

THE FORMAN FAMILY: EVERGLADES PIONEERS

By Charles Forman

It is now hard to believe that my parents Hamilton McLure and Blanche Collins Forman, names intimately associated with the growth and development of Broward County, began their lives here in 1910 in a tent located miles deep in the Everglades. They and others like them sacrificed and labored to make this land habitable and productive; tens of thousands now live, work, and play in comfort where the alligator, water moccasin, rattlesnake, and mosquito had predominated a few short decades ago.

Born on June 24, 1886, in Nashville, Illinois, Hamilton McLure Forman was nurtured in politics by his father, attorney William S. Forman. William had moved from Natchez, Mississippi, as a small boy and had served consecutively from 1878 through 1899 as mayor, state senator, United States congressman, and United States Commissioner of Internal Revenue. William died on the day when Ham graduated from the University of Illinois Law School in 1908.

Hamilton married his high school sweetheart Blanche Collins, a beautiful elementary school teacher and principal. Born in Clinton, Illinois, on July 18, 1884, Blanche grew up and received her elementary and high school education in East St. Louis, Illinois. Her father, Dan Collins, was one of the most respected and admired livestock commission men in the Middle West. Blanche attended the University of Illinois where she was initiated into Alpha Chi Omega Sorority of which she was an eternally proud alumna. She taught school briefly and, due to her ability to secure and maintain discipline, was named principal of the small elementary school.

Due to a permanent eye injury caused by an explosion, Ham could not do the intensive reading which the practice of law required. Believing in the Everglades' agricultural potential, Blanche's father convinced the young Formans to come to Florida. Thus, in 1910, Ham and Blanche left the security and comfort of established society when they boarded a train and headed south to participate in the de-



Mrs. Blanche Forman in 1911 with ex-chicken eating alligator.

velopment of one of America's last frontiers, South Florida and the Everglades.

At that time approximately 150 to 200 people, who mainly were farmers, lived in the greater Fort Lauderdale Area. This was an embryonic frontier, a farming and trading center dependent on the New River and the Florida East Coast Railroad for its existence. Separated from the mainland by two miles of mangrove swamps, the beach was accessible only by boat. Additional families were scattered among the Davie, Dania, Hallandale, Pompano, and Deerfield areas. Hollywood was nonexistent and unplanned. Tourism was unknown. But, people all over the nation were enthusiastic about the possibilities of draining, developing and farming the Everglades' muck lands, rich in nitrogen. Sold sight — unseen, South Florida's first nationally advertised speculative land boom was under way.

Many of the first purchasers, however, stood aghast at their initial viewing of what they had bought. Water overlaid the land half the year and the sawgrass swamp had no access to the coast except by boat. Less hardy owners saw this giant as unconquerable and left. Others dreamed of success and stayed.

However, the realization of dreams to tame the Everglades, the multitude of unknown problems peculiar and unique to South Florida, and the development of a necessary system of water controls would be delayed by a lifetime of toil and tears on the part of resolute, iron-willed individuals who stayed and labored through the years to solve these problems.

The Formans purchased supplies in Fort Lauderdale, hauled them west by boat up New River and the North Canal, and lived in a tent on the

canal bank a half mile east of the present Davie Road and State Road 84 intersection. They remained there until they were able to erect a small, one room house out of the hard, Dade County pine that was impervious to termites. Neighbors were miles apart. No road was available until 1917; therefore, all transportation was by boat. Because the much maligned modern insecticides had not yet been developed, a great variety and multitude of insects were a constant threat to crops, animals, poultry, and men. Dengue fever and malaria were common; other diseases, also borne by insects, afflicted animals and livestock. At times, the mosquitoes were so numerous that they actually would kill unprotected livestock left in the open. For many years, the Formans had to sleep under mosquito netting. There were no thoughts of sun bathing or wearing shorts and halters.

The Formans became the most successful growers of Irish potatoes in the area. In order to secure the first stock of Red Bliss potatoes, which he used for seed, Ham traveled all the way to Maine to purchase and transport them.

Along with fellow pioneers, theirs was a constant struggle for survival. At one point, they owed more than a six months' grocery bill. One cold, frosty winter night they began to tow a barge full of essential fertilizer, packed in 200 pound bags, from town to the farm. When the barge sank in eight feet of canal water, Ham donned a suit of long underwear, tied a rope harness around himself, and passed the free end of the rope to some strong field hands. He dove to the sunken barge, seized a bag of fertilizer, and jerked the rope which signalled the men to pull him and the fertilizer to the surface and onto the canal bank. Despite the chilling water, he salvaged every bag of fertilizer and, somehow, did not become ill.

Initially, all Everglades' farming operations were performed by hand or by back-carried hand operated implements. The land was prepared for planting by burning and with machete, ax, cross-cut saw, shovel, hoe, and push-plow. The sawgrass left exposed limbs cut and bleeding. Ditching followed with pick and shovel. Planting was done by hand or by a hand pushed seeder and fertilizer spreader; dusting and spraying were done by back-carried instruments. Tools for cultivation were limited to the flat hoe and push plow. Harvesting, grading, packing, crating, and the load-

ing and unloading of materials and produce were done by hand. Adding to the backbreaking labor was the fertilizer which came in 200 pound bags instead of 50 pound bags, as it does now.

Mules wearing large square wooden "muck shoes" and pulling equipment soon replaced the manpowered equipment; tractors and mechanized equipment suitable for the muck lands were not available for a score of years. In addition, frost warnings and weather service bulletins were not available.

After the early ordeals, Blanche became inured to the hardships of frontier life. The women of the Everglades were expected to improvise and make do with the materials and equipment at hand. In addition to their domestic burdens the women assumed varied agricultural responsibilities. They helped by preparing seed, harvesting, grading and packing. Because no corner grocery store was accessible, they had to raise their own chickens for eggs and meat. Keeping the alligators, coons, opossums, wildcats, skunks and snakes out of the chicken pens and coops was a continual problem. Blanche became an excellent shot with both rifle and shotgun. There was no electricity, gas, running water, or indoor plumbing. Water was pumped by hand, carried in pails, and heated over an open fire or on a kerosene ("coal oil") or wood burning stove. All cooking was done on these types of stoves. Blanche baked her own bread. Because there were no freezers, vegetables, fruits and meats were cooked and bottled or canned for preservation. Using tubs and a scrub board, clothes were washed by hand. Kerosene ("coal oil") lamps and lanterns and, on occasion, Coleman mantle gas burning lanterns were the sources of artificial light.

As soon as the canal was opened to Lake Okeechobee boat traffic in 1912, the Formans assumed the additional job of operating the locks, now known as the Sewell Locks or Lock Number 1. These boats traveled between the coastal settlements and Lake Okeechobee. The Formans moved into the lock tender's house at its present site, two hundred yards west of Davie Road. Because there was no railroad line to the Lake Okeechobee area, all supplies had to be hauled by boat and barge from Fort Lauderdale to the lake; in return, lake vegetables and catfish had to be transported down the North New River Ca-

nal and New River to Fort Lauderdale in order to be sold and shipped north by railroad.

The Indians often would camp nearby and frequently "request" food from Blanche's supplies. When drunk, they would "howl" long into the night. During these years, Blanche also earned and retained the respect and friendship of the rough, tough men who, unannounced, passed through the locks at all hours of the day and night. These men were farmers, trappers, fishermen, dredgers, boatmen, hunters, and notorious members of Florida's outlaw "Ashley Gang." One of the gang members was very fond of me and often would bounce me on his knee and play with me at length. Years later there were mixed emotions in the Forman household when he was ambushed and killed along with the remainder of the "Ashley Gang" by a sheriff's posse on the old Stuart bridge.

From the standpoint of agricultural and residential development the Formans, together with Broward and Dade Countians as a whole, were caught on the horns of a dilemma. Every fall, the canals and rivers swelled and the unprotected muck lands and other vast lowland areas flooded for long periods of time. This condition prevailed until all the excess summer and fall rain waters in the Kissimmee River Valley, Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades' areas to the north and west, in addition to our local excess rain water, drained through the canals and rivers into the ocean. There was no question about being flooded each fall. We just didn't know for how long or by how much. As the flood waters receded, they were accompanied by the stench of decaying vegetation and stranded fish. After the water had drained off into the ocean, the Everglades dried out.

Every spring muck fires would develop locally and out in the dried Everglades. Most of the shallow muck that once covered the South Florida Education Center was burned off long ago. The remainder of the muck in this area was destroyed by bacterial oxidation when it became dry. Smoke from the major muck fires was so dense that, one morning, a cleaning truck destined for Miami crashed into Ham Forman's milk delivery truck which was slowly heading down State Road 7 near the Fort Lauderdale Water Plant. The driver explained that he was driving on

the wrong side of the road because he barely could see the left side of the road and had not expected that anyone else would be driving through the dense smoke.

At first, the muck fires were fought by hand. Wide "muck shovels" were used as flails in an attempt to smother them. Later, caterpillar tractors and rollers were used to smother the flames. The muck frequently smoldered for months before summer rains extinguished the fires. In addition to the loss of the burned muck and the unpleasantness of breathing the acrid smoke, the coastal water table dropped lower and lower. Without irrigation, crops and pasture grasses stopped growing and died. Municipal well fields became endangered by salt water infiltration. Consequently, the City of Miami had to relocate its well fields westward three times prior to the establishment of the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District.

Prior to canal development and drainage of the Everglades, this cycle of flood and drought did not occur. The coastal lowlands and the Everglades had been kept flooded because excess summer and fall rainfall in the Kissimmee River Valley and in the Everglades naturally were impounded in the Everglades as a reservoir as this water drained very slowly southward through the sawgrass toward the southern tip of Florida. The coastal fresh water aquifers were constantly recharged underground by the percolation of this fresh water from the natural Everglades' reservoir. Through the years, Ham spent a major share of his time controlling the water on his own land and developing an effective water control program for Broward County and the coastal area.

Because of the slow boat trip to town, Blanche lived in Fort Lauderdale for a month before I was born in 1914. My parents also purchased their first cow that year. Hamilton was born at our dairy farm five years later.

When a narrow rock road was built from Fort Lauderdale in 1917, the Formans used \$3,000 in savings, accumulated from their successful potato growing venture, and \$5,000 from an interest-free loan from Bill Kyle's State Bank to purchase a few Jersey cows. As a result of this purchase, they founded the first dairy in the area. Blanche washed the bottles, cooled and bottled the milk by hand in her kitchen, and took charge of raising the young calves. As the dairy grew, she continued to run the pro-



"Big Red," prize brood cow of Forman's Dairy, with young Hamilton C. Forman in 1924. The prize somehow had made her way to South Florida from Norway.

cessing operation, purchased supplies and materials, kept the farm and processing records, and paid the bills.

For at least a generation, fifty years before "Women's Lib," Blanche was a successful businesswoman who was accepted and respected by the businessmen of South Florida with whom she dealt. However, she would have been appalled by many of the statements currently issued in the guise of women's lib. A woman of great pride, she considered herself a lady first, last, and always.

Ham ran the farm, milked the cows and, then, using a Model T Ford, delivered the milk house-to-house in Fort Lauderdale. Operating a producer-distributor dairy was a seven-day-a-week, 365-day-a-year job. The cows had to be milked twice a day. The milk was cooled and bottled twice a day and delivered daily to each customer. Not only did the Formans start the first dairy in Broward County, but Ham continuously pioneered in the use of improved pasture, irrigation, and fertilization. Eventually, they acquired large land holdings in the area.

Ham was a leader in the successful, state-wide fight to establish and maintain the State Milk Control Board. This agency prevented the giant Southern Dairies company from shipping low quality milk, below cost, into the state and from using their tremendous national resources to accomplish their avowed purpose of subjugating the

South Florida dairy industry. They bluntly told the local dairymen, "You will take whatever we give you, or we will break you and squeeze you out."

For thirty years the Formans continued to sell premium quality raw milk with a bacterial count predominantly in the 1,000 to 5,000 per cubic centimeter range, averaging 5 percent butterfat. By 1947 the dairy mainly was selling pasteurized milk and, during the 1947 flood, commenced selling pasteurized milk only. Like the 1926 hurricane, this flood all but financially wiped out the Formans. Forman's Dairy began to artificially inseminate all its cows in 1941, some years prior to other commercial dairy operators in the state. In the 'fifties they switched to the use of Brown-Swiss Jersey crossbred cows, installed a seven unit Surge milking parlor, and conducted an intensive irrigated dairy forage operation until they sold their rockland and retired after forty years in the dairy business.

In 1922 Ham and Samuel Wimberly, father of the late vice-president of Florida Atlantic University, successfully led the fight to have the County Commission construct the "loop road" from Fort Lauderdale to Davie and then to Dania, instead of building a straight road from Dania to Davie as they previously had decided.

At the start of World War II, the Formans owned about one-third of what is now the South Florida Education Center and, with an option to purchase, leased the remain-

der of that land from the State of Florida. After a study of the whole area, the United States Navy determined that they wanted to use this land and the land at Perry Airport to supplement their main field at Opa Locka. Ham and Blanche, therefore, immediately relinquished their leasehold rights to the Navy and deeded them their own land for one dollar. Concerned about the legality of the relatively new Murphy Act regarding deeds, Navy lawyers insisted on condemning this property and reimbursed the Formans the original price of the property, \$25.00 per acre. Shortly before he died, Ham secured the commitment which reserved all this land for the educational purposes for which it now is being utilized.

Ham served under four governors as a commissioner of the Napoleon B. Broward Drainage District from 1930 to 1946. He was its chairman for the last fourteen years of this period. He also served as a commissioner of the Everglades Fire Control District. He organized and served as a Supervisor of the Tindall Hammock Irrigation and Soil Conservation District from 1951 until his death and also served as an organizing commissioner of the town of Fern Crest Village from 1953 until his death.

At the time when he took over as its chairman, the Napoleon B. Broward Drainage District had defaulted on the payment of its bonds and was mired in debt. Dispensing with the services of their attorney and engineer, they operated the District with dragline operator and supervisor Joe Loper and with a secretary, an oiler, and part time employees. They permitted the landowners to rent and use District equipment to dig and clean out drainage canals. Costs were credited to past and future drainage taxes. Passed by local Congressman Mark Wilcox, a congressional act permitted government agencies to refinance and settle their bonds with the individual bondholders at any acceptable figure. Almost immediately, the District began paying off its bonds. When the District retired and burned the last of its bonds on August 30, 1946, this represented a proud moment in Hamilton's life.

By this time, all the required drainage canals within the then developed area had been dug and paid for, the District was solvent, and its only need was for maintenance and operations. At this point, Ham instigated a "Proposition 13." He requested

the legislature to restrict the size of the Drainage District, cease taxing and delete Fort Lauderdale from its boundaries, and place a cap on the District's taxing power by limiting its taxes to 50¢ per acre on remaining lands. Dania banker, I. T. Parker, served on the District Board with Ham throughout this time. Until their respective deaths, Mr. Cantwell and "Spud" Aires also served with Ham. Part of the time, Samuel Wimberly served as secretary. His son, Dr. Stanley Wimberly, stood night guard at the "Dam" in his pre-academic days.

Shortly after assuming the position of chairman, Ham first demonstrated that the areas in western Broward County, now used by the South Florida Water Management District as water reservoir areas, could be used effectively for such purposes. This was done by first damming the North New River Canal at Twenty Mile Bend at Andy Town. Then, by cutting spillways through the canal banks west of the dam, the out-of-area water which drained eastward from the higher lands of the Lake Okeechobee region was forced to flow and spread out into the undeveloped Glades' areas which lay to the west of the Napoleon B. Broward Drainage District's western perimeter levees. Thus, the water no longer was permitted to continue to flow down the North New River Canal and flood lower Broward County's coastal areas.

This provided dramatic flood relief for the lower areas of Davie and Fort Lauderdale, without aggravating flooding in the Lake Okeechobee area because of an approximate thirteen foot drop in elevation between the lake region lands and the land at Twenty Mile

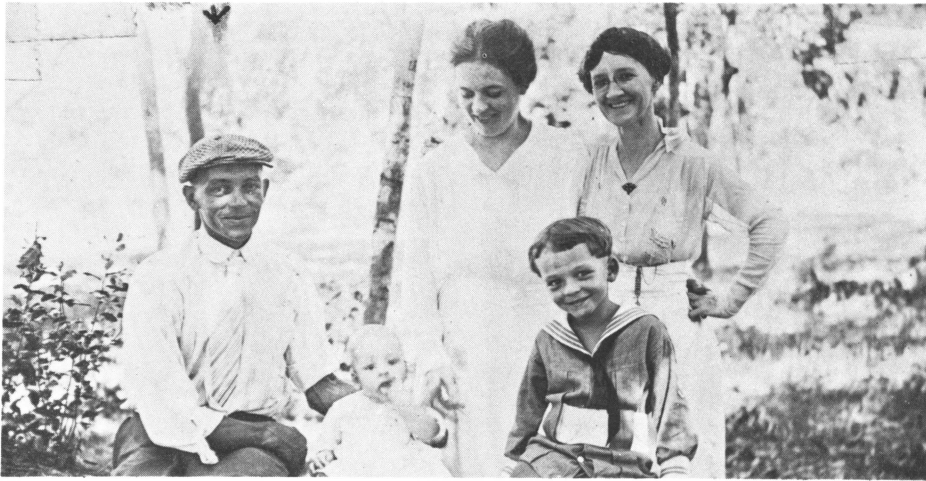
Bend. This was difficult for irate lake farmers to understand, however, because they were certain that such a dam would retard the drainage of their lands. When they discovered the dam almost two years later, they blasted and removed it.

By the next severe fall flood, Ham and Joe Loper, using plasterer's lath, had designed and constructed a model dam. Designed with spillways which could be closed by placing heavy horizontal timbers in I-Beam slots, they temporarily could dam off the lake water while local Broward water drained. Afterwards, the timbers could be removed to permit drainage of lake water. Ham and Joe transported the necessary materials and a dragline by barge to Twenty-Six Mile Bend, constructed the dam as designed, and cut new spillways through the canal banks west of this dam in order to divert water into the Everglades. They then stood guard with rifles and shotguns to keep the dam from being dynamited by lake interests.

Within twenty-four hours after the spillways were closed, the water levels in the canal and river in the Davie-Fort Lauderdale area dropped two feet. Furthermore, the drainage rate of the Lake Okeechobee lands was not affected. Because there was no road between Twenty Mile Bend and Twenty-Six Mile Bend, this dam at the latter location was much more difficult to sabotage than the one at Twenty Mile Bend. Subsequently, the United States Soil Conservation Agency used a modification of this structure both in this area and elsewhere. Ultimately, this design was utilized worldwide in undeveloped countries. Ham built these dams without any legal permission,



Pose before the Sewell Lock or Lock No. 1 in 1915, when the Formans operated the lock. Left to right: Mr. Wooten, fertilizer expert; Hamilton M. Forman, holding Charles; Robert Fahrion, Blanche Forman; Louis Fahrion and daughter Gladys; and, not identified.



Family outing in 1920. Hamilton M., Hamilton C., Charles and Blanche Forman. Standing on the left is Mrs. Louise Fahrion one of the first telephone operators in Broward County.

without any engineering help or advice, and with dubious legal precedent. For the next several years the use of such damming supported a continuous argument between Lake Okechobee and Broward farmers.

These original structures were constructed under unbelievably difficult circumstances. Although the canal was already at flood stage, no one was drowned or seriously injured during construction by the surging waters. Among those who helped the Formans build these dams were Eddie King, Cap Olsen, Dean Cross, Max Durrance and Al Cherry.

Ingenuity and adaptability proved the keys to survival in the Everglades. Ham displayed these qualities in his dam construction which reduced the hitherto cumbersome, inexact method to six concise stages. The dams were begun by placing heavy steel I-Beams horizontally across the bottom of the canal to serve as a mud-sill. Then using sledgehammers, workmen drove steel boiler tubes vertically into the rock bottom of the canal at short intervals behind the mud-sills. They then tied the boiler tubes together and "guyed" them securely into place with multiple strands of twisted barbed wire. The fourth stage of construction consisted of stretching close-meshed heavy gauge livestock fence horizontally across the canal, located behind and tied to the boiler tubes. Boulders from the canal banks were then layered across the canal behind this fence, which prevented them from being washed downstream until they were wedged together. When the wedged boulders had stopped the flow of water, rocky-fill from the canal banks was then placed on top of the

boulders to complete the effective dam.

The primary Drainage District perimeter levee, between the North and South New River Canals, was located about three miles west of Flamingo Groves Road. Built almost entirely of muck, great cracks and fissures would develop in it during the dry season. During one very dry spring, a "sawgrass fire" reached this muck dike and set it afire for most of its length. Ordinarily, muck burned slowly; but when the wind blew, the cracks and fissures acted like chimneys. Thus, the dike burned rapidly.

The District had neither the time nor money to replace this dike before the next rainy season. Consequently, Ham convinced Early Bateman to attempt to extinguish the fire with his farm-sized caterpillar tractor. Because the tractor had no lights, Ham "hung on" to the front of the tractor and directed Early with a flashlight. All night these two "crazy" men rode the relatively small caterpillar tractor back and forth over the top of the burning levee. Despite the acrid smoke and flames, they sufficiently compacted the muck and controlled the fire by morning. They saved the levee so it could be repaired in time to afford flood protection that year to the Davie farmers. When money subsequently became available, this muck dike was replaced with one of rock.

After retiring from the Napoleon B. Broward Drainage District, Ham spent considerable money, as well as time and energy, helping to establish the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District. Insiders considered his efforts indispensable to its formation. Ham led the fight against

the major efforts of powerful state political, financial, cattle, and meat packing interests to have the legislature abolish the Everglades Drainage District established in 1913 and sell the state owned lands therein. These lands comprised the bulk of the land which was used to form the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control reservoirs. Without the use of these state owned lands, no such reservoirs would have been possible.

With the impetus created by the disastrous floods of 1947 and 1948, engineer Turner Wallace and others worked diligently to persuade the Army Engineers to recommend the establishment of the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District. Led by United States Senator Spessard Holland, they also lobbied congress to establish the requisite federal legislation. Ham then founded the Broward County Organization for Water Control, worked to persuade the legislature to establish the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District, and advised Governor Fuller Warren in his behind-the-scenes efforts.

In cooperation with the University of Florida Agriculture Department, the United States Soil Conservation Agency, led by "Jake" Stevens and Bill Spiers, had surveyed and analyzed the soil conditions within the Everglades Drainage District. In cooperation with Dr. R.V. Allison's personnel and the Army Engineers, they designed the proposed flood control program. To culminate these extensive efforts, the 1949 state legislature established the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District. Thus, a new day dawned for Florida. Ham and Blanche finally witnessed the realization of the dreams and work of fifty years to solve the twin horns of the South Florida dilemma, recurrent floods and disastrous droughts. They knew, unlike many other Floridians, that the Everglades deeply influenced every facet of life in South Florida.

Several other regional and statewide problems were solved at the same time. Range cattle had roamed at will in the Everglades to destroy or damage farm crops; in turn, this led to the bearing of guns and rifles by opposing interests. Florida's historic, long accepted common-law doctrine of range cow supremacy and its accompanying right to wander and feed anywhere, regardless of who owned the land or road on



Commencement of the disastrous 1947 flood at Forman homestead and dairy. Future Plantation lies beyond Road 84 to the north.

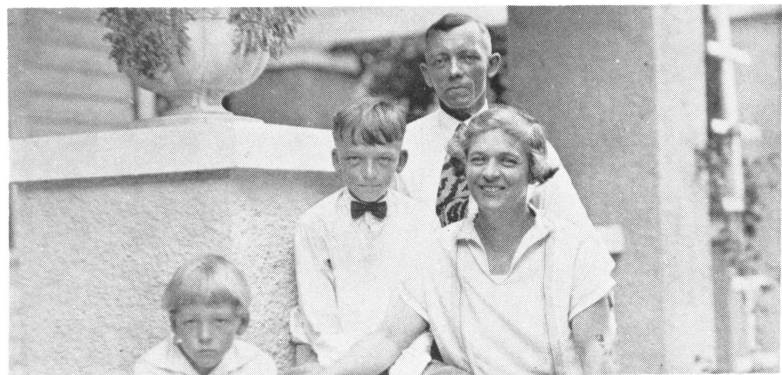
which she tread, was finally abolished under Governor Fuller Warren's administration, 1949-1953. Originally, Governor Warren had campaigned against the establishment of a state sales' tax. However, when he realized that the only practical way to secure the tax money needed both to adequately implement the state minimum foundation program for funding public education and to establish the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District, he successfully supported the implementation of all three programs.

Blanche's indomitable faith and spirit carried her through the early hardships of pioneer life with its constant threats of environmental catastrophies caused by weather, insects, disease, and fire. The virulent influenza epidemics after World War I and the guns which her men carried during the threat of "range war" with "open range" cattlemen were trying experiences. Her spiritual beliefs also supported her during the destructive 1926 hurricane which destroyed or severely damaged their buildings, equipment, fences, and pasture.

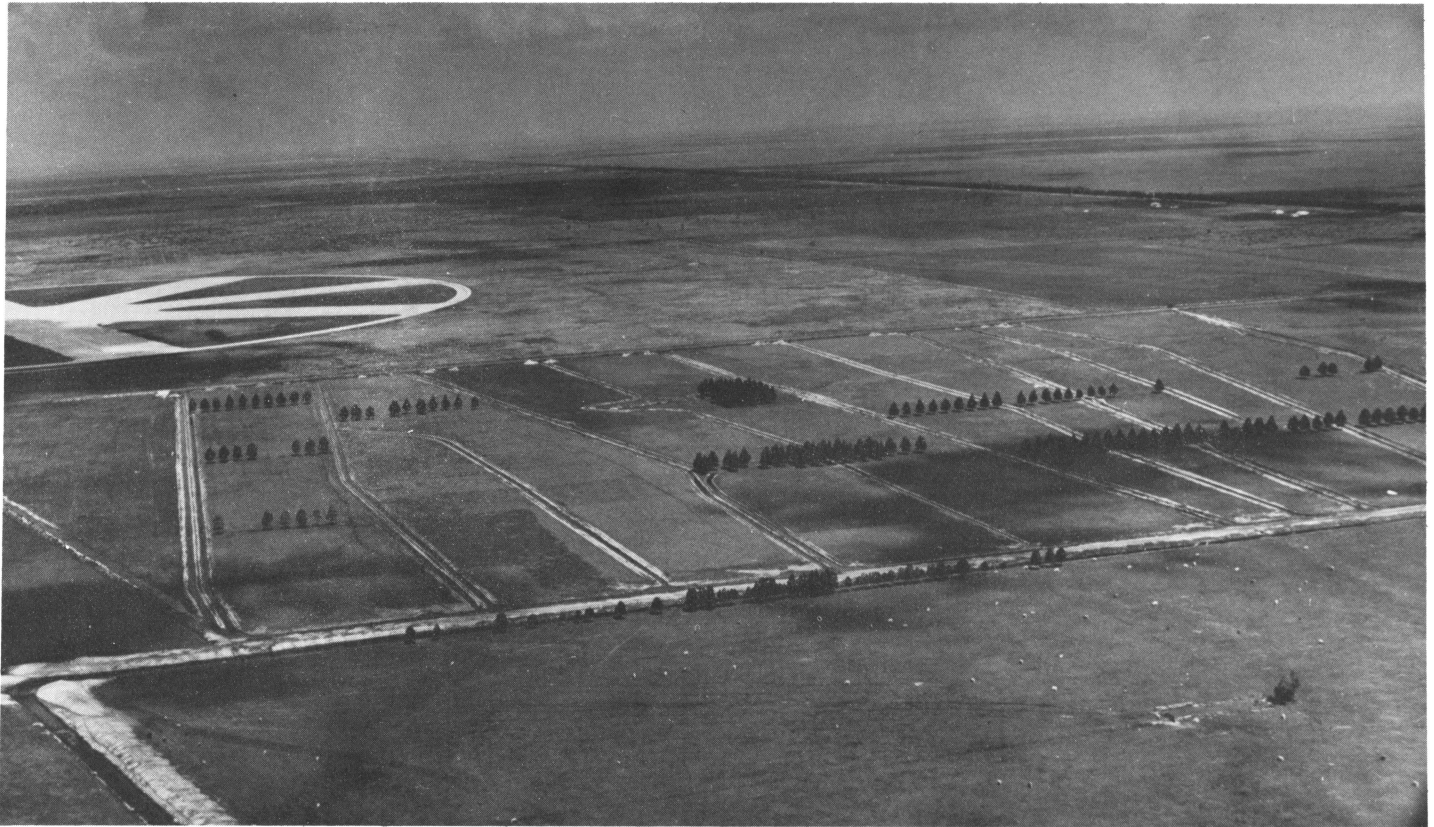
The additional loss of many cows all but ruined them financially. For the Formans and South Florida, the Great Depression was ushered in three years early by the hurricane. When her menfolk carried guns to prevent the equally determined Lake Okeechobee region farmers from blasting the early dams and water control structures constructed by Ham, her faith still sustained her through the long nights.

In later years, Blanche engaged in activities associated with the Daughters

of the American Revolution and the P.E.O. and she heartily supported the Disciples of Christ Church denomination. Her community and her family, consisting of two sons, their wives, and six grandchildren, also received much of her attention and affection. This Bible-oriented pioneer woman spent her lifetime enabling others to succeed. A dedicated wife and mother, she gave, expected, and usually received the best from those around her. In 1959 she died.



Growing up on the frontier. The Forman family in 1925. Hamilton C., Charles, Hamilton M. and Blanche Forman.



Site of South Florida Education Center in 1949. Much of this site in that year was Forman irrigated pasture-land.

Ham was a dedicated, lifelong conservative democrat. But, occasionally, he crossed party lines when he deemed it in the best interests of his community and nation. Very patriotic, he thoroughly believed in the United States and its form of government. He was a Rotarian and a member of the First Christian Church of Fort Lauderdale, the same congregation his wife served.

Most other businessmen studiously avoided becoming actively involved in politics because they felt it might hurt business. But, on every election day during the forty years when his customers received their milk delivery, they also received leaflets and brochures prepared and paid for by Ham. He told them who and what to vote for, and why. Because they knew that he did his "homework" and was conscientious and sincere in his efforts, many of his customers came to look for and rely upon his recommendations.

He believed that one could accomplish almost anything worthwhile if one worked hard enough; and he did not care who received the credit. At the end of his junior year at the University of Illinois Law School, Ham had decided to earn a letter in track. Without any experience or prior train-



Forman family Christmas reunion 1944. Left to right: Blanche, Hamilton M., Mrs. Charles (Lucile F.), daughter Beverly, Charles and Hamilton C. Forman.

ing, Ham persevered to become the best two-mile runner in the Big Ten Conference during his senior year. This training was useful for South Florida pioneering; he often ran cross-country from the Sewell Lock to Fort Lauderdale, through the palmettoes, before the road was built in 1917. Upon request of the boys, he voluntarily coached the Fort Lauderdale High School Track Team in the 1919-1920 era. After training all year, the team advanced from the poorest in the area to the best in the state. Ham then convinced the school board to hire John Prescott from the University of Illinois as the school's track coach and as Broward County's first paid coach. It was during these early years that Fort Lauderdale High School's athletic teams became known as the Flying L's. Ham remained an avid and enthusiastic supporter of athletics all his life.

Although Ham passionately hated bond issue financing, he helped to finance the campaign which passed the 1956 Broward County School Bond issue, the first to be passed since the "boom-bust" and the Great Depression.

As a pioneer vegetable farmer, producer-distributor dairyman, water control expert and advocate, Ham made



HAPPY DAY! Burning of the last Napoleon B. Broward Drainage District bonds in August 1946. District Board members I.T. Parker and Hamilton M. Forman burnt the indebtedness papers held by Mrs. Aires, District secretary.

valuable contributions to Broward County. Like most activists, he realized that the success of private economic considerations depended upon the political climate and policies of government. As a result, he became a consummate politician who devoted a major share of his time, energy, and money trying to improve this area and to secure responsible government at all levels. His major contributions in the political arena were on behalf of agriculture, water control, and education. By the very nature and extent of his activities, he became a controversial figure.

His "finale" was on behalf of education. He received a **firm commitment from United States Senator George Smathers** and full support from Senator Spessard Holland and Congressman Paul Rogers that the land which the Formans had made available to the Navy at the start of World War II would never be used for anything except educational purposes. This land is now the site of the South Florida Education Center. Senator Smathers made it plain that if the Broward County School Board would place a portable school on the site, that regardless of the time it would take

local and state interests to secure the construction money for such purposes, educational facilities would be constructed on the site. The senator, furthermore, insisted despite all of the federal laws, rules, and regulations to the contrary, and despite the General Service Administration's ardent desire to sell this property, that this agency would not be permitted to dispose of this property for any purpose except education. It would be reserved for the eventual construction thereon of the Nova experimental and other public school facilities, for the Broward Community College and Nova University facilities, and for the transfer of the Agriculture Station on Peters Road to the site. Unfortunately, Ham did not live to see the fruition of these commitments. He died September 16, 1961.

Even though Ham was seventy-five years of age, as Orville E. Revelle, former Editor of the **Fort Lauderdale News**, wrote: "His sudden death was a shock to all of us who knew him because of his vitality and untiring efforts to get things done. If he thought it was good for Broward County, it was good enough for Hamilton Forman. If he believed in something, he did more than lip service in its behalf. His contributions to civic projects since he moved here in 1910 are too numerous to mention. He not only watched Broward County grow into a metropolitan area but he aided that growth for almost half a century. For which he'll be long remembered by those who knew of his deeds."



Picture in 1955 of Blanche and Hamilton Forman during their retirement years.