A photograph of an alligator in a swampy environment. The alligator is dark, with its head and front portion visible, resting near several large, bright green lily pads. The background is a dark, murky water. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image, containing the title and author information.

The Early History of the St. Johns River

By: Ed Winn

10 JEANNE BELL

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Ed Winn ROG-07

The River Of Many Names

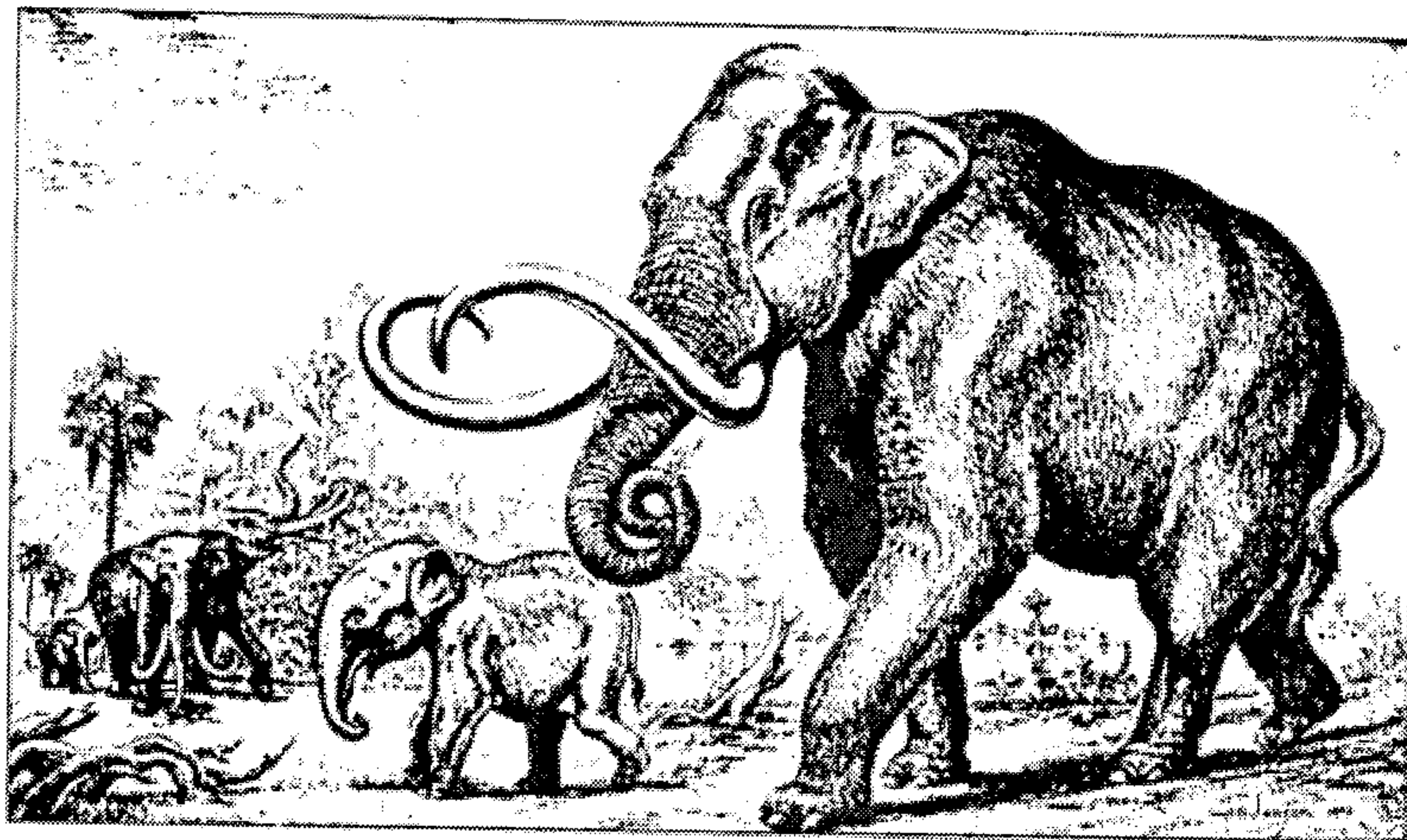
Years ago someone wrote about the St. Johns River, "To the South lies the first great river in North America to be discovered by white men. Called by the Indians Illaka, which meant river of lakes, by the French Rivere de Mai, for May Day in 1563, by the Spanish San Mateo and San Juan, and by the English St. Johns. Holding from the beginning a prominent place in Europe's American adventure, it has a recorded history of over four hundred years. Claimed under the sovereignty of more nations than any other great river in the world, it has seen unfurled the flags of Spain, France, England, the Republic of Florida, the Southern Confederacy, and the United States."

The beginning of the St. Johns River is astounding. Now imagine if you will that you are standing on Hwy. 60 just south of Lake Blue Cypress – a distance of about 15 miles west of Vero Beach. Now just imagine the road standing before you is 30 feet above sea level. This road is perfectly smooth, and runs 310 miles north to Jacksonville. Now suppose you have a small ball in your hand that is perfectly round and perfectly smooth, and you give it a good roll to the north. That ball, only 30 feet above sea level, would continue on until it rolls into the Atlantic Ocean at Jacksonville. Incidentally, by the time the river has run 65 miles north, it is only 5 feet above sea level. Now just imagine you travel 40 miles further west to the Kissimmee River flowing south into Lake Okeechobee. Imagine there is a road to the south, this time 41 feet above sea level, and again you roll a ball – less hard this time. The ball would then travel south about 80 miles to Lake Okeechobee at a slightly higher speed.

Remember, the St. Johns River flows north as does the Nile. Very few rivers of the world flow north. The St. Johns River is an old river. Deposits of *Anastasia coquina* date its beginning at 125,000 years ago. Relict beach ridges constructed during the past sea level heights stands are separated by swales previously occupied by shallow lagoons. When

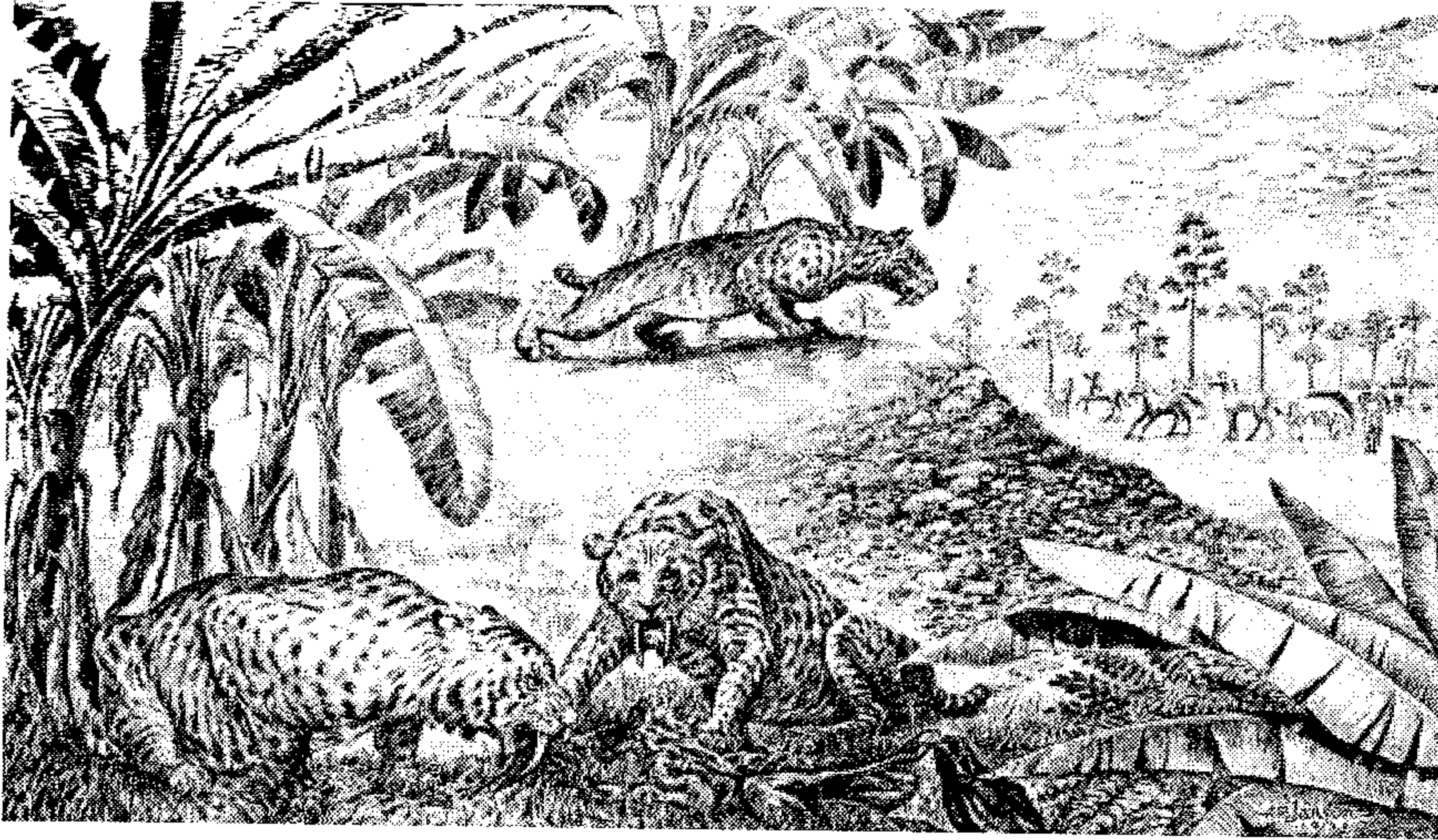
the sea level dropped, these lagoons became valleys, and streams eroded the sands and clays creating this coast-parallel river system, and so began the St. Johns River – a most complicated and unique river. It is my belief after studying several old maps that hundreds of years ago the St. Johns River began in a slough about 70 miles north of Lake Okeechobee. Originally the river must have been about 380 miles long, but in past years man has diverted much of its early water into the Indian River (St. Lucie canal, etc.). The river now has a new beginning from a marshy area about 6 miles south of Hwy. 60 and runs through a culvert under Hwy. 60 near the Florida Turnpike. The first major water supply into the river comes from the “M” canal draining out of Lake Blue Cypress into a large marshy area about 30 miles long near Fellsmere. The river begins at the north end of the marsh with three small channels which combine into one small river and flows into Lake Helen Blazes which is the first lake on the river. The start of the St. Johns River area is described as a level broad treeless area starting in south Brevard county and ending at Lake Harney. This drainage area is huge, some 2,000 square miles. This small river now continues to grow in size, and by the time it reaches Palatka, it is sometimes wider than 2 miles and remains a large wide river until it exits at Jacksonville into the Atlantic Ocean. The St. Johns River is the largest river in Florida.

In the years before man cut so many drainage ditches and canals into the river, it was much clearer than it is now. The Indians and early settlers used the river for drinking water. The river is now very dark, because of tannic acid loosened from the soil exposed to run-off water. North of Lake Monroe a series of large natural springs flow into the river – beginning with Blue Springs. Before the river reaches Jacksonville many natural springs feed the river. Many more are under the dark water’s surface and as yet unknown. The river north of Big Lake George becomes much larger and deeper. The now larger flow of water washes out large amounts of sand and silt deepening and widening the river until it’s now quite deeper and several miles wide, so important to the steamboats of the 1800s. Now that we have some idea of the river, let’s look at its early history. (Remember, this goes back 125,000 years.)



PLEISTOCENE MAMMOTH

Our archaeologists and paleontologists through years of study offer our first glimpse at the river's first animals. It's hard to know where to begin, but the great sloth would make a wonderful start. This magnificent animal stood up 16 feet high. It had claws half as long as a man's arm. Its underside was covered with a thick hide with bits of bone embedded for protection – a kind of armor – which was badly needed, because of the giant Saber-toothed Tigers which prowled the river's length. These great fierce cats feasted on other large animals too, and they stood 4 feet high at the shoulders and were 9 feet long. They had 6 inch fangs that protruded from the front of their jaws. Along the riverbank ran large armadillos – called Glyptodonts. These animals stood 5 feet high and reached a length of 9 feet. Prehistoric alligators grew to be 20 feet in length. There was a variety of small Asian horses, giant anteaters, giant beavers, flat tailed muskrats, large spectacled bears, great racoons, wolves, jaguarundi (cat). Along the drier parts of the river, the giant tortoises slowly lumbered about. These giant tortoises were equal in size to those of the present-day Tortoises found in the Galapagos Islands. There were pumas, peccaries, camels, huge bison and many more strange animals, not the least of which were the elephant-like mastodons and mammoths.

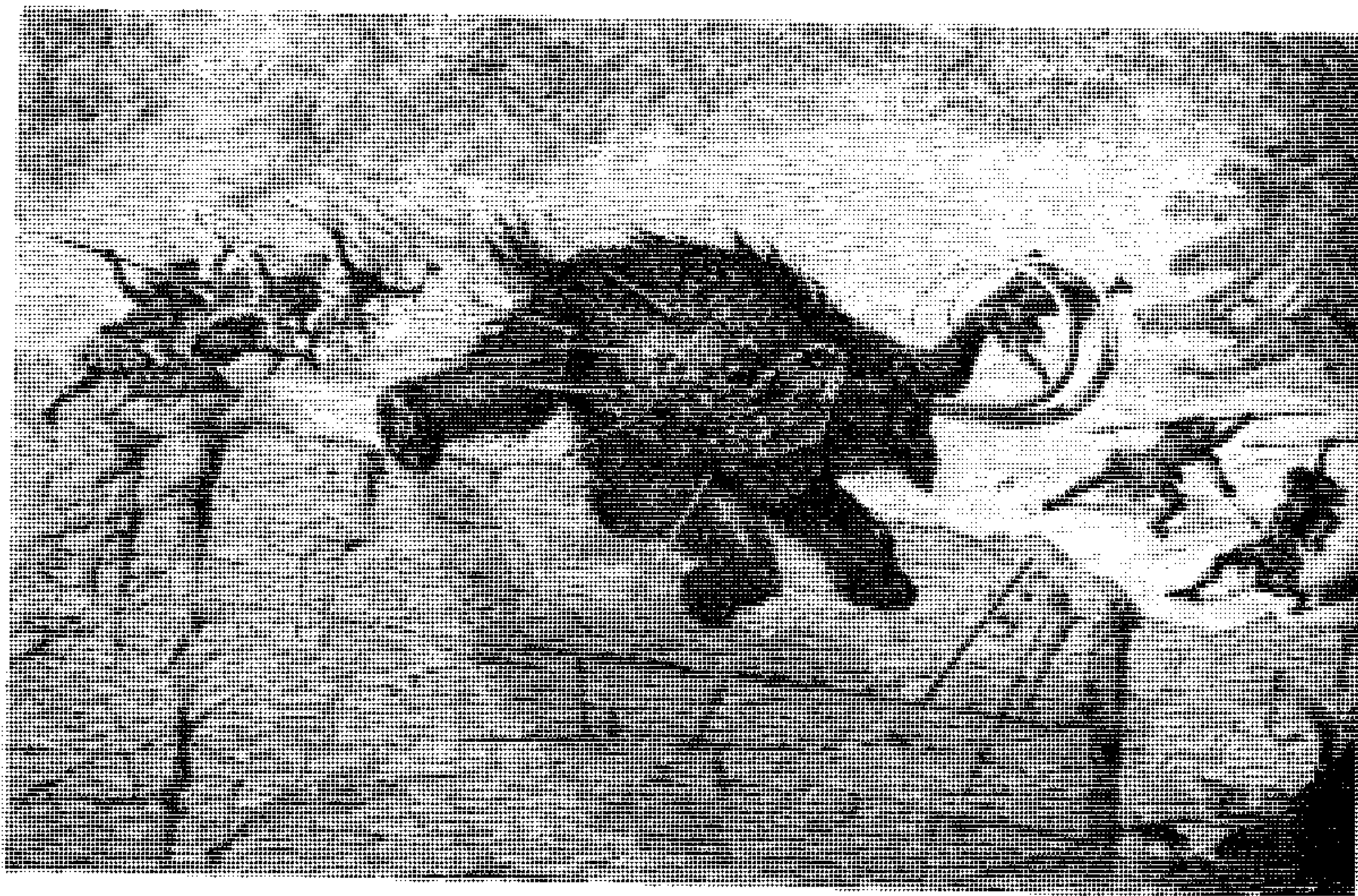


Florida saber-tooth tiger and Pleistocene horses

The remains of the saber-tooth tiger (*Smilodon floridanus*), have turned up in several localities on both coasts of central Florida and the best known remains are from a sinkhole cave in Citrus County, known and recorded as Saber-Tooth Cave.

These huge animals grew to be 12 feet high and weighing up to 20,000 pounds with tusks extending out to nine feet or more. (Our early Paleoindians attacked these huge beasts with spears. The spear throwers were able to throw a 5 foot long spear over 100 miles an hour with great accuracy). About 10,000 years ago – in a very short time – these very large prehistoric animals left the river and all of Florida about the same time, probably due to a sudden radical change of temperature. Temperature through the ages was the greatest influence on the St. Johns River – and all of Florida. Information on the prehistoric animals is from *The Fossil Vertebrates of Florida* edited by Richard Hurlbert.

I obtained from Dr. Louis C. Murray, Jr., Ph.D., a USDA Hydrogeology Chart which shows the difference of sea levels in Florida going back one million years in increments of 100,000 years. The earth's changing temperatures build and melt ice ages. Our last great Ice Age which began 1.8 milion years ago had a great effect on Florida's sea level. When the St. Johns River began 125,000 years ago, melting ice raised sea level at that period to nearly 50 feet about our present sea level. This level peaked for a few years after the river's beginnings and remained mostly level for nearly 50,000 years. Then about 60,000 years ago there was a rapid drop to nearly 275 feet below present sea level. This period would have drained the river and completely halted the flow. Then the sea level went back up to about 175 feet below present sea level. Nearly 20,000 years ago there was another sharp drop in the sea level to a low point of 300 feet below present sea level. About 20,000 years ago, with the Ice Age coming to an end and ice rapidly melting, the sea level rose once again and restored the river's flow to its normal course over a period of time until you see the river's depth as it is now. Just think, at each period that there was a major drop in the sea level, the river would cease to exist as a river. All of its plants and fish would disappear, and when



Prehistoric Native Americans hunting a mammoth



Men with fossil teeth of a mastodon unearthed during phosphate mining. Bones of the mastodon and other giant prehistoric creatures were swept into Bone Valley of southwest Florida and deposited there by the glacier that covered the entire land mass during the Ice Age. Many remains of the giant animals which roamed the lush jungles of Florida 60-million years ago have been unearthed and placed in the museum of the mining companies.

the sea level again came up, the river's wildlife and fish would have to start all over again.

When these great animals came into Florida thousands of years ago, our very first people, called Paleoindians, followed them some 12,000 years ago. These people would have traveled mostly the northern part of the St. Johns River when the river held water. (It was after 10,000 years ago that the last great Ice Age came to an end and again filled the oceans and rivers). It is uncertain if these early magnificent people used canoes, but with the coming of the Archaic Indians (same Asian people, from just different time zones with the Paleoindians as came 13,000 years ago as above, with their followers, the Archaic Indians, coming into Florida about 8 or 9 thousand years ago), they did indeed use canoes.

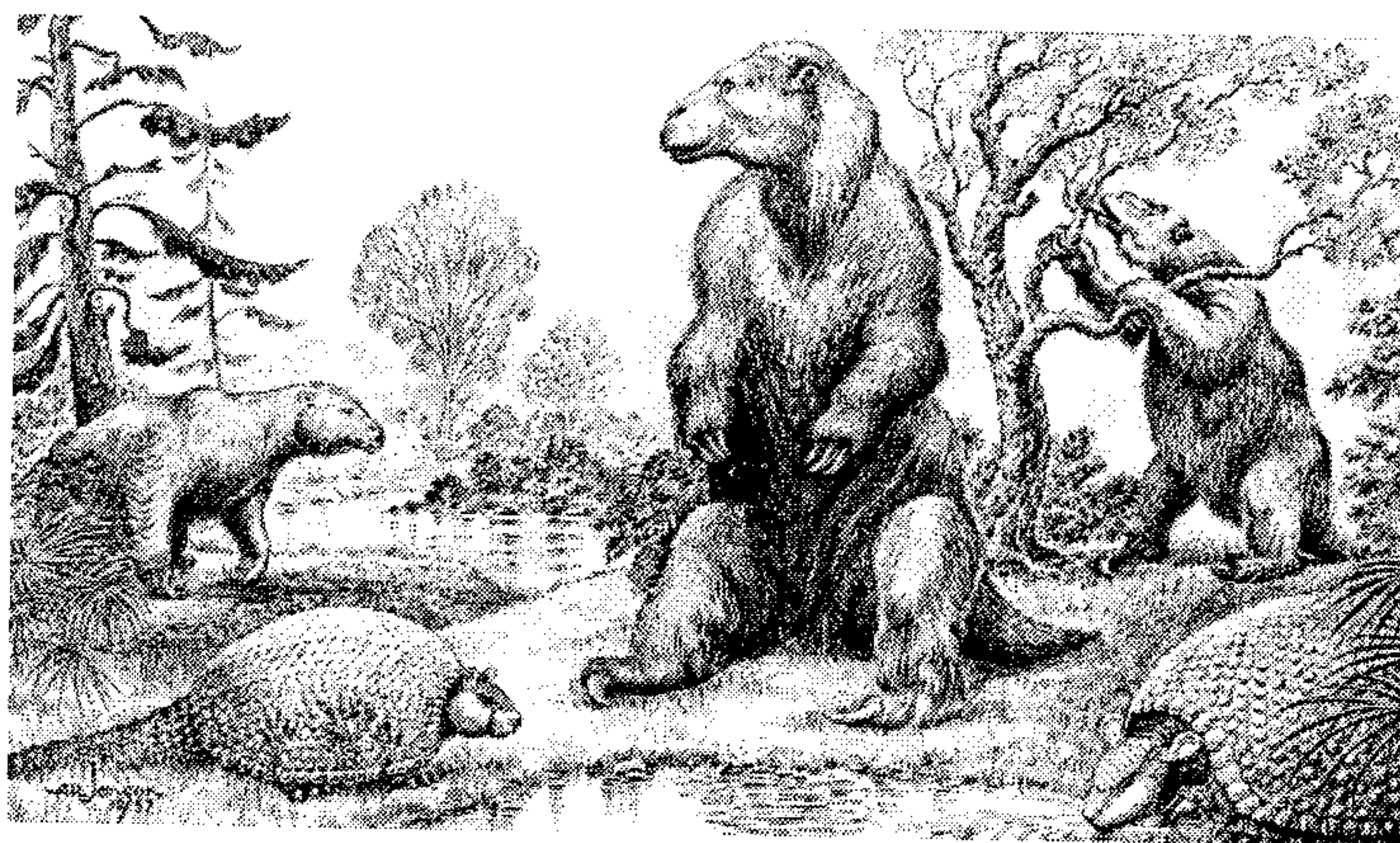
Probably the Archaic Indians are the first people who used the St. Johns River in great numbers. It is thought that in the 1500s there were 47 recorded different tribes of Archaic Indians in Florida (the Timucuan, Calusa, etc.). This information is not substantiated.

As I mentioned before, these people would have been descendants of the Asian nomads who migrated here across the Bering landmass. We have evidence that the Melbourne Man lived near the River 6,000 years ago and mounds or middens along the river indicate men lived

along there at the time of our earliest people- with artifacts dating back 7,000 years. The Windover Man (the first Brevardians) most likely had used the river for over 1,000 years between 7,000 to 8,000 years ago. At a later date several tribes of our early Indians used the St. Johns – principally the war-like Ais.

These industrious people cut down selected trees and burned out the insides to make strong, leak-proof canoes. The canoes were used by the Timucuans in the north part of the river. The middle section river was frequented by the Mayaca, Jororo and the Ais, and further south by the Jeaga and some Calusa. Dr. Julian Granberry, noted anthropologist and linguist, dates the spread of languages in the St. Johns area as 9,000 years ago. Possible Timucua trade routes came down the St. Johns River. Pottery was found along the river dating back to 3,000 years ago in the first period of archaeological study. In the years to follow, the artifacts, burial mounds and middens help us trace the history of our early people along the St. Johns River.

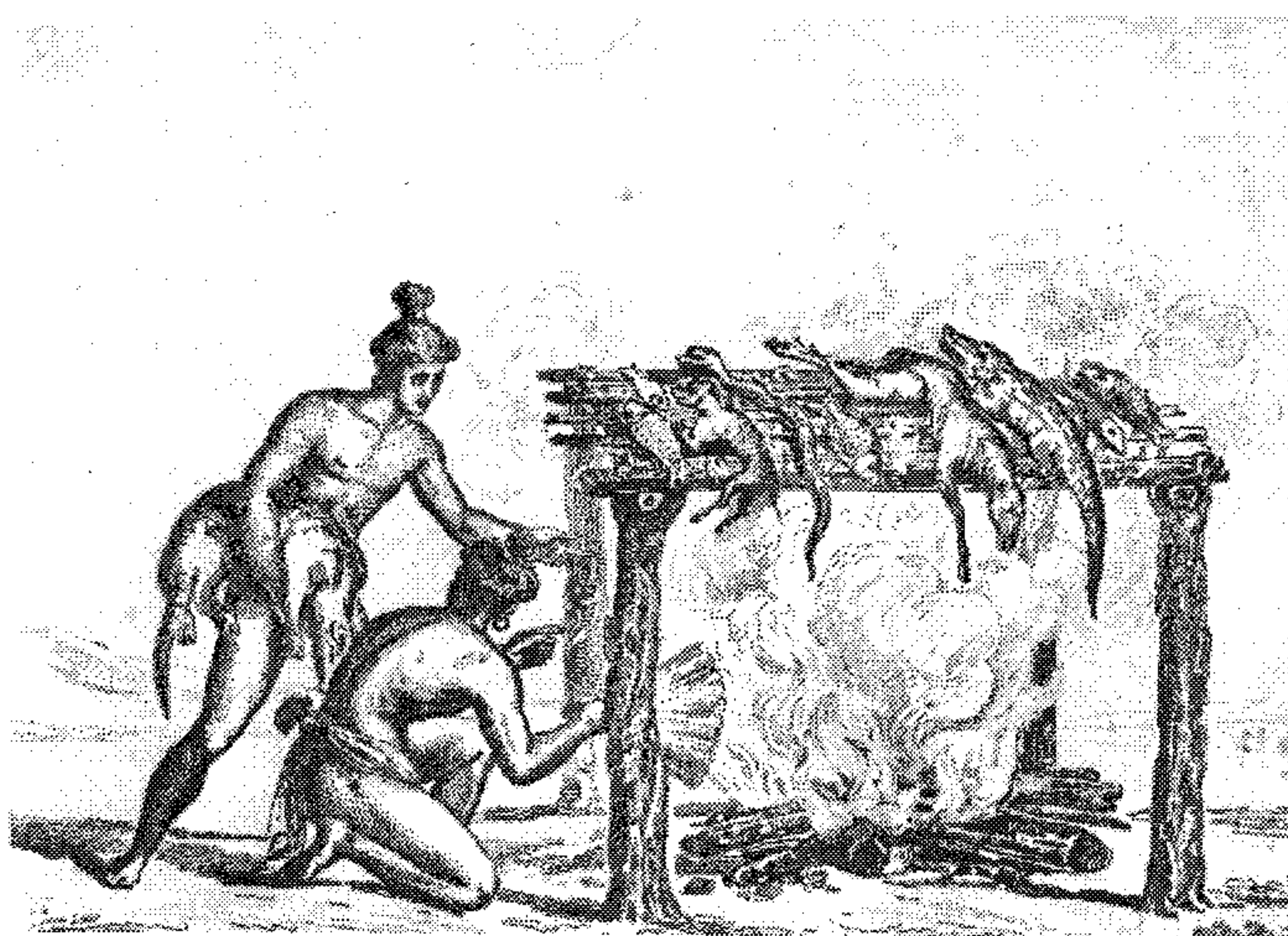
The invasion from Europe began in Florida in 1513. In only a little over 225 years, an estimated 3 00,000 Archaic Indians were obliterated in Florida – mostly by white mans' diseases. So the next wave that the river saw were white men from Europe. The first sailing ship ever to enter the



Megatherium and Glyptodon

St. Johns River was the French ship named Trinity in 1562. For the next hundred years the river was frequented by the Spanish ships carrying cargo for building cattle ranchettes and settlements in the northern part of the Florida peninsula. The Calusa Indians effectively kept the Spanish out of south Florida for over 50 years. As the 1600s came to an end, the Spanish use of the river began to come to an end. Note: Spanish period, 1521-1763, 244 years; French period, 1562-1719 in west Florida; British period, 1763-1783.

As I said with the advent of the Spanish invasion, our native population of maybe 300,000 people in all (with the Timuca and Calusa being the largest groups) divided into many different tribes in the early 1500s. All were doomed to extinction. The Spanish, beginning with Ponce de Leon, spread the common cold virus, chicken pox, small pox and other diseases for which the native Americans had no immunity. So in only a little over 225 years nearly all the Archaic (native Indians) had died from disease or in combat or were caught and sold into slavery. Only a few of these people escaped to areas away from La Florida. The last of the Calusa were forced to move to Cuba in 1717 after they were literally pushed



Timucua Indians Smoking Game

into the gulf. A few of the Indians in the northern part of Florida who survived fled to other tribes in Alabama and westward.

As I mentioned before, the Spanish invaders were turned away from the southern regions of Florida by the Calusa, but they had full use of most of the St. Johns River. The Spanish built their first permanent settlement (fort) in St. Augustine in 1565. From there they could travel northward to Jacksonville. The Spanish and the friendly Timucua Indians shared the river. The Spanish had a limited use of the southern part of the river as they spread their interests and influence westward toward Pensacola. Pensacola became the city of influence in the west, and St. Augustine the center of influence in the east. The rolling dry land between capitals was well suited for cattle ranching, so many ranches were carved from the undergrowth, and these cattle ranches thrived (for a relatively short period). The Spanish got the Timucua and Apalachee to raise most of their crops, as the northern Indians tended to be farmers rather than hunters or gatherers. As the 1600s came to a close, the Spanish and Archaic Indians left the river, and the river was soon to see a whole new group of people once again.

When 1700 rolled around, the Spanish had lost interest in Florida with the British to follow. The Archaic Indians were mostly dead or had left Florida for other areas away from the Spanish rule. Gone forever were the Apalachee and Timucuan Indians in north Florida. Florida was now home to wild Andalusia cattle and Spanish cow ponies that had been brought and left by the departing Spanish. Wild pigs brought from Cuba had the run of Florida. Florida was now a land rich in animals and few people. A vacuum with very few people really. And so begins an entirely new history of the St. Johns River... Special note: The Spanish removed the balance of the Timucuan Indians to Cuba in the year 1763 before the British arrived.

Now it was time for the British. From 1763 to 1783, 20 short years, the British dominated the river building large plantations along the river

from Jacksonville to New Smyrna, raising hemp, cotton, indigo, etc. The British built the first highway in our country running from Jacksonville to the Indian River in New Smyrna - the "King's Highway". They mapped Florida well for the first time, but their uneasy position with our country made their stay impossible. Florida was then given back to the Spanish for only a short time. Florida became a state in 1845.

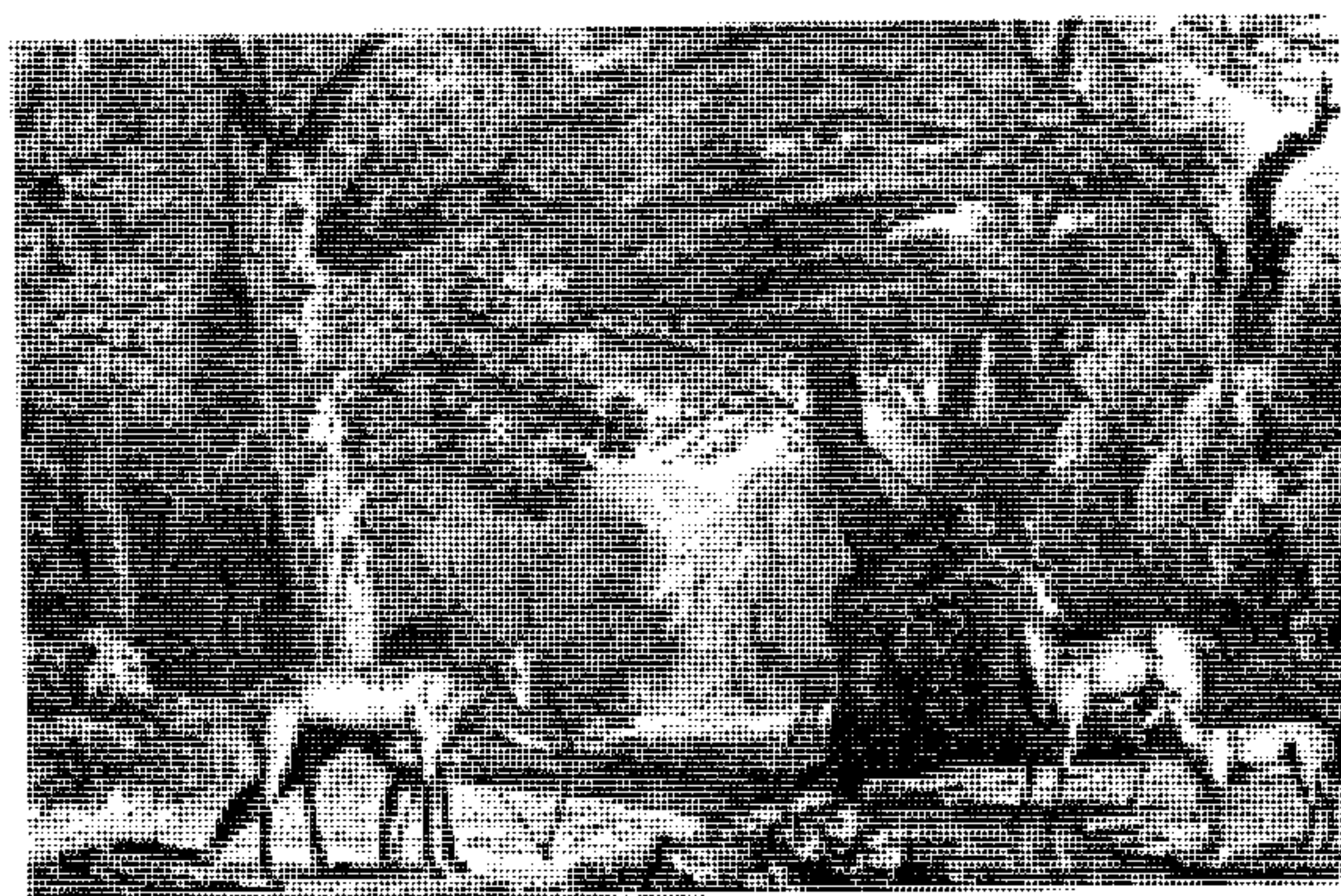
The Indians later to be called Seminoles began to arrive in the mid 1700s and were a mishmash of a number of southern tribes including the Creeks from Georgia all mixed together. The principal use of the river was now by the north and south Creek Indians speaking the Muskogee language. The other Seminoles speaking a language from the Hitchiti tribe of Alabama followed the west coast down to the Everglades. The language of the Seminoles on the west side of Florida is the Mikasuki language. Some of the Florida Seminoles call themselves the Miccosukee. These Seminoles followed the west coast south of Lake Okechobee into the Everglades and by 1717 the Seminoles literally pushed the remaining Calusa Indians into the sea. So the St. Johns River became a busy waterway again with the Florida Seminole Indians dominating the river as they made settlements along the banks of the north flowing river. Tallahassee, our state capital, was derived from the Seminole language and means "old town".

By 1770 the St. Johns saw a new contingency of people. White settlers began establishing large plantations running down to the river, and cotton and tobacco and other farm crops filled the river as the plantation owners began transporting their crops on ships headed for Jacksonville where they were loaded on large sea-going vessels. The large plantations used a lot of slave labor, and many slaves broke away from their white owners and found refuge with the Seminole Indians. The friendly relationships and trading between the Indians and the white settlers was becoming strained. The Seminoles stole from the white people, and the white people stole from the Seminoles. This was setting the stage for the horrible circumstances that began between the whites and Seminoles. The St. Johns River witnessed a tumultuous period that was to dominate

most of the 1800s, the era of wars and of the steamships. Many battles were fought on the river, and many lives ended there. The three Indian wars will be addressed in another chapter. The Second Indian war erupted on the St. Johns circa 1835 when a group of Seminole warriors burned several large plantations on the St. Johns river. Battles raged for a number of years until the Seminoles were forced south down the river and finally into the Everglades. Many forts were built along the river – usually a day's travel apart. As the Indians were forced further south, the forts were no longer needed and abandoned.

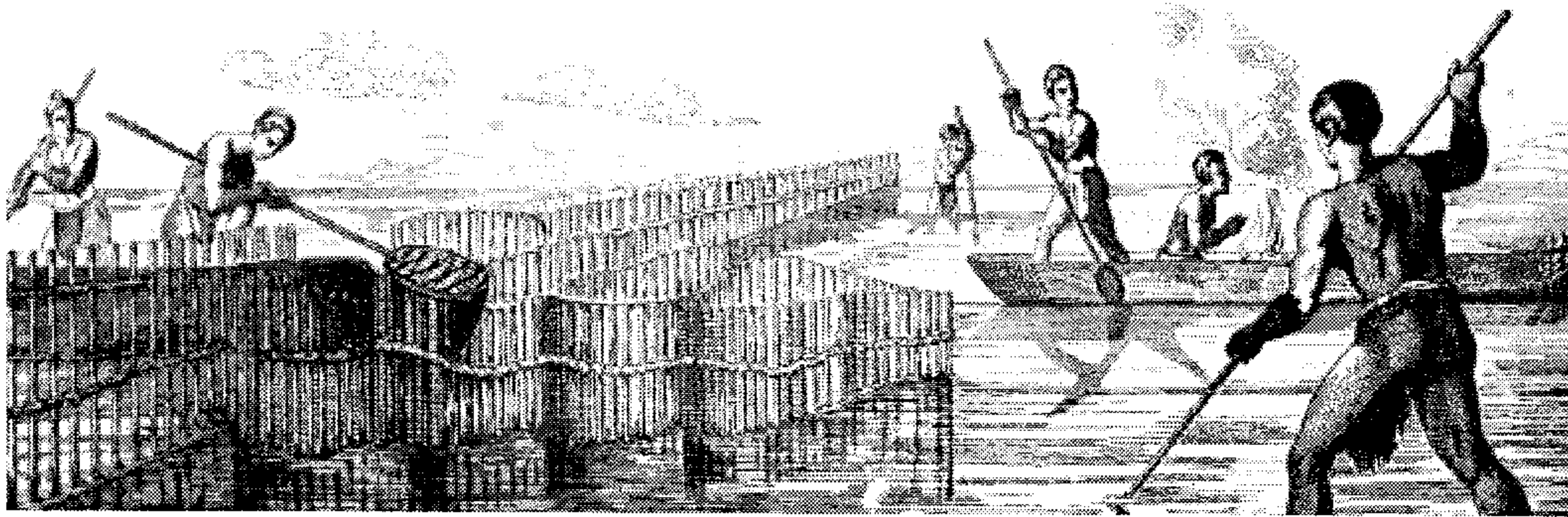
Let's look again at the river - this time with white settlers, farmers and hunters. Small trading posts opened along the river and began brisk trading of manufactured goods, staples, foods for fish, hides, skins, etc. By 1835 the hatred between the white settlers and the Seminole nation boiled over – starting the horrible seven year war that ended in 1842. In 1835 the St. Johns saw a new wave of canoes as mentioned. The Seminoles attacked the farmers and plantation owners on the St. Johns near New Smyrna destroying everything that was there. This was the fuse that started the Second and horrible 7 year war with the Seminoles from 1835 to 1842. By now conflicts had chased away both the Seminoles who lived along the river banks and also the plantation owners. Major Henry Whiting, U.S. Army, wrote that in his trip down the St. Johns River in 1838, in pursuit of the Seminoles, there was scarcely a dwelling occupied on either side of the river's banks for 50 miles about its mouth though there were many evidences of former occupancy.

In 1812 to 1814, there was a bloody Indian War called the Creek Civil War. This is when the Creek's hatred for the whites really began. For clarification of river traffic, the fol-



Timucua Indians Hunting Deer

lowing dates become very important. The First Seminoles and other tribes of north Florida were attacked by Andrew Jackson in 1817-1818. The fighting was confined to the north and northwestern parts of Florida. The Second Seminole War, 1835-1842, had a huge effect on river traffic – early on by the Seminole canoes followed by larger vessels carrying soldiers and support cargo for the troops. The last Seminole War was fought in the Everglades from 1856 to 1858. This war was brought about by U.S. survey teams entering the last Seminole sanctuary. The St. Johns River was too far north to have affected the boat traffic.



Timucua Indians Trapping Fish

THE LARGE SAILING BOATS ON THE ST. JOHNS

The turbulent times of the mid 1800s saw a whole new phenomenon – the era of the steamboats. The river saw its very first large sailing vessel in the year 1562. The ship whose name was Le Trinity was from France. She was loaded with Lutheran French Huguenots who fled Europe for freedom to practice their own religion. They built Fort Caroline near the mouth of the St. Johns River and began to grow the new world's first grapes. The Spanish, however, built St. Augustine in 1565. They may have felt threatened by the close proximity of the French settlement, so a Spanish military force was dispatched to Ft. Caroline, and many French were killed. Some women and children were spared. Their boats would no longer ply the St. Johns River.

Spanish ships would now dominate the river for over 200 years – sometimes searching for the Archaic Indians living along the river so they could be captured and sold into slavery. The St. Johns did not see French ships, as the French influence was on the Gulf side on north Florida only.

In the year 1763 the British traded Cuba to the failing Spanish Florida experiment and only stayed for a short 20 years. The river was active with British ships. The British map-makers produced the first real maps of Florida – their boats traversing the river. Large craft came south from Jacksonville to New Smyrna to bring settlers and supplies to build large plantations growing hemp, indigo and other crops. The British built the first highway in Florida that ran from Jacksonville to New Smyrna. In only 20 short years the same crafts removed the British settlers and plantations owners to board large sailing vessels in the mouth of the river to be transported back to England. Now the river began to see an almost dormant period. The current would flow north without ships – just canoes. The Spanish, in slightly over 250 years, had exterminated the Archaic (native) Indians. The river would now have a new beginning in 1700, a whole new population of Indians – the Seminoles.

The friction that quickly developed with the Seminoles and the white traders began festering seriously about the early 1800s – not only the Seminoles but other Indian tribes in north Florida causing trouble. So in the year 1818, what we know as the First Indian War, Andrew Jackson attacked Florida Indians in western Florida – unfortunately, friendly and unfriendly. This war spanned several years by which time Spain realized it must abandon Florida in its entirety and totally withdrew ceding Florida to the United States. Florida thus became a new territory. By the year 1835 the St. Johns River bore a new group of boats and canoes. The bitter struggle between the whites and the Seminoles in the early 1800s helped to give rise to the advent of the St. Johns River steamboats and tourist travel.

THE ST. JOHNS RIVER STEAMBOATS

For the historical background of steam ships on the river, I turned to Ed Mueller, author and historian. His authoritative books on the steam ships are simply incredible in detail and substance, and his willingness to help is more than appreciated.

The first steamboat that came to Jacksonville came from Savannah and Charleston. In 1827 the side-paddle steam ship George Washington was the first steamboat to visit the town of Jacksonville. Jacksonville was the south end of the train line and the jumping off place for new settlers moving into east and central Florida. It had come from the Savannah River. From 1827 to the



Celery growing in Sanford, Florida
City of Jacksonville steamboat in the background
Tonnage: 548 gross and 395 net.Length: 160 ft.Width: 32.5 ft.Depth: 6.6 ft.Year built: 1882, Wilmington, Delaware.First place registered or first home port: New York, New York.Disposition: circa 1933 converted into a dance hall.

1830s these ships began their runs to Florida and up the St. Johns River. The river saw for the first time a flotilla of new, smoke-belching and noisy giant ships propelled by huge paddle wheels on the side or rear of these vessels. The steamboat era from 1827 to almost the beginning of 1900 transformed the river into a busy passageway for goods, people and supplies all moving south down the east coast. There was no other good way to travel. Rockledge became the end of the line. A sandbar across the southern end of Lake Winder forced the steamboats to unload in a small lake 3 miles west of Rockledge at the end of this line. The first steamboat to arrive at Rockledge was the steamer The Pioneer. The first steamboat to reach Lake Winder was the small steam ship Charles Willey with a cargo of corn, flour, etc. The date was 9th of March 1879, and the Willey was the first ship to open the lower river to steamboat traffic below Salt Lake. People came from and through the thick woods miles around Lake Winder to celebrate the unloading of the Willey's cargo on the west bank of the lake – which during the Second Indian War was the site of Fort Taylor (used only for 6 months). This unloading place became the Savage Trading Post and Post Office and then the Bumby Camp.

It is important to understand the character of the river to understand the river traffic. The river was fairly deep (14 feet minimum) all the way to the east end of Lake Monroe. There a sandbar excluded large steamboats, and so smaller steamboats were used that had only a 2 foot draft, wide shallow draft boats – many with a second story above the deck. As a special note, Salt Lake (a very small lake just south of Hwy. 46 near Mims) had a large Indian mound on the east bank. It became a very busy docking area, and ships not able to go further south on the river would unload their supplies (near what is known as the Hatbill) onto rafts which were then poled from the river east for about a mile to Salt Lake and unloaded on relatively high ground (the Indian mound). From there a tram road was constructed to Sand Point, Titusville, a distance of 7 miles. The supplies southbound could unload at Titusville on the Indian River and be reloaded on boats headed for Melbourne. Northward bound supplies and small boats used the tram line to be loaded on barges at Salt Lake to start their long trip to Jacksonville.

The steamboats that docked further south at Rockledge, which was the end of the line, caused the small community to grow into the tourist center of the east coast – really because that was as far south as the northern visitors could travel. Rockledge was known for growing pineapples, and during the height of the 1884 pineapple harvest, the steamboat Astatula set a record making 5 round trips to Sanford from Rockledge a week. Rockledge was then known as the pineapple capital of the world. Author and historian, Fred Hopwood, records the early history of the area in his book “The Rockledge, Florida Steamboat Line”. Fred Hopwood has been an enormous help to me continuously for two years to understand the early history of Brevard County and the early steamships. The St. Johns River steamships opened east coast Florida to early settlement. Ed Mueller lists the complete details of 67 vessels plying the St. Johns River from 1829 to 1861. Of note is that 7 of these ships would be lost – sunk by the Union Army in the Civil War (or as Southerners called it “The Northern War of Aggression”).

Many, many smaller vessels shared the river with the steamboat giants. In the early years of the St. Johns River, steamboats became larger, heavier, longer and more grandiose. For instance, by 1864 (the end of the Civil War) the City Point steamboat chugged down the river with mammoth side wheels. It was 200 feet long, 30 feet wide, and weighed 568 tons. These mighty steamboats came one year after the appearance of the Dictator appearing in Jacksonville (1863). This mighty vessel was 205.8 feet long, 30 feet wide and weighed 735 tons. The years following the Civil War 1860-1865 were nothing less than a people explosion. There were so many great steam vessels, I’ve barely scratched the surface.

To understand the history of the steamboats on the St. Johns River, you have to think about the river traffic being divided into two parts. Part I - Jacksonville to Lake Monroe at Sanford (north of Orlando), the early route with the large ships, and Part II – smaller boats from Lake Monroe to Rockledge, the end of the line. (I have already covered some of the data about Rockledge). The large vessels unloaded their cargo and passengers and reloaded at Lake Monroe for the trip back to Jack-

sonville. Supplies and a few passengers were then reloaded into much smaller vessels with only a 2 foot draft and back paddle wheels to ferry them to points south – either to Lake Harney, Salt Lake or south to the end of the line at Rockledge.

For part one of the journey to Lake Monroe some 190 miles – or 200 miles to Enterprise (also on Lake Monroe) from the ship's manifest the steamboats Eliza Hancock and the John Sylvester – there were 37 other stops on the river with suitable docks for docking and unloading. Palatka was the largest settlement visited. The records of the DeBary Bay, a merchant line, shows 38 stops with dockages at several locations. The records date back to the early 1800s. Part II of the River traffic – Lake Monroe to Rockledge. Again the first small steamboat, the Charles Willey left Lake Monroe and made the journey, with great difficulty, all the way into Lake Winder (just a few miles south of the future landing at Rockledge); the date, Wednesday, the 9th of March, 1879.

It is of great interest to note that Capt. E. C. Poinsett was the commanding officer of the steamboat Santee and assigned to explore the upper St. Johns (southward) from Fort Mellon on Lake Monroe on November 10, 1837. The ship's mission was to look for Seminole villages or strongholds. They went also to search for suitable sites for establishing forts. It was on this trip that they determined sites for Fort Christmas, Fort McNeil and Fort Taylor. The Santee took troops to the southern end of Lake Harney where a large sandbar made the water too shallow to pass over. Small rowing craft were then unloaded, and the soldiers rowed their boats south into Lake Poinsett and into Lake Winder and later through Lake Winder and Lake Washington.

A Special Note Of Dates

1829 – 1835 Early beginnings – sporadic communication
1835 – 1842 Second Indian War lasted seven years
1842 – 1850 Regular service – Savannah – boat building

1860 - 1865 Civil War - invasion from north - cessation of travel
1865 - 1875 Reconstruction - re-establish old travel patterns
1875 - 1887 Golden age - river steamboat service
1887 - 1920 Gradual decline of steamboats because of railroads
and freezes

The George Washington built in 1827 visited the St. Johns May 18/
19, 1829 from Savannah.

The following steamboats visited the St. Johns in the time period
from 1835-1842: John David Morgan, Richmond-Free Trade, Duncan
McRae, Congaree, Cincinnati, John McLean, Cherokee, Santee, Camden,
Charleston and the Essayons.

In 1840 the Sarah Spaulding, built in Jacksonville, went to Mellonville,
Port of Sanford and to Enterprise.

To better understand the early migration of settlers and later commerce from Jacksonville, it is important to understand the difficulties involved in that migration to central Florida. The first steamboat to dock at Jacksonville with passengers was from Savannah, Ga. in 1827. Keep in mind that the first railroad connecting Florida from the northeast was the New Jersey to Jacksonville Railroad completed in 1884. Then in 1885 Flagler bridged the river and ran a rail line to Titusville and eventually to Key West. By the beginning of the Civil War in 1860, a ferry crossed the St. Johns River at Jacksonville on a regular basis. That ferry was in service until the construction of the first bridge across the River in the year 1921. The second bridge was completed in 1941. It is difficult to fathom what these great improvements made to Florida's transportation and new commerce. Trips that formerly took week or months could now be taken in only a few days.

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PALATKA
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FLORIDA
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Capt. F. W. Lutz, Jr.

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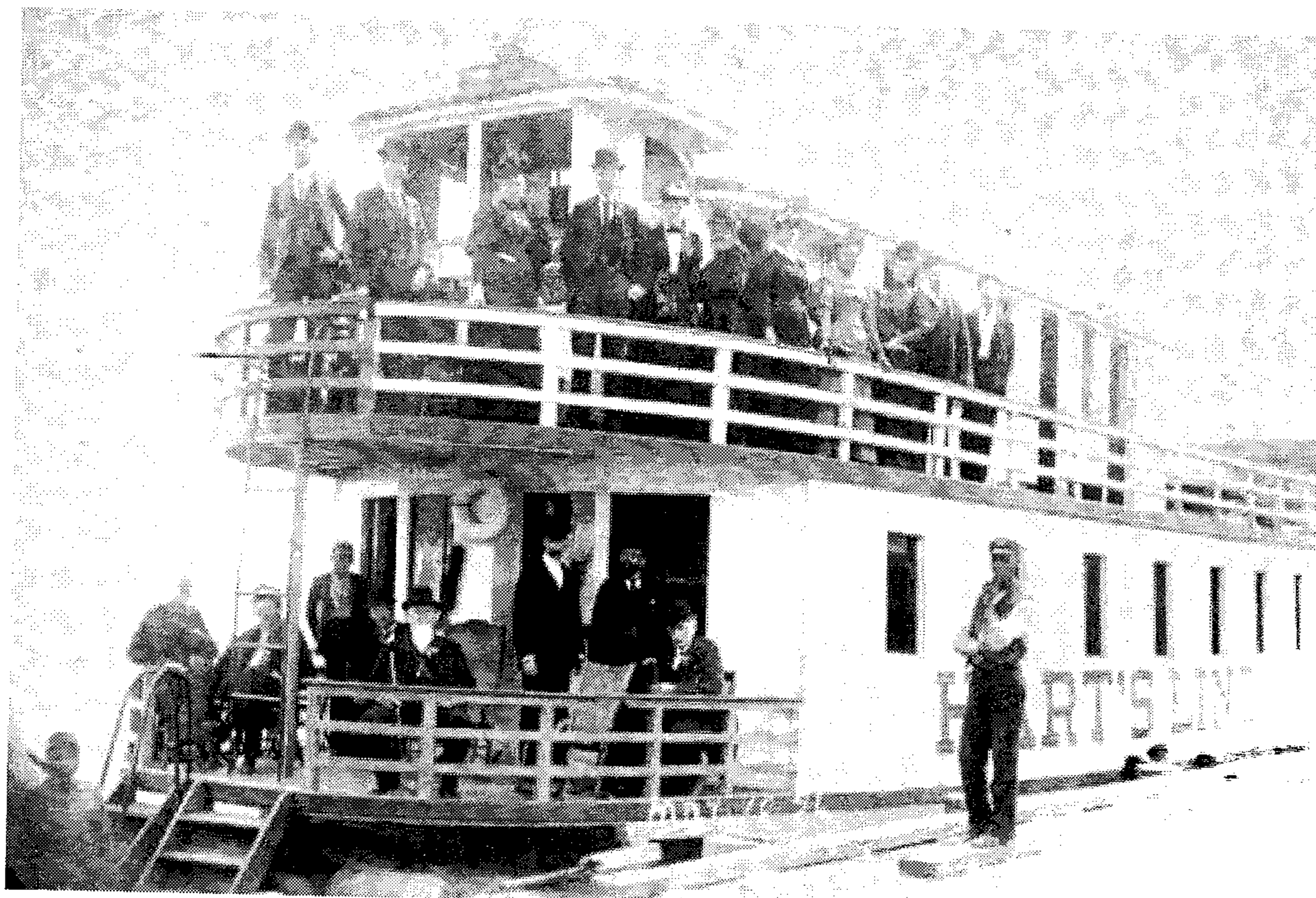
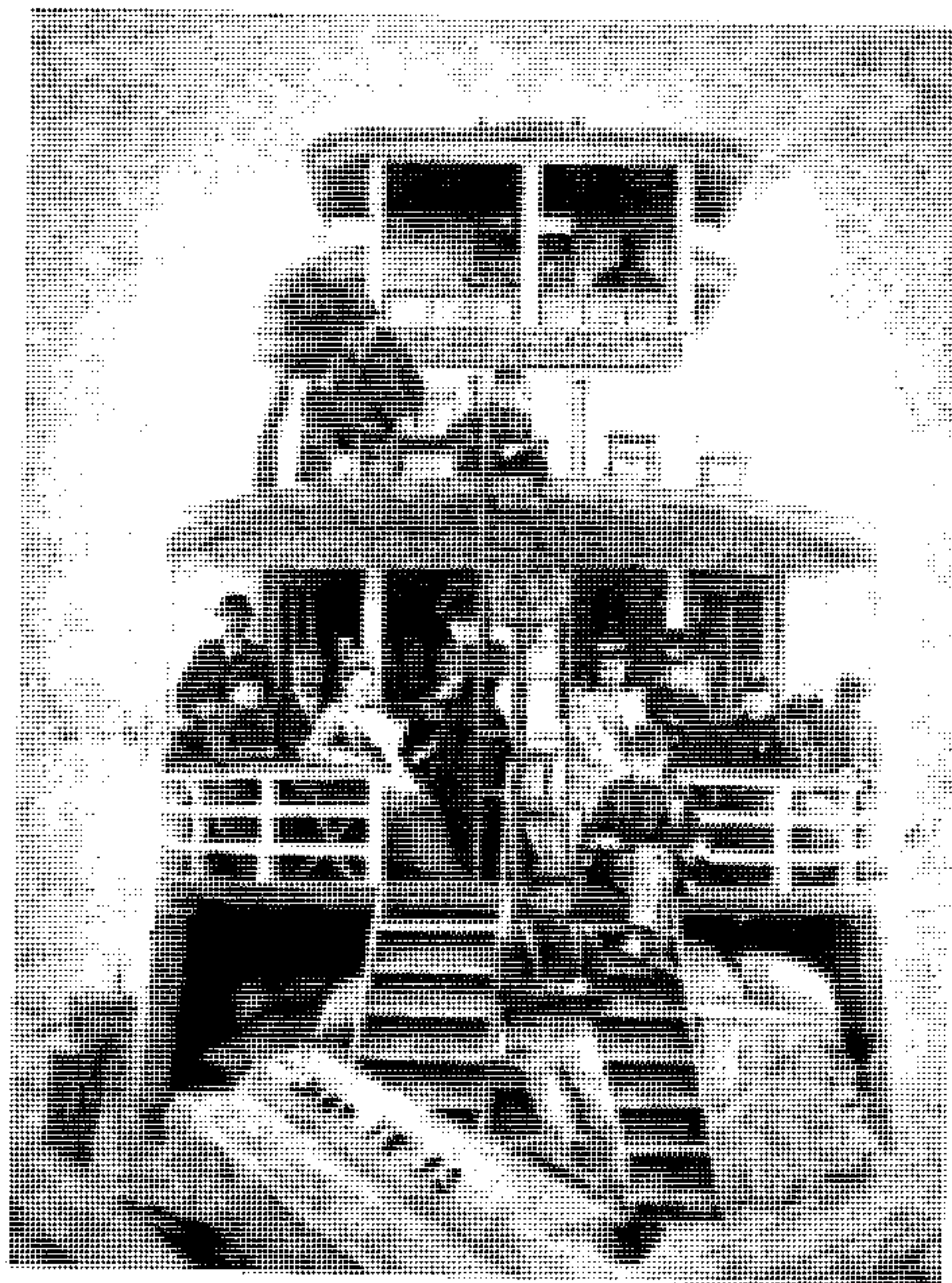
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WILLIAM BARTRAM

No story or history of the St. Johns River should omit some of William Bartram's observations from his book "Travels And Other Writings"; his writings about his trip down the St. Johns River in the year 1774 two years before our independence from the British. Bartram writes in colorful and precise language of his experiences in his small sailboat as he traveled south from Jacksonville up (south) the river. He discusses his observations with the Creek Indians living on the river's banks. He carefully details the wild life he encountered along his way. He observed, labeled and drew detailed sketches and pictures of many plants and flowers. It is a book of immense information and entertainment.

William Bartram writes in such expressive clarity about the huge oaks he saw along the river. Some were 12 to 18 feet in girth. He observed how the great limbs of the oaks grew out from the trunks 10 or 12 feet from the tree's beginning, and then sent out a number of huge limbs in a horizontal direction. He observed that he could step off 50 paces and still be under the massive limbs. These huge trees produced great quantities of acorns which the Indians cooked and ate. They also obtained a sweet oil from the acorns which they used in their cooking. Many animals also relied on the acorns. As I recall acorns are a favorite food for whitetail deer which must have lived along the river in large numbers.

Imagine what Bartram thought when he first discovered the huge cypress trees that often lined the river. It was a sight we will never see because of the near total destruction of these beautiful trees some of which were alive at the time of Christ 2000 years ago.

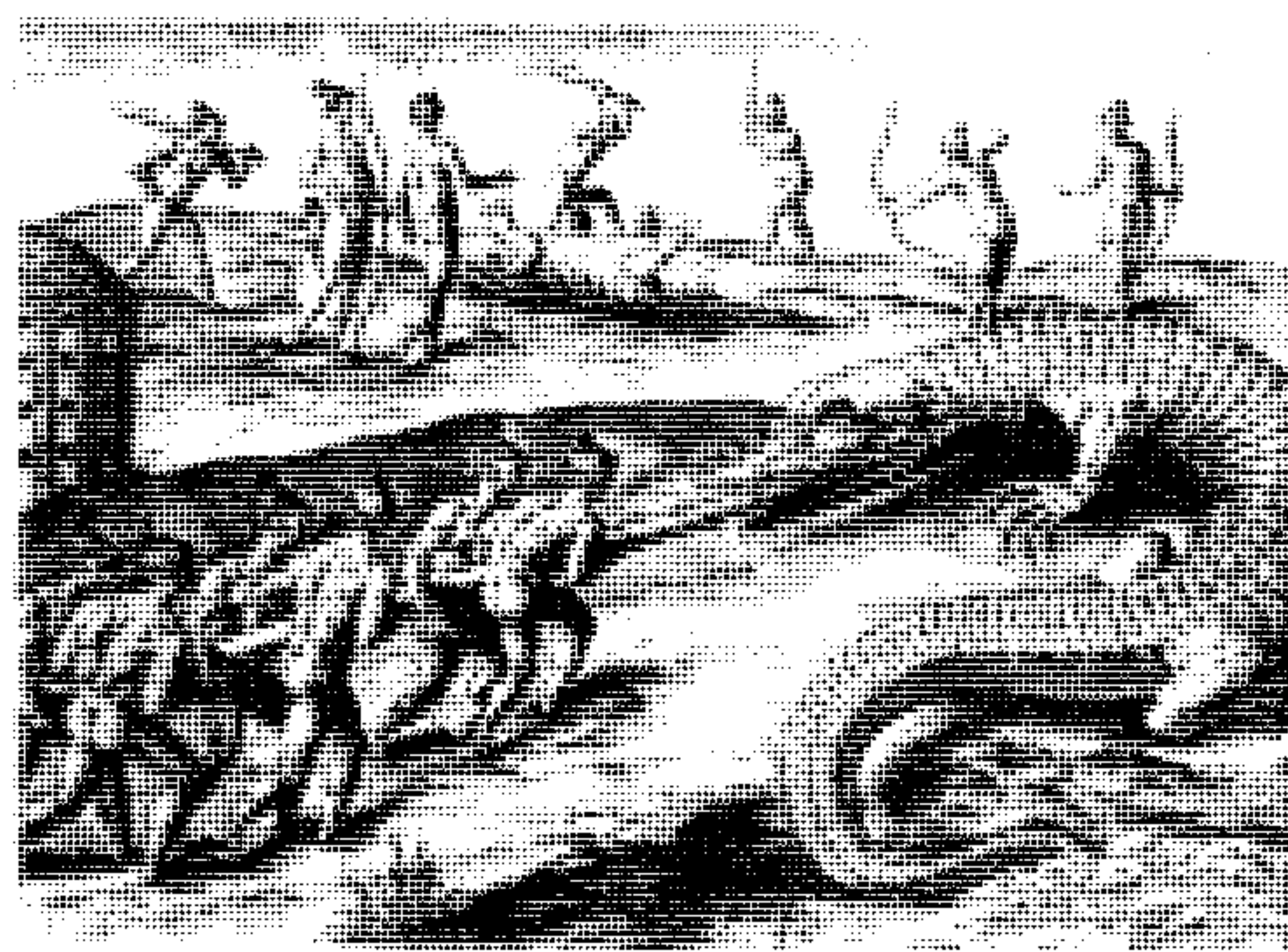
Bartram noted the beautiful color of the lace-like cypress leaves. He must have been amazed the giant trees growing in the water surrounded by their cypress knees which Bartram refers to as "woody cones". He

observed that these giant bald cypresses had many hollow places used by animals and bees. What a sight it must have been for him to look up 80 or 90 feet and see colorful herons and parakeets frequenting the branches, and then at the very top of the tree see a huge eagle nest with eagles circling overhead.

He goes on to describe the beauty of the long strands of Spanish Moss that "hang from the lofty limbs and float in the winds". Even in Bartram's time (1774) on the river, the planters were already beginning the destruction of the beautiful cypress trees. Ultimately we lost nearly all of our cypress trees.

Of all of Bartram's descriptions of his trip on the St. Johns River, I liked his alligator observations the most. I have to think, however, he used some of his writer's license, so to speak, in these descriptions. What I remember most about his descriptions of the alligators he encountered in Battle Lagoon. Bartram said he "saw a huge alligator rush out of the reeds with a tremendous roar and came up and darted underneath my boat. The huge alligator then opened his jaws and belched water and smoke over me like rain in a hurricane."

In another paragraph, he describes "a huge alligator that had a terrifying roar that resembled thunder and caused the earth to tremble". The man must have been terrified, because he thought he heard hundreds or thousands roaring at the same time.



A. Wetmore and J. Wetmore, *Florida's Alligators*, p. 100. From the original in the collection of the Florida Department of Natural Resources, Tallahassee, Florida. Reprinted by permission of the Florida Department of Natural Resources.

THE EARLY TOWNS AND FORTS

To better understand the history of the first forts and settlements along the St. Johns River south of Lake Monroe, I relate to you the history of just a few of the river's first settlements. (The history of Enterprise is an exception, because it was and still is located on the north side of Lake Monroe). Please note the very short and first history of Enterprise, then Lake Jesup, then Lake Harney and the town of Geneva. Just south of Lake Harney was the important loading and unloading area for Titusville from Salt Lake and further south Fort Christmas and finally Fort Taylor.

ENTERPRISE

It is of special interest to think about each of the 38 stops along the river from Jacksonville to Lake Monroe. Each of these stops represented a settlement comprised of people who chose to carve a homestead from the wilds along the river, and who chose a lifestyle such as raising oranges or other crops. Each stop therefore has a history of its own. This book only covers a brief history of Enterprise, Lake Harney and Salt Lake.

The steamboat stops in Lake Monroe have a great significance. There were a number of docks on the southeast side of the lake. Fort Mellon, built during the Second Indian War, to service settlers south of the lake and on to central Florida. There was very important dockage on the north side of Lake Monroe - the town of Enterprise (which is now a small, quiet settlement of homes). Enterprise, in the middle 1800s, was a very busy port with good dockage for steamboats. Its strategic location was just across the lake from Fort Mellon. Some steamboats made Enterprise the end of their journey before returning to Jacksonville. By the year 1876, Enterprise was a thriving community of many homes, stores and with a large 2 ½ story hotel accommodating 50 guests at a time. Enterprise was Volusia's first County Seat. Many tourists came to visit. Fishermen came to fish in the waters of Lake Monroe. A road was built from

Enterprise eastward to the east coast, so supplies and people could be transported to the east coast by carts and wagons.

A number of docks were constructed on the south side of Lake Monroe in the town of Sanford for passengers and goods continuing south.

LAKE JESUP

(sometimes spelled Jessup)

The lake was named after Gen. Jesup

Because of a sandbar shallowing the River entrance into Lake Monroe, few boats ventured south of the lake. Just imagine that it was May of 1837, and Lt. Peyton, with 24 men and 4 Creek Indians, was sent by the Army to explore Lake Jesup - a lake a short distance south of Lake Monroe. Lt. Peyton found a much used western bank of the lake. He discovered an old Indian village where Euchee Billy and a band of 100 Indians lived in 20 lodges. Of special note are military operations in Florida during 1835, 1836, 1837 from the records of the office of the Chief of Engineers commentary by Lieut. W. B. Davidson, 3rd Artillery. "Lake Jesup, about 8 miles long and formed like a crescent was discovered by Lieut. Peyton, 2nd Artillery, who ascended the St. Johns to that lake with a detachment of artillery on the 22nd of May 1837. Nothing was known of the St. Johns beyond that, until the 10th of November following, when it was proposed by Lieut. Col. Harney and Lieut. Wm. B. Davidson to attempt a further explorations of the St. Johns with a view to ascertain whether it afforded any additional facilities for the transportation of supplies and the establishment of depots."

A few years after a dock was built on the west side of Lake Monroe and smaller steamboats unloaded passengers and cargo bound for the Orlando area, it is said that the Big Tree south of Sanford was the boat captain's reading to reach the dock.

LAKE HARNEY AND GENEVA

To illustrate the history of Lake Harney, I reproduce an excerpt from early Army records when a detachment of soldiers left Fort Mellon on Lake Monroe and headed south to Lake Harney to build a new fort to be named Fort Lane. "Accordingly, on 10, November, they started in the steamer Santos with Company; F, 3rd Artillery, from Fort Mellon, and, after dragging a little over the bar at the head of Lake Monroe, proceeded up the river without the least obstruction for 30 miles, where they discovered another large and beautiful lake, 8 miles long and 5 or 6 wide, to which was given the name of Harney. The boat was steered around near the eastern shore of the lake and landing made, with 20 men in a barge, opposite to an Indian village situated in a beautiful grove of live oaks and palmettos, about 3 miles from the entrance to the lake. The village appeared to have been abandoned but a day or two before. The Santos could not be forced over the bar at the head of the lake, so we returned by the western shore, and arrived at Fort Mellon a little after dark."

Fort Lane was built in short order and only used for 3 days and abandoned. Early settlers began traveling from Lake Monroe to settle this newly discovered area where the fishing was so great. These people then began to claim land and plant orange groves which prospered. When the Civil War erupted in 1860 a new wave of settlers arrived, and through the years of 1870 to 1880 many new settlers moved to Geneva, mostly from Georgia and the Carolinas. In 1877 a group of Russian immigrants who had fled the Czar of Russia settled in Geneva and became very successful grove owners. In 1890 the community of Geneva built a large dock complete with a two story pavilion. The lake fishermen often stayed nights there to fish, and the dock became a busy boat landing. The docking lasted until 1912 when the railroads came. Part of the pavilion still existed until the middle 1940s. Special note: the Lake Harney landing had been an Indian campsite for thousands of years. The last of which were the Seminole Indians. The town of Geneva sits over a large "bubble" of fresh water unlike any of the surrounding area.

THE HISTORY OF SALT LAKE

Right near Mims and just south of Hwy. 46 about one mile south through the marsh, lies a small shallow lake that is maybe 100 acres or less having the only bank of any sort that is a sizable Indian mound on the east side of the lake. To look at this almost ugly muddy lake you would never guess in a hundred years how important this body of water was for a period of time in the mid and late 1800s. If you look at the ancient Indian mound, probably Ais, you can still see some of the deep ruts that the wagon wheels cut into the mound so many years ago. It's the only hint of the place's history.

Salt Lake gets its name from its very high content of salt and understandably why, because Salt Lake is the closest link of the lower St. Johns to the Indian River and some six miles distant to Titusville. Just imagine in the 1800s what a problem it was to get goods, materials and people from the Titusville area to the rest of the country. There were no roads, no railroads, so the river was the only lifeline to the area. What's more, the Indian River came to an end of few miles north of Titusville where the Haulover Canal is now. Salt Lake became a very busy, very shallow water port (if you can call it that) to both the Titusville area and boats and cargo going to and from Melbourne. A Florida Department of Natural Resource Journal of Proceedings of the House of Representative of 1854 records a state engineer in Florida, Dancy, arrived at Salt Lake that year in four oared boats. This is the first documented arrival of a boat at Salt Lake.

The next documentation was in 1870 by a surveyor, Arthur T. Williams, who noted he sailed north on the Indian River to reach Fernandina arriving at Sand Point, Titusville, at 8 A.M. and met a Mr. Carlisle who hitched up his oxen team and loaded their boat and stuff aboard a cart and proceeded to Salt Lake – some 7 miles distance to begin the balance of the trip on the St. Johns River, arriving in Fernandina some 5 days later.

In 1875 Sidney Lanier writes about a small steamboat from Lake Monroe arriving at Salt Lake from which conveyance is had across the tongue of land. Some 6 miles wide to the Indian River. It is about this time that enough traffic existed to build a 7 mile tram road from Salt Lake to Sand Point - Titusville on the Indian River.

In 1883 C. K. Monroe writes for a number of years freight was brought almost wholly by small steamers up the St. Johns south from Sanford to Salt Lake. It was then hauled over land 7 miles to Titusville. Oranges and other exported produce went by the same tedious route.

In 1888 James Henshaw writes about his sailing trip from Lake George on the St. Johns arriving at Salt Lake where they found an old wooden tramway connecting Salt Lake with Titusville. A thing of the past - the tramway had rotted away, but the wagon and mules stood by ready to be loaded.

In 1896 Charles Cory writes that a line of steamers were running from Enterprise (Lake Monroe) up the St. Johns River, passing through Lake Jesup and Lake Harney to Salt Lake and part of the time beyond that as far as Lake Poinsett, but the line was discontinued years ago because the St. Johns River was usually navigable only as far as Salt Lake. Below Salt Lake it was often choked with floating water plants.

This part of the history of Salt Lake and the lower St. Johns traffic came to a halt with the advent of the railroad from Sanford to Titusville and the railroad from Jacksonville south on the east coast.

Take a minute and reflect how important Salt Lake was to our east coast. Settlers from 1854 to the advent of the rail line which was built from Jacksonville to Palm Beach by 1893. Salt Lake is positioned about 1 mile east of the St. Johns near the Hatbill. A tram road was built from the unloading area on the Indian mound on Salt Lake and extended 7 miles south and east to Titusville's Sand Point. Here travelers and goods from Melbourne area had to travel the 7 miles to board boats going on the St.

Johns for points northward. People, goods going to Melbourne – just the opposite to go from Jacksonville to Melbourne.



Chief Osceola



FORT TAYLOR ON LAKE WINDER

From old military records, the distance from the military locations from Fort Mellon on Lake Monroe to the head of Lake Jesup is 11 miles, Fort Christmas is 37 miles from Lake Monroe and 12 miles from Fort Lane on Lake Harney. Fort McNeil is 16 miles from Fort Christmas. Fort Taylor on Lake Winder is 8 miles from Fort McNeil and estimated to be about 10 miles from the Atlantic Ocean and 100 miles by river from Fort Lane.

Fort Taylor was built on the western bank of Lake Winder on an old Indian mound for good vantage. Like the other forts, it was used only for a short time as the Seminole Indians moved south toward the Everglades. This location was the end of the old military trail.

Some records regarding the 100 mile march along the River from Fort Mellon to Lake Winder's Fort Taylor detail the hundred Dragoons and their horses leaving Fort Mellon for Fort Taylor. These poor men - dressed in wool uniforms and boots that were not made for water and mud suffered as they slowly made their way south along the river for days. They could only move about ten miles per day.

In Dr. Mahon's book *THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR* he quotes "It is indeed doubtful if U.S. ground forces endured harsher field conditions anywhere (than Fort Taylor). Protracted service in the humidity, the rank growth, and the darkness of the Florida swamps took the sunshine out of a man's life. Cypress knees, mangrove roots, and sawgrass tortured the foot soldier. Too much water, and the lack of water, made his life a torment. There was marching in water from ankle-to-armpit deep, hour after hour, with no chance to dry off, not even at night. Men slept in their clothes, often including boots, for four months running. When mules could not pull the wagons through the mud, the men on foot had to drag them. Surgeon Forry wrote, 'Our position here (Fort Taylor) is indeed melancholy. After each rain we resemble Noah on the top of Mt. Ararat. Clouds of crows and blackbirds then hover around, waiting for the waters to subside, to resume their daily vocation of picking up corn. Turning your eye to the earth you then behold a score of glandered and sore backed mules! Now a mosquito buzzes in your ear, and next a flea bites you between the shoulders.' At other times there were periods of draught so severe that the marching troops could find nothing but stagnant water to drink, and the temperature fluctuated wildly. The same soldier might shuffle along in 102 degree heat that killed mules in one season, and shiver all night from 30 degree cold in the next. A Capt. Joseph R. Smith was quoted as saying, 'We are almost eaten up by fleas, ants, cockroaches and almost all manner of vermin.'"

Far more dangerous, of course, were snakes; and the army trampled its way through areas where even the Seminoles would not live because of the rattlers. Once, feeling a leg heavier than the other, a soldier glanced down to see a large rattlesnake caught by the fangs in his pants leg. (Yet, strange to tell, if snake-bite killed and crippled men, the written record does not mention it so much as one time). There are also records of men fighting over a dead man's boots, as theirs had rotted off. Cut by sawgrass, made raw by insect bites, now and again feeling dizzy from dysentery and fever, the common soldier in Florida (at Fort Taylor) lived in a world which had no horizons. He had little relief to hope for. Dr. Mahon adds

that another officer wrote, "Our march from Fort Mellon to the southern portion of Florida was marked by a great destruction of the finest horses that I have ever seen. Our Regiment suffered a great loss - one that I fear will not be made up in some time." Dr. Mahon's book *The Second Seminole War* is a masterpiece of Seminole history.

The Savage Trading Post was active for many years on the same site as Fort Taylor, but that building was just north of the Indian mound. In the years to follow principally after the Second Indian War, the area around the Savage Trading Post became a cattle center. There was a sandbar across the mouth of the south river just south of the Trading Post that made an important passageway for cattle to cross the river. The Trading Post finally closed out in the early 1900s. There had been a post office at the Trading Post for several years, closing in 1919.

FLORIDA'S RAILROADS

The introduction of the railroads in Florida caused an east coast explosion of settlers, passengers and transportation of goods. In the early 1800s Jacksonville developed into a large and prosperous town, supplying horses, oxen, farm animals, wagons, carts, tools and whatever the newly arrived settlers from Georgia and other east coast states wanted or needed. Some of these people were fleeing from the law! Others just wanted a chance to improve their living standards or make their fortunes. Others had "farmed out" their old worn out farms. Some came walking, some on horseback, some in carts and some in wagons. They brought as much as they could of what they needed, and followed the St. Johns River trails westward, as they could not cross such a wide river - more than a mile across. They proceeded down the west side of the river, settling there and into central Florida. By 1827 passengers with fare money could go aboard a steamship and travel 200 miles to Sanford and begin their trek southward.

By the late 1800s a railroad was built that started in Jersey City, New Jersey. It followed the east coast and chugged into Jacksonville, Florida. The epic year was 1884. Thus in December of that year, Florida's history was taking a giant leap forward with a railroad reaching this then remote part of the country. Settlers, visitors poured into Jacksonville - some to start new lives, others to look around and be our first tourists. This railroad was named the East Coast Railroad and Florida Trade Railroad via the Atlantic Coastline and Florida Central and Peninsula Rail lines.

In 1885 Henry Flagler completed a railroad from Jacksonville to St. Augustine so travelers could visit the nation's oldest permanent settlement and fort at St. Augustine completed by the Spanish in 1565. The line was then extended further south to Titusville reaching there December 27, 1885. It continued south to Palm Beach in 1893 and then on to Miami and Fort Dallas. On April 16, 1896 the railroad extended to Key West. That part of the track was later destroyed but rebuilt in 1912.



Source of Material - *"Flagler's Folly - The Railroad that went to Sea and was Blown Away"* by Rod Bethel.

BOATS AND RAILROADS

BARGES AND BRIDGES

To better understand the early migration of settlers and later commerce from Jacksonville, it is important to understand the difficulties of the settlers and tourists to central Florida as mentioned in the railroad information.

As previously mentioned, the first steamboat to dock at Jacksonville with passengers was from Savannah, Georgia in 1827. It is important to note that the first railroad connecting Florida from the northeast was the New Jersey to Jacksonville railroad completed in 1884. Then in 1885, Henry Flagler bridged the River, and ran a rail line to Titusville and eventually Key West. At the beginning of the Civil War which started in 1861 when Fort Sumter was fired on, a ferry crossed the St. Johns River on a regular basis. The ferry continued in use until the construction of the first bridge across the river in the year 1921 – the second bridge completed in 1941. This led the way to a new way of transportation never before possible.

THE HAULOVER CANAL

Very few of us, so comfortable in our easy lives, know anything about the great event occurring on the Indian River that was the completion of the Haulover Canal that started in 1843 and was completed in 1854 by Henry Titus. (Fishermen had earlier in 1843 cut a narrow canal for their small fishing boats). Few people realized that a narrow strip of land extended completely across the Indian River and made it impossible for boats to leave Jacksonville and reach Titusville or Melbourne. That strip of land made the people from Titusville south entirely dependent on the St. Johns River to Jacksonville. As mentioned in the Salt Lake section, there were seven difficult miles of tram line from Sand Point on the Indian River to Salt Lake because it was impossible to use the Indian River north of Titusville. The completion of the new Haulover Canal at a later date made it possible for boats from Melbourne to go to Jacksonville and changed the lives of many of our east coast settlers. It was so easy now to take a boat from Melbourne to Jacksonville on a straight waterway. Now thousands of boats of all sizes could travel freely from Miami to Jacksonville and then northward to New York.

HYACINTHS IN FLORIDA

In the year 1884, the beautiful St. Johns River received a horrible blow with the introduction of a plant that is very hard to control - the beautiful flowering hyacinth. One of the most destructive events in the St. Johns River history was the appearance of the water hyacinth plant in its waters. In the year 1884 a very nice lady, whose name was W. F. Fuller, purchased several hyacinth plants in New Orleans. The plants had just been brought in from Venezuela. She put them in her pond, and in a short time the pond was overflowing with the plants, so she introduced them into the St. Johns River near Palatka. (This story is unconfirmed.)

The rest is history. These hyacinths are practically indestructible, and efforts to eradicate these hyacinths is costly. If they are chopped up, they make more plants. They can be killed by frequent spraying, and then they sink to the bottom. This ruins the bottom for fish. If left unchecked, the rapidly growing plant would soon close the river for boat use.

NATIVE CREATURES OF/ON/AROUND THE RIVER

The following information shows in a small part why this river is so popular to thousands and thousands of Florida residents and visitors. The river remains a river of commerce in the Lake George to Jacksonville areas. It supports a huge naval base, Mayport, near its mouth. Large vessels still ply the Jacksonville area. The best attractions, however, are its sports activities - boating, skiing, hunting, fishing. It is a river for everyone, but its best features are its living fish, birds, animals. Read on.

The fish

The manatees

The alligators

The birds

The snakes

The ducks

All attractions for all to see and enjoy.

THE FISH OF THE ST. JOHNS RIVER

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission prints a poster that pictures and names 32 different varieties for freshwater fish. 28 species of the 32 are currently found in the St. Johns River. Very few, if any, rivers in North America have such a variety and large fish population. Sportsmen from all over the country come to the St. Johns River to share in its outstanding fishing. In addition to the freshwater species, large striped bass - some up to 40 lbs. - are often taken in the Croaker Hole (a deep spring) in Lake George. Mullet live in the entire length of the river. Flounder, croakers and red fish frequent the Jacksonville area where the river has the greatest salt content. This brackish water works its way many miles into the river's interior. There is a reason for the huge population. It is the natural abundance of freshwater shrimp that all these species of fish will feed on. The varied grasses and plants along the banks harbor these tiny shrimp by the billions. The river's bottom usually forms sandbars that have a huge supply of fresh water mussels and snails. So much natural food keeps the fish population a good fish population even with the ever escalating fishing pressure.

The large-mouth bass as well as the striped bass are premium sport fish. The population of crappie (speckled perch) that are taken each winter is staggering as are the big stringers of blue gills and shell crackers that are taken in the summer months. Many trophy fish are taken each year from the river. Large-mouth bass can still be found up to 14 lbs., but a 14 lb. bass would be rare. However, many bass 10 lb. and over are caught each year by fishermen using native shiners. Striped bass are caught up to 30 lbs. (so "They" tell me) - mostly in the Croaker Hole (spring) at the north end of Lake George using live eels for bait. Other striped bass are caught along much of the river - some up to 12 lbs. Speckled perch (crappie) are taken weighing up to 3 lbs., and blue gills up to 2 lbs. Large pan fish are taken by using large minnows, worms and crickets. There is no such thing as a bad day fishing on the St. Johns River.

If you pick a day when the fish are not biting so well, feast your eyes on the river's ever changing plants and trees at the water's edge. You will see a wide variety of grasses which change from location to location - too many varieties to mention. Grape vines drape themselves from branches. There are magnolia trees, huge oaks, bald and pond cypress trees, wax myrtle, cabbage palms, palmettos - look, they're there.

BIRDS ALONG THE ST. JOHNS RIVER

How pleasant it is as you travel the river to watch the wondrous array of water birds that fly over you or grace the water's edge. How beautiful it is to see a big raft of birds suddenly erupt from around you and take flight temporarily blocking out the sky. Many of the river's water birds are breathtaking in beauty and color. The roseate spoonbill's brilliant colors will remain in your mind's eye. In the winter months, it's such a treat to see large flocks of the huge white pelicans feeding in concert along the river - or watch them fly in circles ever rising until they are almost out of sight. It's as if you are watching a choreographed bird ballet. The whole length of the river supports the great blue heron - almost regal in its stance as it watches you and the water around it for the movement of small fish. The oldest bird frequenting the river is the cormorant. This is a pre-historic bird that dates back millions of years, and its relative is the anhinga.

Another breathtaking sight is the bald eagle. You sight him, he sights you. He is always a very private and stately bird. Once in a while you will see a loon. There are coots, gallinules, common moorhens, clapper rails. There are four different varieties of egrets with their lacy plumage, three different varieties of gulls, flocks of slow flying white and glossy ibis, the cocky kingfisher, the brown speckled (my description) limpkin everywhere. Overhead are ospreys, oyster catchers, dowitchers, black-necked stilts, willets, yellow-legs and curlews abound. The black skimmers are gorgeous in flight as are the wood storks (but standing along

the river, they would never win a beauty contest). Seven varieties of terns and always a few vultures are near. Occasionally a wild turkey will peek at you for a brief moment. These are just a few of the large variety of birds to be seen on the river.

My favorite wading bird is the beautiful sand hill crane – grey in color with a red top-notch – stately – often not afraid of people. In flight it often thrills you with its throaty, garbled call – a sound most pleasant to the ear. The seasons of high water in the river are the times when most water birds can be seen. But whatever the water's level, you will see the beautiful boat-tailed grackle and redwing blackbird. Both have such happy sounds. Above Lake Harney the higher ground is frequented by song birds such as the cardinals, blue jays, mocking birds and many, many more. A joy to behold.

THE ALLIGATORS

Many alligators live in Florida, but can be found as far north as the Carolinas and southern states west to Texas. These impressive reptiles are a great curiosity to our northern visitors. Many tourists each year enjoy seeing the Florida alligators first-hand from air boat rides and other sightseeing boats.

Wildlife agencies protect these animals from being over-hunted by only issuing a few permits to hunt them. The permits cost \$250 each, and the hunting is closely regulated. There are no crocodiles in the St. Johns River, but there are thousands and thousands of 'gators along the river's 310 miles. The heavy population of 'gators is south of Lake Harney where they have more privacy from humans. These animals are truly prehistoric. The crocodilian branch of these reptiles dates back 200 million years – Jurassic period. The crocodilian branch of the archosaur reptiles is presently a relatively restricted group both in terms of numbers of species and morphologic diversity. The fossil record demonstrates that this was not always so. Some ancient crocodilians once lived entirely on land and others specialized to live entirely in the ocean. The 50

foot Deinosuchus preyed upon dinosaurs and the two foot long Terrestriuchus had the long and slender legs of a greyhound. Semi-aquatic crocodilians similar to the modern species have existed since the late Jurassic period, surviving the mass extinction event at the end of the Cretaceous period that devastated their dinosaur contemporaries. The oldest crocodilians were of the Eocene age, 38 to 54 million years ago, and were found in the northern part of the Florida peninsula.

Now very few alligators grow beyond 12 feet. Millions of years of changes have produced our present day alligators. They are protected in our state, because of their contributions to the balance of nature. They eat many trash fish, mud fish, gar fish, etc. The real truth is they will eat almost anything that offers a meal – even bugs and snails. They will eat dogs and other small animals that might wander near the water. If their kill is large such as a deer or calf, they cannot eat it immediately, as their mouths are not designed to tear meat apart. These larger animals are then stored under water to decompose, so they can be eaten in parts. Their diet does not stop there. They will eat turtles, snakes, water birds, ducks, frogs, etc.

These amazing reptiles can live 60 years or more – depending on its food supply. They can go for months without eating anything. Their body functions and metabolism can go on hold. When that is in effect, they barely move about and don't burn up body energy. In the northern-most territory, they can live in freezing water – remaining under ice for an extended period. Their body temperature is only a degree away from the outside temperature around them. Through time they have developed a bone-like particle called scoot. These are small pieces of bone located in the large bumps you see on the 'gator's back. These scoots take in heat from the sun and store it for body use.

Popular belief is that alligators are stupid. "Not so", says Flavio Morrissiey, curator of reptiles at Gatorland in Kissimmee, Florida, who has studied alligators and Cuban crocs for 13 years. Alligators can be taught to come forward when called by name or by use of hand signals,

he says. They remember well – even after a year. Their brain is a well developed one – enlarged on both sides and thinner over the skull center.

Alligator meat is good to eat if prepared properly. The ‘gator meat kept many of our early Indians fed particularly when other foods are not available. The saddle section of ‘gator hides can be used for belts, shoes, handbags. The hide is removed between the ridged back – from the under jaw to the beginning of the tail.

When hunting alligators at night, lights are shined into the darkness until the light comes upon two huge beautiful ruby colored eyes giving away the alligator’s position. In the early summer, the alligators mate. The females then make a mound on a shore and bury 30 or so eggs that are soft-shelled. When the eggs hatch, the baby alligators must make their way to the water. Few baby alligators survive, however, because the young ‘gators are excellent food for other alligators and herons. On the land racoons raid the nests to feast on the eggs. The question is often asked about how fast do alligators grow. Flavio Morrissiey says it mostly depends on availability of food and the ease to obtain it that determines the alligators growth. His study shows that a baby alligator, if he can eat all the food he can every day with no effort, can grow to 6 feet in only one year. Most alligators grow just a few inches per year. Many books are written about these remarkable reptiles.

I cannot leave our story about alligators without sharing with you a little more information about the intelligence of the Florida alligators – once thought to be stupid. Flavio Morrissiey probably knows more about alligators and crocodiles than anyone in our state. He has studied these animals for 13 years, and has just released his new study prepared in concert with others on the Cuban crocodiles, (crocodiles similar to our Florida alligators). This study is dumbfounding to people knowledgeable in the field of alligators. In it, he tells us that alligators can be taught their names, and will respond when their name is called. They respond

to training, and have a good memory. It took only 10 training sessions for the animals to respond to their names.

SNAKES OF THE ST. JOHNS - PAST AND PRESENT

We begin with the first snakes along the river - the prehistoric snake records as shown in the fossil vertebrates of Florida.

First, the poisonous snakes:

There was a forerunner of what we know as the eastern diamond-back rattlesnake. This huge early rattlesnake grew to be 12 feet long and had a body like a large boa constrictor. There were large coral snakes, pigmy rattlers and cottonmouths much like we see along the river today. The poisonous snakes along the river today are the descendants of the early varieties. The largest of all the rattlesnakes, the eastern diamond-back rattlesnake, and is still found (but not often) along the banks in the northern part of the river usually south of Lake Harney. South of Lake Harney, the surrounding areas are too moist.

The cross and mean little ground pigmy rattler is found in dry spots and on old Indian mounds the length of the river. The pigmy or ground rattler is small, and when they rattle you can barely hear them. These little snakes are quick and ill tempered. Be careful of them on sandy soil, tops of bank, mounds. They can't kill you, but they can really hurt you.

The age old cottonmouth moccasin (with elliptical eye pupils) also range the river's length. It is the only water snake along the river that has a light colored stripe underneath the eye running the length of its head. It is called cottonmouth because of its habit of opening its mouth in a threatening fashion when approached, and when it does that, the mouth looks like it is cotton. The cottonmouth's body is heavier than a non-poisonous snake, so it usually swims on top of the water. Rattlers and cottonmouth usually try to warn away intruders. Being mostly a water snake their numbers are greater south of Lake Harney. None of these poisonous snakes will attack you. Very few people are ever bitten

by poisonous snakes, but when such a thing does happen it's because they stepped too close to the snake, or missed in trying to capture it.

The coral snake almost never bites anyone. Their mouth is so small they can only bite a toe or finger. They don't strike. It can be identified by its black tipped nose followed by a very yellow band, then a black band, then another yellow band and then a red band. These bands go all the way around the snake. The little scarlet snake has a pink nose and a white belly and is often killed being mistaken for a coral snake.

It is a shame that so many people have such great fear of our snakes. Believe me, the snakes are much more afraid of us - and with good reason.

The non-poisonous snakes:

Fossil vertebra of Florida list the following snakes as being prehistoric: the king snake, the hog nose snake, the indigo snake, the coachwhip snake, the mud snake, the rat snake, the corn snake. These listed snakes are land snakes, and these species still exist today. In addition you will find the black snake, garter snake, ribbon snake, green snake. Most of these snakes are found north of Lake Harney where there is higher ground, but they do frequent the entire length of the river and adjacent lands.

The most frequently seen snakes in or very close to the river or in the river itself are the more numerous water snakes. By far the largest number is the banded water snake (which vary greatly in their coloring). The green water snake is large and dark in color and often mistaken for a cottonmouth. Another water snake is the brown water snake. His head is triangular in shape and is often killed by someone who thinks it is a cottonmouth. There is also a salt marsh snake found only near salt water. Water snakes usually swim under the water with only the head above the surface. All of the non-poisonous snakes have a round pupil and can be identified by that round pupil; the cottonmouth moccasin

has an elliptical pupil. I make an urgent plea to you to not kill all the snakes you see - only kill poisonous snakes that are a threat.

Snakes are important members of the community in which they live. They perform valuable ecological services. All are carnivores. They eat rodents, insects, earthworms, crayfish, fishes and a few birds. In turn, they provide food for bobcats, hawks, owls, racoons, panthers, black bears, storks, herons and other snakes and even humans.

Florida is richly endowed with 45 species, but they are disappearing rapidly. If we kill off the snakes, the balance of nature in just a short time will move "off balance".

Note: information on snakes is found in the outstanding book *The Fossil Vertebrates of Florida* edited by Richard Hulbert.

THE DUCKS OF THE ST. JOHNS

Each year at duck season, hundreds of boats loaded with duck hunters race up and down the River in the dark before dawn to find the special spot for a blind and to spread their decoys and wait until daylight when flocks of ducks will hopefully come within their gun range.

A variety of ducks follow the St. Johns Flyway - migratory mallards, blue and green wing teal, wood ducks, blue bills, canvas backs, Florida native black mallard, widgeons. The ducks of the greatest number are the blue and green winged teal. They fly nearly 70 MPH and can easily outsmart even a good marksman. There is always a large population of coots - mostly because they are seldom shot or taken by hunters. Their meat is not considered edible. The old-timers did kill coots, however, for their very large gizzards. Only a very small amount of ducks grace the river now - not like in the earlier years when flocks of duck of all varieties would darken the sky - so vast were their numbers.

MANATEES

Manatees are our oldest living mammals, and look much the same as they always have. The earliest manatees were only slightly more primitive. They swim the waters of Florida where they have done so for 45 to 50 million years. They are the only marine mammals that primarily eat vegetation. Our manatee is classified as the West Indian Manatee. The manatees swim in the St. Johns in the winter and

around the Florida peninsula going as far north as Rhode Island and as far west as Texas. They have also been seen near the Dry Tortugas.

A Florida manatee migrates when water temperatures drop below 68F. We have two divisions of manatees – those who frequent the east coast and those who frequent the west coast. It is the east coast manatees who frequent the St. Johns River swimming south to north of Puzzle Lake (which is very shallow). The average manatee is about 10 feet in length and weighs from 800 to 1,200 lbs. This is a unique animal. It has a spatulate shaped tail which moves up and down to propel the manatee through the water – if need with great speed. The two pectoral flippers along the upper part of the manatee's body are used primarily for steering. The species' name, *Manatus*, means having hands. This is in reference to its flexible flippers which aid the manatee by grasping and moving food to its mouth, cleaning its front facial area, guiding movement along a water bottom or for touch and embracing objects and other manatees. The manatees are shallow water feeders and can only dive to a depth of 33 feet. An average manatee eats between 32 to 108 lbs. of food a day. The manatees are mammals, are live-bearers, and the calves suckle their mothers' milk.

Manatees are a protected species, but many are slashed by propellers from fast moving boats each year – hence the manatee slow zones have been in place to slow boats in those areas that manatees frequent. The manatee population grows each year and over-grazing of some areas has been noted. These animals must be protected, however, because so many more of them suffer terrible wounds from boat propellers. There

is a magical quality about these friendly giants. Almost everyone is thrilled at a sighting, and their presence in the St. Johns is an added attraction.

THE ST. JOHNS RIVER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

The State of Florida owes a great deal to the St. Johns River Management District for their constant battle to protect the ecology of the river and the river's broad basin. It is a huge task and not without adversity. They do not have an easy job. They are possibly our last defense to protect some of Florida's most sensitive areas. Glance at the map included, and you will see the immense task they face and manage so well.

Water has become Florida's most thought about and talked about resource, and with very good reason. We are running out of water. The St. Johns River Management District covers 12,400 square miles which is nearly 8,000,000 acres. It protects 21% of Florida's area. Twenty five percent of our state's population which is about four million people live in this same 12,400 square mile area.

The St. Johns River Management District has to serve 19 counties and 101 municipalities. It takes over 700 employees to handle this enormous responsibility. This is no small operation.

When asked what the mission of the St. Johns River Management District is, their answer is simple. "Our mission is to manage water resources to ensure their continued availability while maximizing both environmental and economic benefits." As you can see, this is a very large mission.

Florida experienced devastating hurricanes in the 1940s and 1960s. After these years came the incredible droughts of the 1970s. Today more than ever, the Management District is most needed to protect our water resources from our growing demands which are caused by a rapidly

increasing population and booming development of industry and agriculture.

In 1972 our State passed the Water Resources Act, Chap. 273-State Statutes. Five Water Management Districts were then created, and it is then they were given the awesome responsibilities of protecting our surface water and ground water. They will need cooperation from all of us.

Most of the above information above came from one of their folders entitled Guardians of Florida's Water.

My most sincere thanks go to Maurice Sterling, CPM. He is the Director of Projects Management for the St. Johns River District. He has



Tattooed Timucua of High Rank

supplied me with any information and folders I have needed and answered my many questions. He has invited me to special Management meetings in which he knew I had interest. Few people have a love of Florida so ingrained in their being as Maurice Sterling.

We have come to the end of the early history of the St. Johns River up to the current time. It is a body of water like none other. I have enjoyed it for 65 years. It was beautiful then, and that's how it remains. It has been a source of magic to me through my life, and it is my wish that many others will enjoy the magic of the river for many years to come.

Threatened and Endangered Species of Florida

10 Species of Animals

Peregrine Falcon
Whooping Crane
Wood Stork
Snail Kite
Florida Sandhill Crane

Bald Eagle
Least Tern
Purple Skimmer (insect)
Florida Black Bear
Eastern Indigo Snake

32 Species of Plants

Brittle Maidenhair Fern
Auricled Spleen-Wort
Bird's Nest Spleenwort
Many-Flowered Grass Pink
Long Strap Fern
Flatwoods Sunflower
Star Anise
Bog Spicebush
Hand Fern
Widespread Polybody
Plume Polybody
Swamp Plume Polybody
Peperomia
Florida Peperomia
Common Wild-Pine
Giant Wild-Pine

Curtis' Sandgrass
Snowy Orchid
Catesby Lily
Angle-Pod
Blue Butterworth
Yellow Butterworth
White-Fringed Orchid
Yellow-Fringed Orchid
Southern Rein Orchid
Rose Pogonia
Hooded Pitcher-Plant
Lace-Lip Ladies' Tresses
Long-Lip Ladies' Tresses
Reflexed Wild-Pine
Rainlily
Simpson's Zephyr-Lily

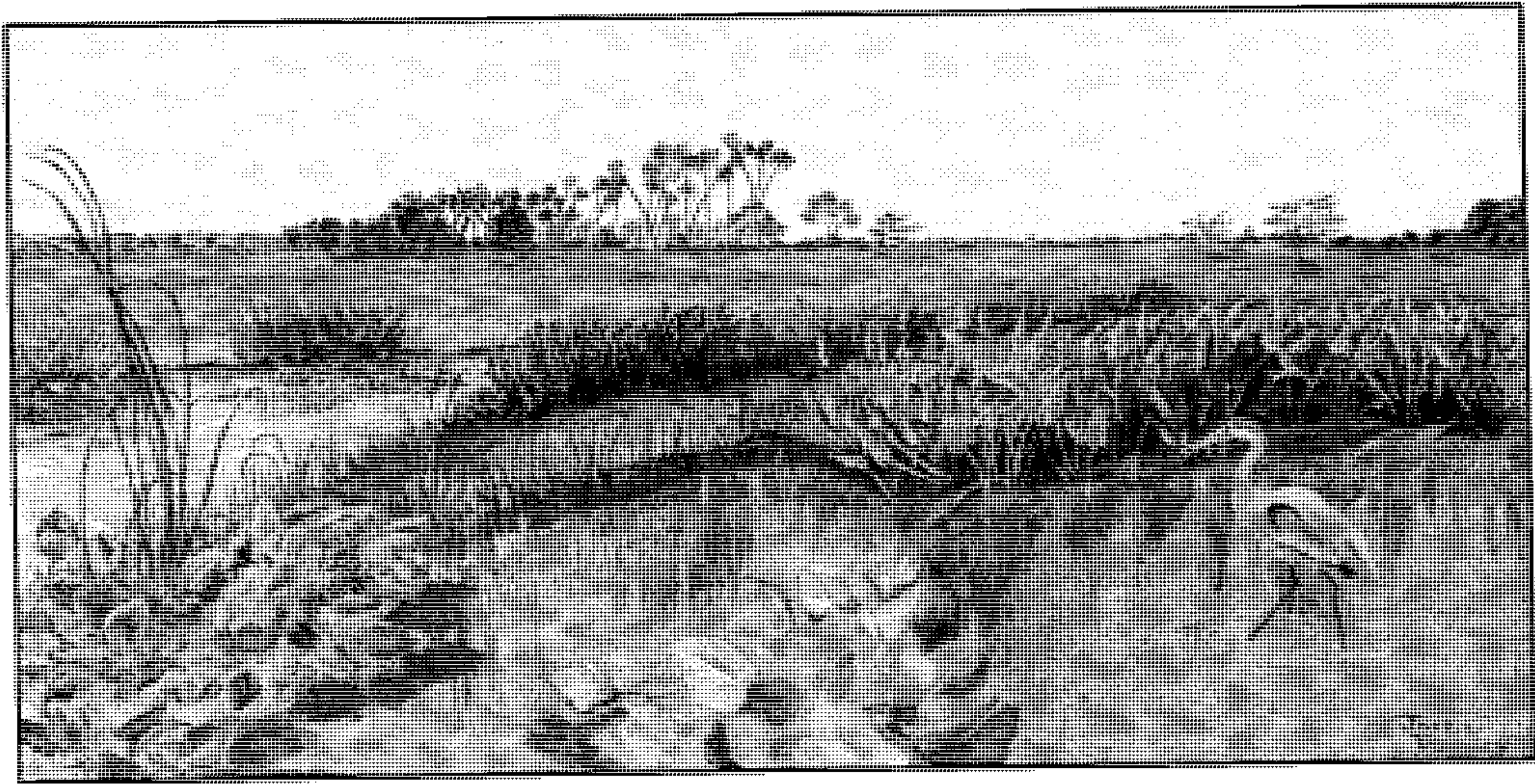
Ed Winn is a native of Florida. He was born in Central Florida and currently resides in Maitland, Florida with his wife Gloria. Ed's love for Florida the great outdoors and history prompted him to write this book. His other books are entitled:

I Never Had Enough Money to Leave Town

My Florida Soul

Thank You Lord for Laughter

The Florida Story Teller's Guide



Snake Creek on the St. Johns River from an original painting by artist Jackie Rumbley a life-long resident of Sanford, Florida.