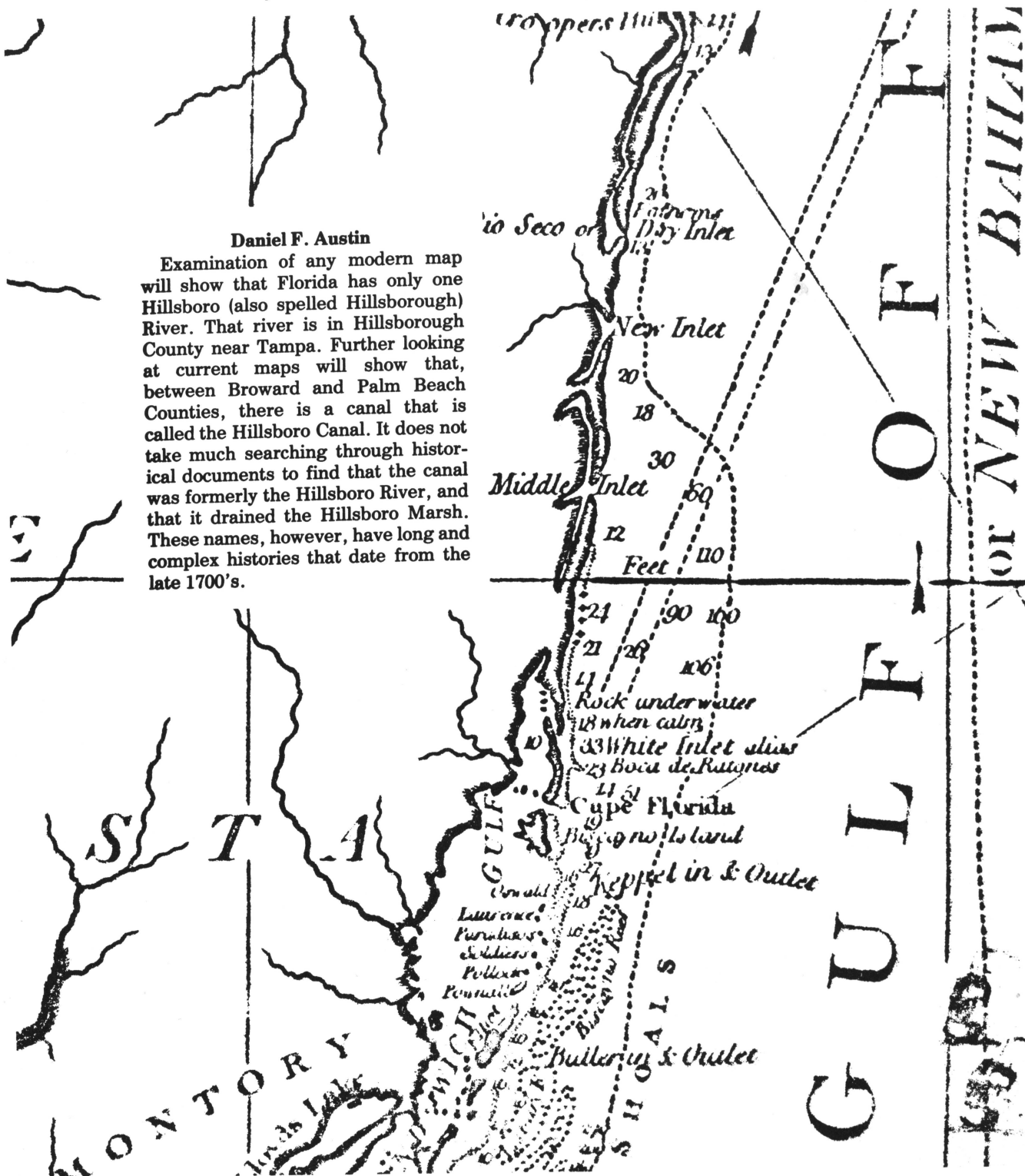


Hillsboro River

A River Of Many Names

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 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 It does not take much searching through historical documents to find that the canal was formerly the Hillsboro River, and that it drained the Hillsboro Marsh.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.



Jefferys Map of 1792

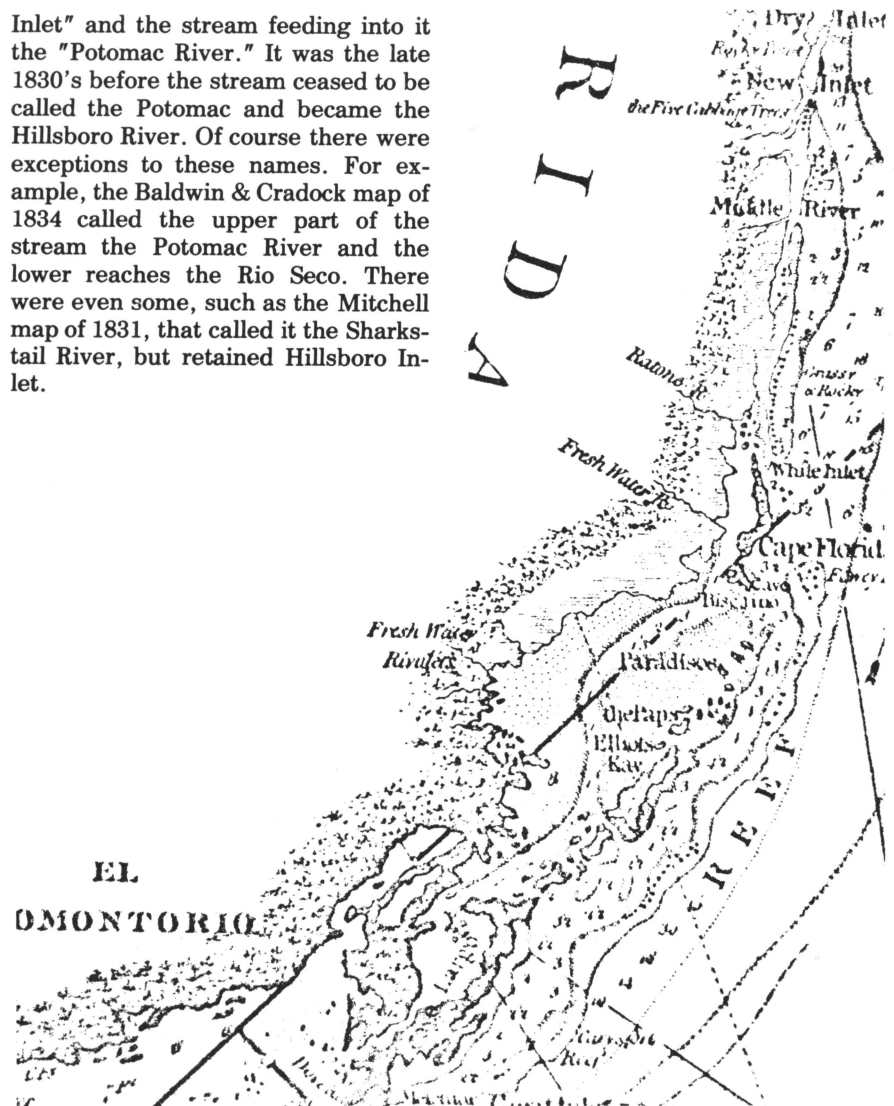
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Inlet" and the stream feeding into it the "Potomac River." It was the late 1830's before the stream ceased to be called the Potomac and became the Hillsboro River. Of course there were exceptions to these names. For example, the Baldwin & Cradock map 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 Sharks-tail River, but retained Hillsboro Inlet.

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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 appellation 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



Gauld Map of 1794

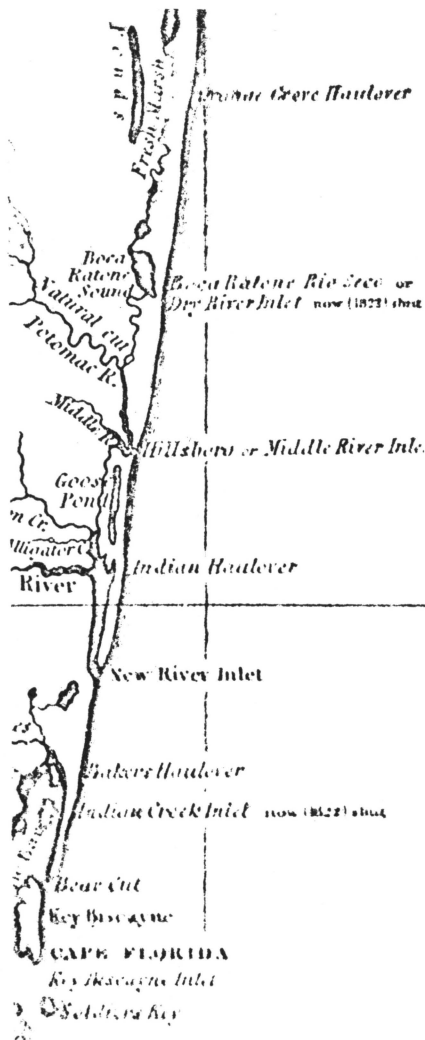
Legends for Maps

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.

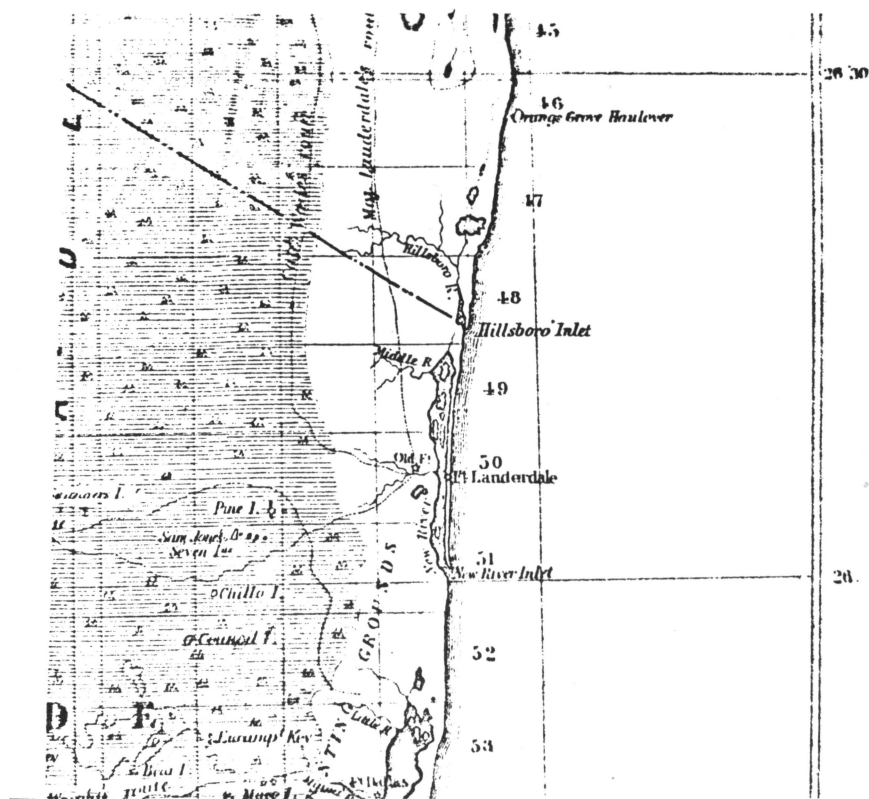
Today there is little indication that the Hillsboro Canal was once a flowing river. The waterway is spanned at various points by bridges, and blocked in several places by salt-water dams. There is still a lighthouse near the Hillsboro Inlet, and a town named Hillsboro Beach, but the character of the 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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Ives Map of 1856