

About this Guide
The waters of Charlotte County, Florida, include the large estuary Charlotte Harbor and the lower reaches of its two principal tributaries, the Peace River and the Myakka River. Greater Charlotte Harbor embraces all the tidal waters from Lemon Bay—largely in Sarasota County—south to Lee County's Estero Bay. This guide is designed to help boaters enjoy and appreciate the natural and cultural resources accessible from recreational vessels in the Charlotte Harbor vicinity. The maps and text display and describe features from the maritime history of the area, resources important to boaters and anglers, including marinas and boat ramps; the distribution of natural resources; and sources of information and assistance.

Do not rely on this guide for navigational purposes. Use the latest NOAA navigational charts.

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Content of this guide is also available on the Web: charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu/seagrant/

NAVIGATIONAL, HISTORICAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE OF

CHARLOTTE COUNTY WATERWAYS

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Sea Grant Florida
Florida Sea Grant
P.O. Box 110400
Gainesville, FL 32611-0400
(352) 392-5870

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Charlotte County Extension
25550 Harborview Rd., Unit 3
Fort Charlotte, FL 33980
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WHO WAS CHARLOTTE?

Juan Ponce de Leon discovered the harbor in 1513, and it bore his name for many years: Bahia Juan Ponce, though some maps identified the harbor as Carlos Bay, for the Calusa chief, Cacicou Carlos. Florida remained Spanish territory until 1763, when the Treaty of Paris ceded Florida to England.

King George III of England engaged Bernard Romans—born in Holland, trained as an engineer in England, and already part of a Florida survey team in 1764—to chart the coast of the Floridas (sic). In *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (1775) he wrote of a new bay that "...contains a large river, which empties itself into the new harbour, of which I am the first explorer, we have given it the name of Charlotte Harbour."

Romans did not explain why he called the new bay Charlotte, but most likely it was for King George's new wife. In 1761 the King married Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744-1818). Though the English court was frugal and pious, the Queen actively sponsored extensive charities, including hospitals, orphanages, the elderly, and music.

When Thomas Jefferys created his important 1775 map of Florida, he labeled the bay "Charlotte Harbour formerly Carlos Bay." Americans soon dropped the u from "harbour," but the name will long continue to honor a queen of England.



ABOVE: In front of Adams Fish Market, a jacked-up barge on the Punta Gorda waterfront, stands Mrs. Brice Gillikin, ca. 1930. Mrs. Gillikin holds a couple of fish, and signs on the market offer "bay shrimp" and "bay oysters." The barge may have been fronting the approach to the Nesbit Street bridge that crossed the Peace River, with the ice wharf visible in the background.

BELOW: In April, 1947, the Punta Gorda Fish Company crew displays company wares, probably on the fish dock at Maude Street (now Fisherman's Village). The company, established in 1897, was a mainstay of the local economy until the 1960s. L-R: Harry R. Dreggors, Andrew "Mullet" Owen, Tom Coleman, Harry R. "Pete" Goulding, Mansel "Bum" Graham, Sammy Holmes, William H. Monson, Floyd Chadwick, William E. Guthrie.



ICE HOUSES & FISH CABINS

Ice houses were collecting points where keepers would weigh catches from the fishing boats. *Run boats* brought ice from the Punta Gorda Ice Plant to preserve the catch, and transported fish to Punta Gorda for processing and shipping by rail to the nation's markets. The fish cabins provided accommodations for fishermen, allowing extended stays near the fishing grounds and providing places for gear and net maintenance.

Some of these structures remain today and are in the National Register of Historic Places, the United States government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects deemed worthy of preservation. The structures shown in these photographs served their original purposes primarily in the first half of the 20th century. Now privately owned and used for recreational purposes, they are maintained to preserve their original character in appearance and in construction materials and methods.

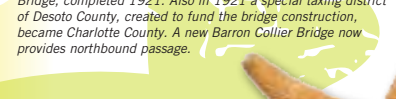


ABOVE TOP: Newly restored after Hurricane Charlie (2004), this ice house is in Bull Bay.

ABOVE BOTTOM: Brown pelicans and frigate birds perch near a fish cabin in Bull Bay.



LEFT: This postcard shows the Barron Collier Bridge, with the Hotel Charlotte Harbor, the new name for Hotel Punta Gorda, after its renovations and additions in the 1920s. Fire destroyed the hotel in 1959.



RIGHT: A residential district along Retta Esplanade had been laid out early in the city's history.



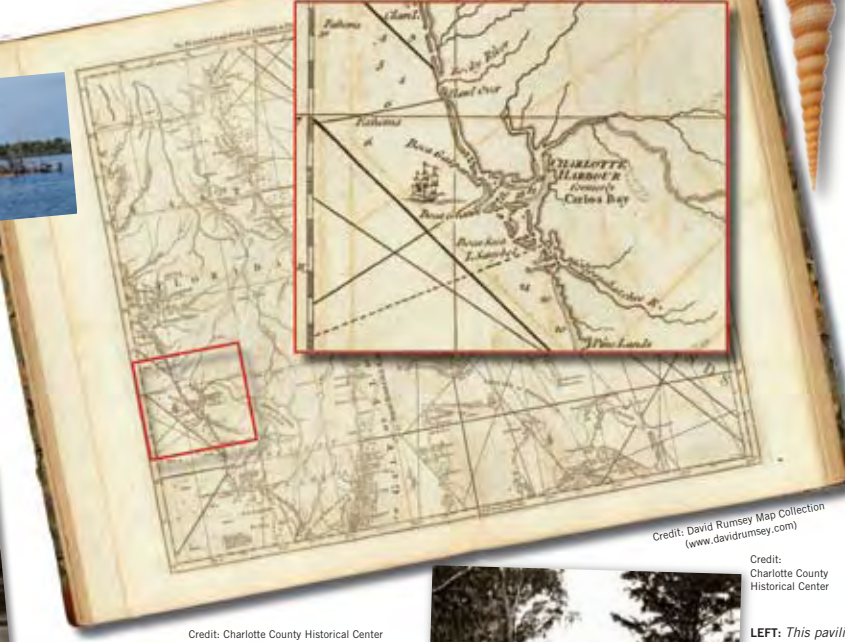
COVER TOP: Queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (portrait by Nathaniel Dance, c. 1769)

COVER MIDDLE: The auxiliary schooner Roamer, a fishing vessel, tied up at the Punta Gorda waterfront.



COVER BOTTOM: The O.A. Bell Boat Works, photographed ca. 1915, on the Punta Gorda waterfront near Retta Esplanade, was part of an important local industry.

Thomas Jefferys, British Geographer to the King, created this map in 1775 for his book, *The American Atlas; Or, A Geographical Description of the Whole Continent of America*. The inset is an enlarged view of the portion outlined in red.



THE YACHT SHEILA



ABOVE: At the Cleveland Marine Steam Ways, the yacht Sheila shines in the sun on the marine railway. The owner of the boatbuilding company, George Brown, an African American, came to Punta Gorda in the 1890s. He founded the company in 1916 and managed it until 1945. Later, the firm's machine shop became the community hall of the Palms and Pines Riverside Resort.



LEFT: This pavilion was on Englewood Beach ("Punta Gorda Beach") at or near today's Chadwick Cove Marina. The date of the postcard is uncertain.

THE Photos of Dr. Joseph John Kirkbride

In 1890 Philadelphia physician Joseph John Kirkbride (1842-1899) visited Charlotte Harbor. He was not a professional photographer, but an avid traveler who made Kodak snapshots wherever he journeyed. The Library of Congress maintains an extensive collection of his travel photos from Maine, Georgia, and South Florida, as well as some views from elsewhere in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Cuba.

RIGHT TOP PHOTOS: The Hotel Punta Gorda was near the location of today's Best Western Waterfront, at the foot of the U.S. #1 bridge over the Peace River. Dr. Kirkbride felt the hotel was worthy of at least two photographs. Was he a guest?

RIGHT BOTTOM PHOTOS: Dr. Kirkbride voyaged Charlotte Harbor on the steamer Alice Howard. The caption on another photograph suggests a stop at the docks of Saint James City, at the south end of Pine Island. The mail steamer Clara passed in front of Dr. Kirkbride's camera, evidently while he was aboard another vessel, perhaps the Alice Howard.



RESOURCES DIRECTORY

- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**
Marine fishing information and fishing regulations: (850) 488-6058
Report Fish Kills: (800) 636-0511 or <http://research.myfwc.com/fishkill/submit.asp>
License & species identification info and much more: www.myfwc.com/marine/
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection**
Clean Marina Program: www.dep.state.fl.us/cleanmarina/
Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves: (941) 575-5861
www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/sites/charlotte/
State Parks: (850) 245-2157
www.floridastateparks.org/
Report hazardous material incidents, such as spills: (800) 320-0519 (24 hr)
- Charlotte County Historical Center:** (941) 629-7278
22958 Bayshore Road, Charlotte Harbor, FL 33980
- Florida Sea Grant:** www.flseagrant.org (352) 392-5870
P.O. Box 110400, Gainesville, FL 32611-0400
Elizabeth Stauffer, Charlotte County Marine Agent: (941) 764-4346, Stauffer@ufl.edu
- Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program:** www.chnep.org or (239) 338-2556
- Monofilament Recovery & Recycling Program:** www.fishinglinerecycling.org
- U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary**
Charlotte Harbor Flotilla 98, 070-09-08: http://a0700908.uscgauxinfo/Flotilla_98_home.html
North Port Flotilla 92, 070-09-02: <http://a0700902.uscgauxinfo/>
Rotonda West Flotilla 89, 070-08-09: <http://a0700809.uscgauxinfo/>
Englewood Flotilla 87, 070-08-07: <http://CoastGuardEnglewood.com/>
- Punta Gorda Police Department:** (941) 639-4111; for emergency dial 911
- Charlotte County Sheriff's Department:** (941) 639-2101; for emergency dial 911
- Punta Gorda Fire Department:** (941) 575-5529; for emergency dial 911
- Charlotte County Fire/EMS:** (941) 833-5600; for emergency dial 911

NATURAL FEATURES OF THE AREA

MANGROVES of Charlotte Harbor

Mangroves are salt-tolerant shrubs and trees that form one of the most productive ecosystems in Charlotte Harbor. Mangrove forests are rich in life, providing food and a safe haven for coastal and marine creatures. The trees filter pollutants and play a major role in stabilizing shores and preventing erosion. Decaying mangrove leaves help form a rich soup that supports inhabitants such as crabs and small fish.

Three principal mangrove species—red, white, and black—inhabit salty, brackish, or fresh water, especially intertidal areas sheltered from strong wave action. Red mangroves are most common. Black mangrove with its arching prop roots often forms large, nearly impenetrable colonies that provide an excellent nesting area and refuge for birds and marine animals. The pencil-shaped aerial roots that protrude in large numbers above the soil around the tree and salty leaves that are whitish on the lower surface distinguish the black mangrove from its neighbors. White mangrove leaves provide the best clues for identification: leaves are the most broadly rounded of the mangroves and often have a shallow notch at the very tip.

Mangroves reproduce in an unusual way. Their seeds germinate while still on the mother plant, producing propagules that are dispersed by gravity and water. During dispersal, embryonic development continues in the floating propagule, and once a suitable habitat is encountered, the young plant is able to establish quickly.

BELOW LEFT: These red mangroves are on the shore in the community of Port Charlotte. **BELOW RIGHT:** Charlotte Harbor waves toss a red mangrove propagule.



Why is Charlotte Harbor's water so brown?

Greater Charlotte Harbor (including Lemon Bay to Estero Bay) is Florida's second largest open water estuary connected to the sea, its level dominated by tides, but diluted by freshwater runoff from the land. At 30 miles long and 7 miles wide, the harbor encompasses 270 square miles. Although a large estuary, the harbor is small in relation to its 4,468-square-mile drainage area. Approximately 17 square miles of land funnel water to every one square mile of estuary.

Charlotte Harbor's drainage area, over 8 percent of Florida's land surface, comprises several watersheds. (A watershed is land area that drains rainwater to a given river, river system, or other body of water.) Encompassing 2,350 square miles, the Peace River watershed is the largest draining into Charlotte Harbor. The river begins in Polk County at the Peace Creek drainage canal east of Winter Haven and at Saddle Creek, with headwaters east of Lake Land, above Lake Hancock. Saddle and Peace creeks converge at Bartow, and the 105-mile Peace River flows south to the harbor.

Another major watershed, drained by the Myakka River, encompasses approximately 600 square miles. This watershed begins in Manatee County at the confluence of seven tributaries

Charlotte Harbor's Aquatic & Shore Preserves

Florida's waters and coasts are ours to enjoy and ours to protect. Essential to Florida's distinctive character is the rich bounty of its coasts, which sustained the earliest inhabitants and attracts today's tourists and residents. Ironically, the pressures that result from increasing population endanger the very features that draw people to Florida.

In 1975, Florida passed the Aquatic Preserve Act to protect its living waters and to ensure that they are home forever to bird rookeries and fish nurseries, freshwater springs and salt marshes, and seagrass meadows and mangrove forests. Today, Florida has 41 aquatic preserves encompassing nearly 20 million acres, five of which are within the Greater Charlotte Harbor estuary complex: they are Lemon Bay, Cape Haze, Gasparilla Sound, Charlotte Harbor, Matlacha Pass, and Pine Island Sound.

The Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park Web site is also a rich source of information: www.floridastateparks.org/charlotteharbor/default.cfm

To learn more about Florida's aquatic preserves, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/programs/aquatic.htm

that form the headwaters known as Flatford Swamp. The Caloosahatchee and other rivers, streams, and wetlands also supply fresh water to the estuary.

The fresh water that flows into Charlotte Harbor is naturally high in organic matter produced by all vegetation, including oaks, pines, and mangroves. Organic matter creates a natural browning of the water. Just as pine needles that fall on a sidewalk stain the sidewalk brown, pine needles that fall into the river—as well as other organic matter that decomposes anywhere in the watershed and makes its way to the river—stain the river water brown. Because so much fresh water flows into Charlotte Harbor, the water is naturally darker and browner than adjacent estuaries, which have much smaller watersheds.

The amount of fresh water that flows into Charlotte Harbor changes throughout the year. Rainfall is heaviest during the summer and fall, creating much higher river flows and thus darker waters. In winter and spring the harbor water can become quite clear if rainfall is scarce.

In the late 1970s, the state began acquiring lands around Charlotte Harbor to create the Charlotte Harbor State Preserve as an upland "buffer" to protect the aquatic resources. The park was later renamed Charlotte Harbor State Buffer Preserve and then, in 2004, it became the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park. By preserving upland habitats surrounding the aquatic preserves, the park helps protect water quality, seagrasses, and other habitats that are important to fish and wildlife.

The preservation and protection of Charlotte Harbor is the goal of a continuing partnership between the five aquatic preserves and the state park. Together, the park and preserves provide residents and visitors opportunities and access for boating, fishing, and other recreational pursuits.

Please RECYCLE Your Fishing Line!

Monofilament fishing line can last for centuries in the water, out of the sun's ultra-violet rays. Each year, thousands of animals and many boat propellers become tangled in discarded fishing line. Shorebirds, sea turtles, and manatees can starve to death, lose limbs, or drown because of entanglement. Divers can also become tangled in line.

Please deposit used fishing line in the designated recycling containers at Charlotte County's ramps and fishing piers. You can find more information at www.fishinglinerecycling.org

This symbol indicates container locations on the photo map.



Archival copy: for current recommendations see <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> or your local extension office.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY WATERWAYS

HISTORIC SURVEY MONUMENTS: WITNESSES TO HISTORY

Hydrography from surveys made prior to 1900. You may see this on coastal charts of our area and wondered what went on prior to 1900. Starting in the early 1800s our nation's first scientific agency, the United States Coast Survey, surveyed this area. One of the first Charlotte Harbor nautical charts was Coast Chart 179, dated 1883. This beautiful chart and 20,000 other maps and charts are available at <http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/coastcharts/chart.html>

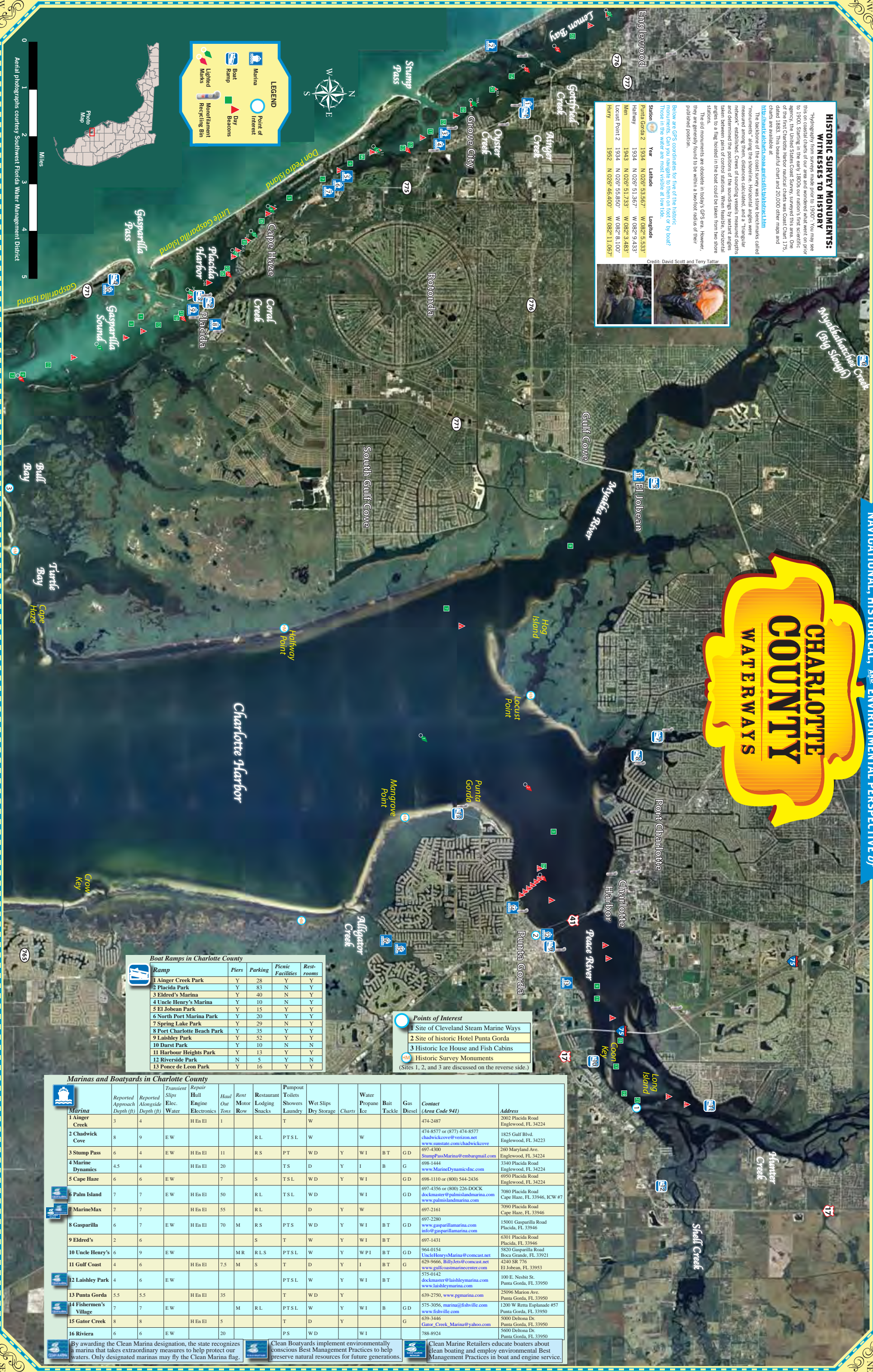
The backbone of the Coast Survey was stone benchmarks called "true points" which were placed on the shore. A "triangular network" established. Crosses of sounding vessels measured depths and determined the positions of the soundings by sextant angles taken between pairs of control stations. When feasible, horizontal angles to a flag hoisted in the boat could be taken from two shore stations.

The old monuments are obsolete in today's GPS era. However, they are generally found to be within a two-foot radius of their published position.

Below are GPS coordinates for five of the historic monuments. Can you navigate to them on foot or by boat? Those in the water are most visible at low tide.

Station	Year	Latitude	Longitude
Punta Gorda 2	1934	N 026° 53.567'	W 082° 5.533'
Halfway	1934	N 026° 51.367'	W 082° 9.433'
Men	1943	N 026° 51.733'	W 082° 3.483'
Locust Point 2	1934	N 026° 55.850'	W 082° 8.100'
Hurry	1952	N 026° 46.400'	W 082° 11.067'

Credit: David Scott and Terry Tattar



Boat Ramps in Charlotte County

Ramp	Piers	Parking	Picnic Facilities	Rest-rooms
1 Ainger Creek Park	Y	28	N	Y
2 Placida Park	Y	83	N	Y
3 Eldred's Marina	Y	40	N	Y
4 Uncle Henry's Marina	Y	10	N	Y
5 El Jobean Park	Y	15	Y	Y
6 North Port Marina Park	Y	20	Y	Y
7 Spring Lake Park	Y	29	N	Y
8 Port Charlotte Beach Park	Y	35	Y	Y
9 Laisley Park	Y	52	Y	Y
10 Darst Park	Y	10	N	N
11 Harbour Heights Park	Y	13	Y	Y
12 Riverside Park	N	5	Y	N
13 Ponce de Leon Park	Y	16	Y	Y

- ### Points of Interest
- 1 Site of Cleveland Steam Marine Ways
 - 2 Site of historic Hotel Punta Gorda
 - 3 Historic Ice House and Fish Cabins
 - 4 Historic Survey Monuments
- (Sites 1, 2, and 3 are discussed on the reverse side.)

Marinas and Boatyards in Charlotte County

Marina	Reported Approach Depth (ft)	Reported Alongside Depth (ft)	Transient Slips Elec. Water	Repair Hull Engine Electronics	Haul Out Tons	Rent Motor Row	Restaurant Lodging Snacks	Toilets Showers Laundry	Wet Slips Dry Storage	Charts	Water Propane Ice	Bait Tackle	Gas Diesel	Contact (Area Code 941)	Address
1 Ainger Creek	3	4		H En El	1			T	W					474-2487 474-8577 or (877) 474-8577 chadwickcove@verizon.net www.sunstate.com/chadwickcove	2002 Placida Road Englewood, FL 34224
2 Chadwick Cove	8	9	E W				R.L.	P T S L	W		W			697-4300 StumpPassMarina@embarqmail.com	1825 Gulf Blvd. Englewood, FL 34223
3 Stump Pass	6	4	E W	H En El	11		R.S.	P T	W D	Y	W I	B T	G D	698-1444 www.MarineDynamicsInc.com	260 Maryland Ave. Englewood, FL 34224
4 Marine Dynamics	4.5	4		H En El	20			T S	D	Y	I	B	G	698-1110 or (800) 544-2436 dockmaster@palmislandmarina.com www.palmislandmarina.com	3340 Placida Road Englewood, FL 34224
5 Cape Haze	6	6	E W		7		S	T.S.L.	W D	Y	W I		G D	697-4356 or (800) 226-DOCK dockmaster@palmislandmarina.com www.palmislandmarina.com	6950 Placida Road Englewood, FL 34224
6 Palm Island	7	7	E W	H En El	50		R.L.	T.S.L.	W D		W I		G D	697-2161	7080 Placida Road Cape Haze, FL 33946
7 MarineMax	7	7		H En El	55		R.L.		D	Y	W			697-2280 UncleHenry'sMarina@comcast.net 629-9666, BillyJen@comcast.net www.gulfcoastmarinacenter.com	7090 Placida Road Cape Haze, FL 33946
8 Gasparilla	6	7	E W	H En El	70	M	R.S.	P T S	W D	Y	W I	B T	G D	575-0142 dockmaster@laisyshaymarina.com www.laisyshaymarina.com	15001 Gasparilla Road Placida, FL 33946
9 Eldred's	2	6					S	T	W	Y	W I	B T	G D	964-0154 UncleHenry'sMarina@comcast.net 629-9666, BillyJen@comcast.net www.gulfcoastmarinacenter.com	6301 Placida Road Placida, FL 33946
10 Uncle Henry's	6	9	E W			M.R.	R.L.S.	P T S L	W	Y	W P I	B T	G D	575-0142 dockmaster@laisyshaymarina.com www.laisyshaymarina.com	5820 Gasparilla Road Boca Grande, FL 33921 4240 SR 776 El Jobean, FL 33953
11 Gulf Coast	4	6		H En El	7.5	M	S	T	D	Y	I	B T	G	639-3446 Gator_Creek_Marina@yahoo.com	100 E. Neshit St. Punta Gorda, FL 33950
12 Laisley Park	4	6	E W					P T S L	W	Y	W I	B T	G D	639-3446 Gator_Creek_Marina@yahoo.com	25096 Marion Ave. Punta Gorda, FL 33950
13 Punta Gorda	5.5	5.5		H En El	35			T	W D	Y				575-3056, marina@fishville.com www.fishville.com	1200 W Reta Esplanade #57 Punta Gorda, FL 33950
14 Fishermen's Village	7	7	E W			M	R.L.	P T S L	W	Y	W I	B	G D	788-8924	5000 Deltona Dr. Punta Gorda, FL 33950
15 Gator Creek	8	8		H En El	5			T	D	Y			G		5600 Deltona Dr. Punta Gorda, FL 33950
16 Riviera	6	6	E W		20			P S	W D		W I				

By awarding the Clean Marina designation, the state recognizes a marina that takes extraordinary measures to help protect our waters. Only designated marinas may fly the Clean Marina flag.

Clean Boatyards implement environmentally conscious Best Management Practices to help preserve natural resources for future generations.

Clean Marine Retailers educate boaters about clean boating and employ environmental Best Management Practices in boat and engine service.

0 1 2 3 4 5
Miles
Aerial photographs courtesy Southwest Florida Water Management District

LEGEND

- Point of Interest
- Marina
- Boat Ramp
- Day Beacons
- Lighted Marks
- Monument
- Recycling Bin

