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The Earliest Days of Florida Horticulture



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Horticulture graced Florida before Europeans. We see wisps of it: archeological remains of cucurbit and pepper seeds and “native” agaves and papayas probably brought from afar. But we do not know much about any of that, so an informed account must jump to the early 19th century and pineapples. We will start in the Florida Keys around the 1820s then come upward in time and latitude, visiting the 1860s Gulf Coast followed by Miami and a nod to the Orlando and Apopka area. The focus is on the most famous and best-documented early horticulturists. Admitting there is a little mission creep, as the northern border is near Orlando and the timeline ends roughly in the 1930s.

Pineapples and Henry Perrine (1797–1840)

The earliest significant South Florida documented horticulture was in and near the Keys where most of the earliest growers were farmers from the Bahamas. Horticulture flourished in the Caribbean for centuries before South Florida settlement, making an opportunistic drift to the Keys from neighboring islands no surprise. By the 1820s Bahama farmers grew sea island cotton and pineapples on Key Vaca. A leader there was Squire Temple Pent (1794–1868) who farmed around Miami in the 1820s and on Key Vaca by the 1830s. Henry Perrine doctored these farmers.

Florida plant enthusiasts know the Geiger tree, drawn beautifully by Audubon, arguably native to Florida or not, and named for John Geiger. Geiger’s home in Key West is now called the Audubon House. John’s brother Henry Geiger (d. 1872) was farming at Geiger Key adjacent to Key West by the early 1840s.

By then Key West was a growing city, and it expanded especially around the time of the Civil War creating demand for farming throughout the Keys. Pineapples became an important crop serving Key West and increasingly marketed northward by boat and later by train.

Some of the early growers were also wreckers or assorted scoundrels. Happy Jack Jonathan Thompson (1790–1858) had a plantation on Sugarloaf Key by 1849. His drinking buddies Jolly Whack, Paddy Whack, Red Jim, Lame Bill, and Old Gilbert

sound like Disney characters. Happy Jack failed to have a happy ending, killed by a booby trap of his own making.

The pineapple growing center migrated northward during the early 1900s, briefly to Central Florida, then to the East Coast, for example, the Yamato Colony in Palm Beach County, established 1903. In 1910 over a million crates per year came from the pineapple belt between about Fort Pierce and the Miami area. Decline set in around 1910 and ended by World War I. Toward the end, the industry suffered from pestilence, hurricanes, frost, soil depletion, and Cuban competition.

Henry Perrine entered this broad context in 1838. He grew up in New Jersey and became a medical doctor. Drawn to the frontier, Henry practiced in Ripley, Illinois for 5 years, known as “the lil’ hard riding doctor.” In 1821 he accidentally drank a bottle of arsenic he had mistaken for medicine and it left him ill and unable to withstand cold weather. Perrine headed southward to Natchez, Mississippi where malaria spurred him to national authority on quinine to counter the disease. Even in Mississippi Perrine suffered in the winter and he moved farther south to Mexico.

Perrine was appointed U.S. Consul in Campeche, Mexico in 1827 where an epidemic of cholera was killing reportedly thousands of people per day. Repeating his prior tendency to jump in as a “hard riding” doctor he became a hero attributed with saving lives and easing the devastation. He himself inevitably caught the disease, but survived.

During Perrine’s Mexico tenure, President John Quincy Adams directed United States consuls to ship plants back to the U.S. Perrine complied by sending shipments to Charles Howe on Indian Key. In 1838 the Perrine family moved there despite warnings of threateningly restive Native Americans.

The Perrine family lived on Indian Key, then a substantial community, from 1838 to 1840. Perrine established Florida’s first plant introduction garden there, of perhaps 70 species, among them aloe, avocado, betel vine, cinchona, key lime, logwood, mango, sapodilla, palms, and cacti. Perrine’s main interests at the time were agaves, especially the sisal agave for which he is

the botanical author, and which survives to this day growing at Indian Key and far beyond. Henry Perrine was killed in 1840 during a Seminole attack, but the rest of his family escaped harm by hiding in a turtle crawl beneath their house.

Reasoner Brothers—Royal Palm Nursery

By the late 1860s development swept the southern Florida Gulf Coast, fueled partly by Civil War veterans, including union soldiers with a taste for the south, and their former foes displaced by the Confederacy. By 1867 Sarasota had a tourist resort and a fruit packing house. Although railroads did not arrive until 1902, ships served the Gulf Coast. Harper's Magazine published multiple articles promoting Florida during the 1870s. Fort Myers and the Sarasota areas prospered, expanded, and supported early plant nurseries.

This wave brought the Reasoner Brothers to Oneco, which is now a part of Bradenton. They founded the earliest continuously operated plant nursery in Florida, dating back to 1881. Almost as old, the Glen Saint Mary Nursery in North Florida sprouted in 1882.

Coming from a farming background in Princeton, Illinois, first to arrive was Pliny Reasoner (1863–1888) at age 17. He single-handedly carved out a plant nursery at Oneco. In 1885 his younger brother Egbert (ca. 1870–1926) joined in, and the rest of the family followed soon.

Freezes in the winter of 1884–1885 hobbled the young nursery, but the setback taught the priceless lesson that a nursery surviving a freeze is well positioned afterward. Consequently they adopted extreme efforts in frost protection including lath houses, sheds with retractable tops, glass-houses, and a system for protecting trees in the groves. The next severe freeze a decade later gave their nursery a strong competitive advantage.

Pliny must have been a genius. Not only did he initiate a business empire as a kid, by his early twenties he was prominent. In 1887 he published the first U.S. Department of Agriculture Division of Pomology "brochure," which was a full-size book entitled "Report on the Condition of Tropical and Semi-Tropical Fruits in the United States." The brochure is a rich color-illustrated encyclopedia of fruits suited to South Florida.

Along with another famous early horticulturist, Charles Torrey Simpson, Pliny served on a sheriff's posse, and brought royal palms into cultivation.

During his short years in Florida, Pliny wandered to Cuba. The trip did not end well, and foreshadowed Pliny's premature death. Yellow fever was a menace in those days. Travelers were not permitted a round trip to Cuba without proof of immunity acquired by prior infection. Pliny traveled despite having neither proof nor immunity, and was properly barred from returning to the mainland. Stowing away on a ship, he slipped home illegally. Not long thereafter, he was in Cincinnati preparing a plant exhibition when yellow fever hit Bradenton. Pliny returned home to assist with the crisis only to catch yellow fever fatally at the age of 25.

Pliny's brother Egbert took the reins at the business, by then called the Royal Palm Nursery, and built the nursery magnificently despite tragedy within his own family.

The Royal Palm Nursery offered just about everything that grows, an astounding inventory. They were important early suppliers of budded citrus, and through correspondence developed a catalog of fruits, palms, and ornamentals, shipping plants all over the country and beyond. Their handsome annual catalogs

are books. They also offered cut flowers and eventually landscape design services.

Among countless achievements, one will serve as an interesting example. The pink grapefruit appeared in 1906 as a sport in the large Atwood Groves. An employee there thought it was pathological and showed it to Egbert Reasoner. Egbert realized that the pink sport might have value and budded it, amassing perhaps thousands of trees. They did not sell in Florida, even after an appeal to the Florida State Horticultural Society. The grapefruits eventually found a future when a Texan carted them off to launch the Rio Grande grapefruit industry.

Egbert and his wife Sarah raised three children. Their daughter Julia late in life wrote an account of the nursery. Their son Pliny, Jr. died at age 15 in a hunting accident. Their son Norman carried the torch into the next generation, seeing the nursery through bankruptcy in the Depression and rebirth as Reasoner's Tropical Nursery after World War II. The family home adjacent to the nursery, a beautiful and historic Victorian structure, was demolished in 2015.

Charles Torrey Simpson (1846–1932)

Charles Torrey Simpson arguably had the most diversified life of the early Florida horticulturists. His existence was complex, as were his intellect and character. He was intelligent, tough, flexible, and emotionally labile. He seems to have been a bit of a ladies' man with some associated baggage. He had an enormous skill set ranging from carpentry to scientific study, and although Simpson did not like public speaking, he was apparently good at it. With time he became an accomplished writer and conservationist, a voice for preservation of the Everglades.

Simpson grew up in Illinois close to the Reasoner family farm. The families perhaps knew each other in Illinois, which would make it no coincidence when Simpson turned up in Bradenton on the heels of Pliny Reasoner. The two spent four years as friends, honored later when Charles named his son Pliny.

Simpson served in the Union Army during the Civil War, and marched with Sherman's Army to the sea, and late in life he became active in veterans activities. Upon returning to Illinois from the Civil War, Simpson had what he called a "muss" with a young lady, and perhaps as an outcome, enlisted in the Navy for three more years. During that time he saw the world, built what became his lifelong interest in mollusks, and acquired nautical skills.

In 1882, after his naval service, Simpson moved to Bradenton and spent four years there working primarily as a carpenter, going by the name of Charlie Carpenter. In the company of Pliny Reasoner, these were eventful times. Simpson had access to a sailboat named The Permit, allowing Simpson and Pliny to explore the Gulf Coast, with his wife Cornelia Simpson accompanying them on one trip while pregnant and miserable with probably combined morning sickness and seasickness. From near the Cape Sable region they brought royal palms into cultivation, prompting a name change from Reasoner Brothers Nursery to the Royal Palm Nursery.

In or near 1884 a gang of hoodlums murdered the Sarasota postmaster, Charles Abbe, prompting the sheriff to gather a posse. Pliny Reasoner and Simpson joined the posse with consequences, as there were tensions between native Floridians and Yankee carpetbaggers. The murderous band represented the natives, whereas the posse smacked of Yankee. Apparently in retribu-

tion for the posse participation, the Reasoner nurseries suffered vandalism, and Simpson stumbled into deeper woes.

Adding to antipathy from the posse ride, Simpson antagonized the local community by having an extramarital affair with his pregnant wife's caretaker. Violating the 7th Commandment did not play well in 1880s South Florida. Conceivably contributing further to the trouble, Simpson listed himself as "infidel" on a voter registration. Even Mrs. Reasoner stood against him, not approving of Pliny's friendship with such a rascal. The daughter resulting from Cornelia Simpson's pregnancy died in infancy.

As a result of this perfect storm Simpson and Cornelia skipped town, buying a farm in Nebraska. Charles did not take well to the Nebraska climate, but the area allowed him to study freshwater mussels. He must have done that outstandingly in order to receive an invitation to work on mollusks at the Smithsonian Institution.

So in 1890 they uprooted again, to Washington, DC for a dozen not-entirely-happy years. Simpson suffered professional frustrations and interpersonal tensions, although he made friends with John Brooks Henderson, Jr. who likewise studied mollusks. Henderson's father was Missouri Senator John Brooks Henderson, Sr., author of the 13th amendment abolishing slavery. The younger Henderson remained a lifelong friend of Simpson's.

During the years in Washington, son Pliny Simpson entered the world. Cornelia left the world, and Charles remarried in 1902 to Flora Roper Simpson, the widow of a former colleague.

In 1903 the newlyweds retired to Lemon City, now part of Miami. Simpson spent almost 30 more years as a voice for conservation, as a writer, as the proprietor of a botanical garden, as an icon to garden clubs, and as a student of land snails.

Simpson's Biscayne Bay waterfront home, called the Sentinels, adjoined his garden, which attracted hordes of visitors, tourists, VIPs, and garden club members. Simpson was a gracious host but behind the scenes the trespassers factored in to what might be described as repeated nervous breakdowns.

While in Miami Simpson published his most important treatise on mollusks along with new works, including four books. The one most relevant to horticulture was his 1916 "Ornamental Gardening in Florida." The others featured exploring, nature, conservation, and wildlife. Bryant Walker, a Detroit attorney and student of mollusks, helped publish Simpson's long dormant and controversial *magnum opus* on freshwater mussels.

Soar Brothers Nursery

A few years before Simpson's Miami debut, the Soar Brothers, John, Victor and Francis, followed the railroad to Miami and founded the Soar Brothers Nursery there in 1897. Victor worked for Henry Flagler, while the other two ran the nursery, which split into two nurseries in later years. The three brothers and Simpson took up exploring for plants around the southern Everglades and Miami area, joined at times by botanist John Kunkel Small (1869-1938).

Plant exploring takes resources, and in South Florida that includes boats. Access to a boat, the Barbee (Fig. 1), and extra hands, including a cook, came from Charles Deering, co-heir to International Harvester Company. Deering on repeated occasions was a financial patron of botany and horticulture; his first estate in Miami was a botanical garden in its own right.

The Soar Brothers Nursery made two especially prominent introductions to horticulture: the paurotis palm and the Boston fern. According to legend, the fern went from the brothers to



Fig. 1. The Barbee, a boat used for plant exploration. Left to right: John Soar (presumably), Leban Bethel and Paul Matthaus. Near Pumpkin Key, Florida, in 1916. Photo by J.K. Small, courtesy of the State Archives of Florida.

Boston where it acquired its name, and became the main indoor foliage plant of the era.

The Ustlers and the Boston Fern

Growing tropical ferns in heated northern greenhouses cut profits. In 1912 a smart Ohio greenhouse clerk had the idea of producing the fern cheaply in its natural environment in Florida. Harry Ustler came from Springfield, Ohio to Orlando and initially worked as a hotel waiter. A hotel guest helped the young entrepreneur launch a fern business in an old pineapple facility. Later, Ustler and his brothers started the Ustler Brothers Nursery in Apopka as the first large foliage operation there. Soon the leatherleaf fern joined in, those two species dominating the Apopka foliage industry until approximately 1930, to which we will return shortly with Robert D. Mitchell.

Another soul important in Simpson's life was David Fairchild, probably the most active exotic plant introducer of all time, and namesake of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Coral Gables. At that time Fairchild was in charge of a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plant introduction garden in Miami. Fairchild took Simpson under his wing to promote plant introductions, and Simpson earned the Frank Meyer Medal for plant introduction in 1923. They don't give medals anymore for introducing exotic species. In fact, soon thereafter the USDA restricted this activity.

Another prominent horticulturist inhabited the Miami area during essentially the same years as Simpson. William J. Krome was Flagler's chief construction engineer, working to extend the railroad from Miami to Key West. Krome lived in Homestead, the knuckle between Miami and the Keys.

William J. Krome (1876–1929)

Krome became the founding father of the Homestead fruit industry, especially avocados. Characterization of their unique pollination system happened on his property. The Krome family donated the land which became the core of the University of Florida's Tropical Research and Education Center at Homestead. The Krome family is commemorated to this day by the Florida State Horticultural Society's Krome Memorial Institute.

Although Krome and Simpson were both horticultural luminaries at essentially the same place and time I do not know what their relationship was. There seems to have been one divergence of views outside of horticulture. One of Simpson's interests was land snails. With Krome in charge of railroad construction, Simpson objected to the habitat damage from working on the railroad in the Keys.

Charles Torrey Simpson was an early advocate for the Everglades. A step along that path was his love of what was then called Paradise Key, which he explored with the Soars and John Kunkel Small in 1903. Carrying a dead rattlesnake out of Paradise Key, John Soar became ill, possibly due to the rotting rattler. With advocacy and assistance, Paradise Key became Royal Palm State Park, thanks in part to Mrs. Henry Flagler's land gift to help it happen. Royal Palm State Park was later absorbed into the Everglades National Park in the late 1940s.

Into the middle and late 1920s, Simpson had increasing troubles beyond mere advancing age. He had suffered malaria all his life. He had surgery for cataracts, no doubt traumatic in that era. The 1926 hurricane devastated his garden. And then came a robbery. One bright spot glimmered, however: Simpson received the first honorary doctorate degree from the (then) new University of Miami in 1927, having been nominated for this honor by his good friend, David Fairchild. Simpson continued living, writing, and promoting conservation until he died in 1932.

The Temple Orange, World Series, and Mysterious Sea Captains

In 1910, near Oviedo, John Hakes discovered a great new orange on just one tree grafted onto grapefruit rootstock. He knew he had something good, and so did William Chase Temple.

William Chase Temple (1862–1917) was—among many corporate and industrial involvements—a Pittsburgh steel executive turned citrus grower and President of the Florida Citrus Exchange. Temple owned the Pittsburgh Nationals baseball team and is credited with launching the World Series, in 1895, setting the rules and donating the trophy of the era, the Temple Cup, presently in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Temple was also the first lifetime member of the AAA, and was first owner of a professional football team. His son-in-law Del Mason played pitcher for Rollins College then went to the major leagues. Temple became Mayor of Winter Park. He was a serious bigshot who liked baseball, oranges, and motoring. Hakes showed Temple the delicious new orange, which is technically a tangelo. Temple directed Hakes to D.C. Gillett of Buckeye Nursery, Tampa, a major grower at that time.

Gillett patented the cultivar, making a deal with Hakes. Hakes did not want his name on the orange, so Hakes named it for Temple. Gillett introduced the tree for sale 1917, and by the 1970s there existed over 2 million Temple Orange trees, all propagated by budding.

The tree in the Hakes grove may have its origins in Jamaica, where tangelos were common. Possibly somebody there sent budwood to friends in Oviedo around 1896 before Hakes bought the land.

A second tree surfaced producing the same fruit in Winter Park. The owner said Hakes gave him permission to take budwood, although Hakes denied it and built a fence to thwart further snitching. And then two more similar trees turned up near Oviedo. According to local lore, a retired sea captain might have brought the original budwood from Jamaica, with Hakes-Temple-Gillett being the first to recognize its market significance. The other similar trees were dubbed "Jamaica Oranges."

Henry Nehrling (1853–1929)

Henry Nehrling, like some of the other early growers, achieved prominence before turning to horticulture later in life. Nehrling was an ornithologist who wrote about birds in both the German

and English languages, and whose most famous ornithological book was *Die Nordamerikanische Vogelwelt* (World of North American Birds), published in 1891, and later in the English language as *Our Native Birds of Song and Beauty*. It is now a prized rare book.

A German American, he was born in Wisconsin before his family moved to Illinois. In 1874 he married his wife Sophie and began teaching in a series of Lutheran schools, including in Texas (1878–1882) and in Missouri (until 1884). Nehrling became a customs inspector in Milwaukee, then Curator of the Milwaukee Public Museum until 1901.

In 1885 Nehrling purchased sight unseen 40 acres in Gotha, Florida, near Orlando. Gotha was a German community, and thus a logical place for him to settle. He probably knew others there, and moved his family to Gotha in 1902 at around the time Charles Torrey Simpson moved to Miami. The Gotha property, Palm Cottage Gardens, was the site of his best horticultural efforts, and after a long period of neglect, has been restored in recent years.

Still in Milwaukee in 1893, Nehrling visited the Chicago Columbian Exposition and discovered caladiums, which had been brought to Chicago for display from their native Brazil.

Nehrling and his family lived approximately 15 years at Gotha, where he took up horticulture with great enthusiasm. Through correspondence he imported all manner of plant species from around the world, coming to the attention of the king of plant importation, David Fairchild. Nehrling received the Frank Meyer Medal for plant introduction in 1929, no doubt with Fairchild's recommendation. Nehrling knew Thomas Edison, who wintered in Fort Myers, and he helped Edison grow rubber-bearing plants.

Nehrling's main claim to fame is the Florida caladium industry. He bred and grew them in massive quantities, perhaps having as many as a quarter of a million plants, representing a couple thousand variants. The industry went forth and flourished around Lake Placid and Sebring, where one of the early large growers was David Mitchell (1907–1954). Mitchell legendarily dynamited a neighbor's dam for sequestering too much irrigation water, and went on to become Mayor of Sebring.

Nehrling was a friend of Fort Myers garden enthusiast James E. Hendry (1878–1955), grandson of Francis Hendry (1845–1917), a founding father of Fort Myers, and reputedly the gardener who introduced bougainvilleas there. James's daughter-in-law Helen Hendry (b. 1931) was a prominent landscape architect until recently. James Hendry owned the Everglades Nursery in Fort Myers, where Nehrling's stepson Robert D. Mitchell was manager in 1929.

An odd utopian community called the Koreshan Unity, headed by visionary Cyrus Teed, was located in those years at Estero, near Fort Myers. Their village remains preserved to this day as a state park. Henry was a friend of the Koreshans, exhibiting plants and speaking there. The Koreshans published and archived much of Nehrling's horticultural writing.

There were six Nehrling children. Both daughters died young, and Nehrling's first wife, Sophie, also had an untimely death. Nehrling later remarried, to Betty Mitchell. The sons mostly went on to careers in botany and horticulture. Arno Nehrling was a horticulture professor at Cornell and prolific author. Walter Nehrling taught botany at the Illinois State Normal School. Werner Nehrling worked for the Orlando parks system and grew oranges. Bert Nehrling was the only son to step off the garden path. Nehrling's stepson Robert D. Mitchell (1899–1989) went on to be a major Florida grower in his own right.

In 1917, a record freeze decimated Florida horticulture and Nehrling was nearly ruined at age 67. But he moved his center of operations southward to Naples where troubles caught up with him. Naples was not as frost free as he had hoped. Nor did Naples escape the 1926 hurricane. His wife Betty stayed behind in Gotha. And worst of all perhaps, Nehrling defaulted on his Naples mortgage and had to vacate. The property was looted, including his papers, eventually becoming the site of Caribbean Gardens. By then in his 70s, Nehrling tried to start once again at Sebring in about 1927 but, with the details murky and perhaps open to question, his caladiums wound up at the Sebring Ornamental Nursery unpaid. He died not long thereafter, shortly before the death of his contemporary Charles Torrey Simpson.

Robert Mitchell, Nehrling's stepson, went to study horticulture in St. Louis at the Missouri Botanical Garden, under George Pring, himself known for breeding waterlilies. Upon completing studies and a stint of work in St. Louis, Mitchell returned in 1929 to Florida to manage James Hendry's Everglades Nursery. In 1930 he sallied forth to Orlando to found the Shore Acres Nursery. This was early in The Great Depression when the fern industry was in depression, having had a good run since the Ustlers. The foliage industry needed a shot in the arm, and Mitchell provided it.

In St. Louis he became familiar with heartleaf philodendron, introduced from South America by botanist Jesse Greenman and cultivated around St. Louis and a little in Florida. Mitchell commercialized the vine into the next big foliage crop with the help of his friend Glenn Turner who ran the National School of Floral Design and who promoted the plant broadly. Later and likewise through Missouri Botanical Garden connections, Mitchell introduced aglaonemas, and then *Epipremnum*, (which is now a Category II invasive exotic).

After Nehrling's death, the Gotha property came under the ownership of Julian Nally (1903–77), a radio announcer and son of former RCA President Edward Nally. Julian commercialized Nehrling's old gloriosa lily line, feeding a corsage fad during the World War II era. Viral disease ended that around 1950, and Nally switched to growing bromeliads.

Theodore Mead (1852–1936)

Theodore Mead came from a well-to-do New York family. His youth was privileged, equipped and traveled. He took advantage of his advantages. Theodore studied civil engineering and some law at Cornell University but apparently never worked at either profession. I do not think he ever needed to work, as he spent his life enjoying a series of interests in nature and horticulture. His early passion was butterflies, where he achieved success highlighted by an 1871 trip of 12,000 miles to the western U.S., largely Colorado. Theodore discovered several new species as well as the famous Florissant Fossil Beds. Mead's wife Edith was the daughter of entomologist William Edwards.

In 1882 the Meads came to Florida to grow oranges, first near Eustis, and later at Lake Charm by Oviedo near Winter Park. Mead taught some, perhaps informally, at Rollins College in Winter Park, where the Mead Botanical Garden established in 1940 commemorates his accomplishments.

Mead invested in real estate, launching the upscale Mead Manor development ahead of its time, and was a Boy Scout leader. He owned one of the first cars in the area, reputedly needing sandbags to protect his garage. As with most of our other early horticulturists, the Mead family suffered tragedy, losing a young daughter in 1892, and Mead's brother died by gunshot.



Fig. 2. Theodore Mead with amaryllis, Oviedo, Florida. Photo used with permission, Department of College Archives and Special Collections, Olin Library, Rollins College, Winter Park, FL.

The freeze of 1894 and 1895 drove Mead out of citrus and into botanical-horticultural interests less susceptible to frost. He grew palms, and sold plants to the Reasoner Brothers Nursery.

Mead became an innovator in orchid breeding. His orchid propagation chamber was remarkable, 30 feet long and partly filled with moist sphagnum. On the sphagnum rested cheesecloth pillows stuffed with ground oak leaves, fungal inoculum taken from other orchids, and moss. Nurturing orchid seedlings on the pillows required warm, moist, filtered, pressurized air. Leading into the chamber was a unit holding pots of moss to boost and control the humidity. Preceding the moss unit was an antechamber containing a vented heating lamp. In with the lamp was a fan spinning at 1000 rpm. This drew power from a paddlewheel in a neighbor's artesian spring. It all got stolen, initiating Mead into the club of crime victimhood along with Simpson and Nehrling.

Mead's plant breeding embraced gladiolus, crinum, and most famously, amaryllis, leaving the world with the "Mead Type Amaryllis" (Fig. 2). Grower B. M. Sangster commercialized the Mead Amaryllis, breeding-in Dutch lineages and growing amaryllis commercially on 70 acres in Apopka until the 1950s.

Conclusions

What patterns emerge from a selective peek at a few standout people in the galaxy of our Florida horticultural predecessors? Like all rock stars, there were peccadillos, but most of today's cluster was too busy for much funny business. I would be dismayed if Theodore Mead ever did anything bad. He was the Boy Scout of the group, literally. The worst known thing he did to his wife was to flip the car with her in it.

Their collective misdemeanor, from a modern standpoint, is a puzzling disregard for what we now deplore as invasive exotics. Pleading ignorance is not a full defense: Fairchild, Mead, Nehrling, and Simpson had credentials as biologists before their march into horticulture. Perhaps they should have known better. Perhaps the answer lies in the simple fact that back then it was all about Progress with a capital P. This was the steel era of planes, trains, and automobiles. The local goal of those industrious days

was Florida's booming development, not fuzzy environmental concerns a century in the future. Here's how Simpson saw it, "I can look forward with full confidence to a time in the near future when a large area within the territory covered by this work will be girdled with the finest of roads bordered with beautiful tropical and semi-tropical shade trees; I can see the land filled with happy homes shaded and embowered with the glorious vegetation of the equatorial regions, a land of peace and contentment, a land of hope, of rest for the weary, a land of perennial verdure, and fadeless beauty." (Ornamental Gardening in Florida, p. xiii) No mention of strip malls, Brazilian-pepper, or Interstate highways.

Like all celebrities, those in horticulture mixed it up with even bigger VIPs. There is no room here to tie everybody together; suffice it to say that our group was interlaced with Alexander Graham Bell, Glenn Curtiss, Charles Deering, Thomas Edison, Henry Flagler, Henry Ford, Orville Wright, and sundry Senators and CEOs. Not a bunch to discourage full steam ahead. On the gentle side of the coin, perhaps we can credit the Soar Brothers and Pliny Reasoner for initiating native species into horticulture.

Times were tougher then. No modern horticultural resume lists posse service chasing homicidal outlaws. Few of us have carried rattlesnakes out of the woods over a shoulder. Nearly every family covered in this review has suffered tragedies, especially lost children.

Perhaps the harshness of that era inspired Charles Torrey Simpson to dream eloquently about that embowered future. The future arrived and we are it, for now. Florida still has harshness to fight with perennial verdure. Isn't that what horticulture is all about? We continue the good green quest on a foundation built by superheroes who survived arsenic, rendered foliage into a regional economy, and powered micropropagation with spring water. Pliny Reasoner accomplished more before the age of 25 than most of us could, given a hundred years. Charles Torrey Simpson did as much in his "golden years."

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- Theodore Mead as Entomologist <<http://images.peabody.yale.edu/lepsoc/jls/2010s/2015/2015-69-1-001.pdf>>.
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