro (also spelled Hillsborough) River. That river is in Hillsborough Ven Inlet County near Tampa. Further looking at current maps will show that, between Broward and Palm Beach Counties, there is a canal that is called the Hillsboro Canal. It does not take much searching through historical documents to find that the canal Middle was formerly the Hillsboro River, and that it drained the Hillsboro Marsh. These names, however, have long and complex histories that date from the late 1700's. when calin 33White Inlet sliss t in & Ouder s: Chalet

Daniel F. Austin, Ph.D., is a professor of Botany and Curator of the Herbarium at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida.

Jefferys Map of 1792

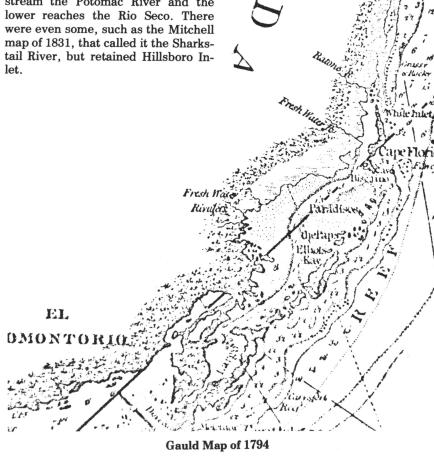
Before the names came into existence the river that was to become the Hillsboro Canal was either unknown, or thought to be part of what was then known as the Rio Seco. These names appear from the early 1600's on the Sanson and Ruesta maps as well as others. Some confusion occurred during the 1700's and the site was alternately called Rio Seco, Rio Nuevo or New Inlet on the Gibson, Romans and DeBrahm's maps. New Inlet was continued for this site at least until the 1790's when the Gauld map was published.

During the first three centuries of Florida's history few of the European explorers ventured inland in this region. On the available maps of that time, coastal features were emphasized. The maps were intended mostly for mariners and contained largely those aspects of the coasts that would be useful for determining their location. Hills, unusual tree clusters, and most important rivers and inlets were common notations. Little detail was given for the inland parts of the peninsula.

Apparently the first application to any site in Florida of "Hillsboro" or "Hillsborough" came from the first English surveys in the 1760's. De-Brahm first called the Mosquito Lagoon and Indian River branches the "Hillsborough Stream" in honor of the Earl of Hillsborough. This Irish gentleman, one Wills Hills, who became the secretary of state for the colonies in 1768, was particularly interested in Florida. Most subsequent mapmakers did not, however, like changing the name of those sites to honor Lord Hillsborough. So, the name was shifted about the peninsula. James Grant Forbes, who visited the area in 1803, was among the first to apply Hillsborough's name to a bay formerly known as "Espiritu Santo" or what we now call Tampa Bay. Later both a river feeding into that bay, and the county surrounding it came to be called by the Irish Lord's name.

A third site also came to bear Lord Hillsborough's name in the 1820's. Charles Vignoles decided to retain older names for both Tampa Bay and the Indian River regions, but named the inlet on the southeastern coast as the "Hillsboro Inlet." In so doing he moved the original Hillsborough Inlet named by DeBrahm about eighty miles south down the eastern coast. Vignoles wrote on his map the standard usage of the time, calling the inlet the "Hillsboro or Middle River

Inlet" and the stream feeding into it the "Potomac River." It was the late 1830's before the stream ceased to be called the Potomac and became the Hillsboro River. Of course there were exceptions to these names. For example, the Baldwin & Cradock map of 1834 called the upper part of the stream the Potomac River and the lower reaches the Rio Seco. There were even some, such as the Mitchell map of 1831, that called it the Sharkstail River, but retained Hillsboro Inlet.



With the first military maps of the Second Seminole War, such as the Hood map of 1838 and the MacKay & Blake map of 1839, the waterway began to settle on either "Hillsborough" or "Hillsboro" River and Inlet. This appelation was continued on the first State map, the Bruff map of 1846, as "Hillsborough" and the Ives Military map of the Third Seminole War as "Hillsboro." This terminology finally settled, and was kept for the following decades.

With the upsurge of power of that political force known as Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, new plans began to be made for the Hillsboro River. In the first decade of the 1900's Broward campaigned for governorship on a drainage platform. He is said to have gone about the state armed with graphs, pictures and maps of the Everglades as he argued for drainage of this vast marsh system. He won his

Legends for Maps

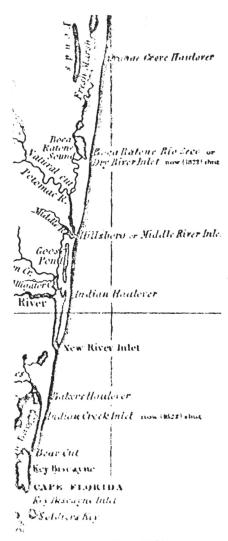
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Map 1. Jefferys Map of 1792. "A Map of of the Isle of Cuba with the Bahama Islands, Gulf of Florida and Windward Passage." In: Jefferys, T. A Description of the Spanish Islands and Settlements on the coast of the West Indies. (1792). (New York, 1970. Reprint by AMS Press, Inc.).

Map 2. Gauld Map of 1794. In: Gauld, G. A Chart of the Gulf of Florida or the New Bahama Channel Commonly called the Gulf Passage. (Charing Cross, London, 1794).

Map 3. Tanner Map of 1825. "Map of Florida." In: Tanner, H. S. A new American atlas, etc. (Philadelphia, 1825).

Map 4. Ives Map of 1856. Military Map of the Peninsula of Florida south of Tampa Bay. (Washington, 1856).



Tanner Map of 1825

governorship (from 1905 to 1909) and Ft. Lauderdale (in what was to become Broward County on 1 October 1915), became the center of operations for draining the Everglades. By 1921 the Hillsboro River had been reduced to a canal, much of it having been dug by 1913.

Today there is little indication that the Hillsboro Canal was once a flowing river. The waterway is spanned at various points by bridges, and blocked in several places by saltwater dams. There is still a lighthouse near the Hillsboro Inlet, and a town named Hillsboro Beach, but the character of the area is drastically changed. Fishing may still be good, but it is rarely like that described for the inlet in the 1760's by Bernard Romans. He said that " . . . Jewfish are very abundant both within and without the river . . . " Similarly, the " . . . five tall cabbage trees on the pine land . . . " about two and one quarter miles south of the inlet are no longer in evidence to guide sailors.

Inland the story of change is similar. During the Second Seminole War Dr. Jacob R. Motte, a physician attached to General Jesup's command, marched down the coast past the Hillsboro River. Although he did not mention the river by name, he described it as a series of " . . . cypress swamps with deep streams flowing through the centre . . . " In truth, the Hillsboro River was one of the major places where excess water escaped from the Everglades. It still serves that purpose even though channelized, but the timing and manner has changed.

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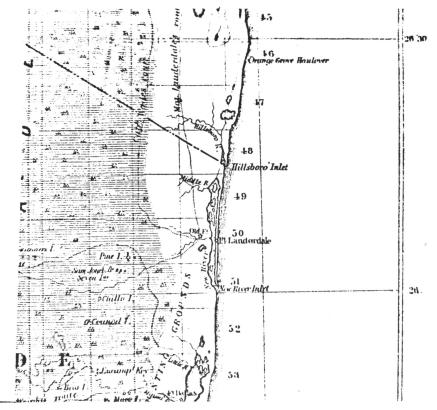
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Ives Map of 1856