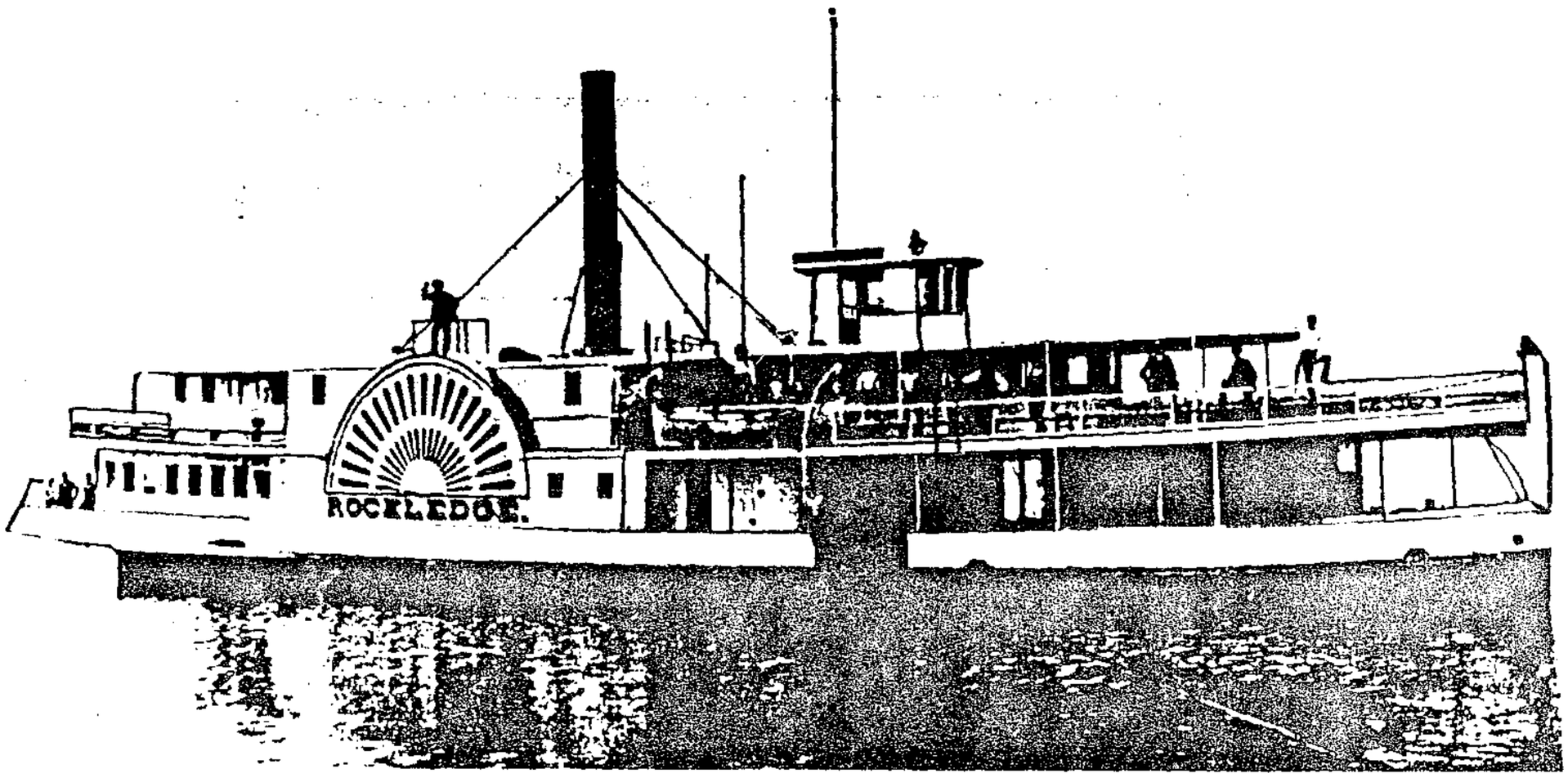
THE ROCKLEDGE, FLORIDA STEAMBOAT LINE

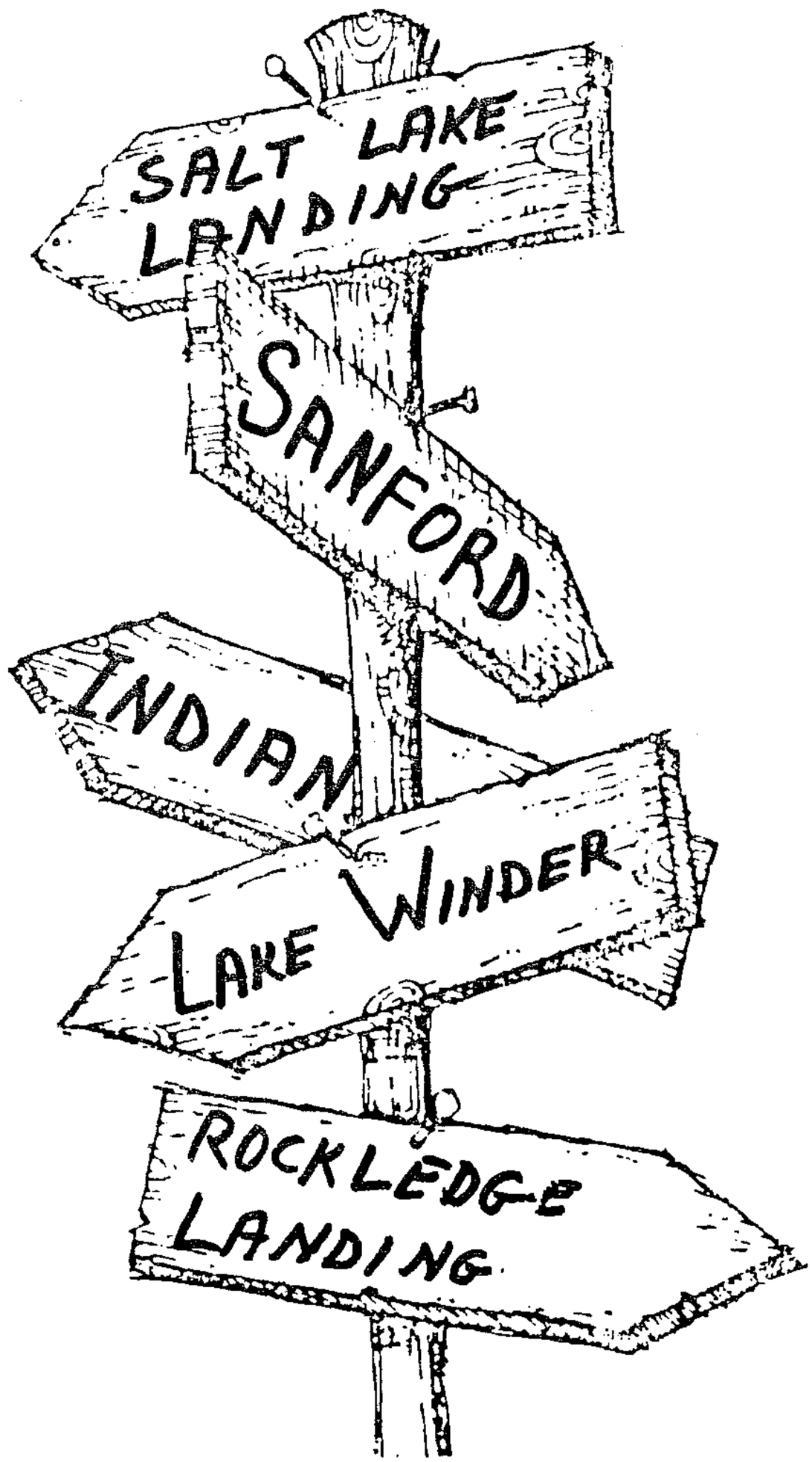


JEANNE —
I HAD THIS BOOK COPIED FOR YOU
FROM MY COPY - THIS BOOK HAS
BEEN OUT OF PRINT FOR YEARS —
VERY FEW COPIES WERE MADE —

By

Fred A. Hopwood

Ed Wm



The history of Steamboating on the Upper St. Johns River is only a small part of the many events that occurred during the period of the 1880's. Steamboats, other than those mentioned in this book, made the scene prior to 1880, but their presence in this region is lost to history. Many names and events have been overlooked, but it is my hope that this book may be useful to history buffs in the future in understanding how and why this County of Brevard has grown to be the nice county it is today.

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F-O-R-W-A-R-D

These pages about the Upper St. Johns River and The Hart and Smith Rockledge Line of Steamboats are the result of several years research. Very few words have ever been published about this section of Florida's most scenic river and its early history. And it is difficult to believe that until a railroad penetrated the region and connected Titusville with the middle of the state, this Upper St. Johns river route was the only route to enter Brevard County and the Indian River country until 1885.

There were no newspapers in Brevard County during the first ten years of steamboat service, consequently, with the exception of family histories, diaries and memoirs of the early pioneer settlers who homesteaded the area back then, there are no sources to consult about the various steamboats or the routes they used during the 1870s.

The author is forever grateful to these early arrivals for jotting down their memories.

The Brevard County archives contain very few records from the 1870s. The only records on file from that period are minutes of Board of County Commissioner meetings, marriage records, wills and a book connecting cattle brands to their owners.

And after 1950 there was no one around who remembered any of the quaint steamboats that once graced the Upper St. Johns River at Rockledge Landing.

In 1960 the Jacksonville Historical Society erected a bronze tablet on the northwest corner of the main post office, facing Hogan Street. The inscription reads:

"To the South lies the first great river in North America to be discovered by white men. Called by the Indians Illaka, by the French Rivere de Mai, 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."

I trust you will find something of merit in the following pages!

THE UPPER ST. JOHNS RIVER

The river rises from the level, wide, marshy treeless plains in Indian River County, west of Ft. Pierce and Vero Beach, where the swamp enters Lake Wilmington or Blue Cypress Lake as it is also called. It enters Brevard County north of Fellsmere. Lake Hell'n Blazes is the first of the St. Johns chain of lakes. It varies greatly in size, overflowing its ill-defined banks in times of flooding, and going nearly dry when rains are scant.

The shores and bottom here and in Lake Sawgrass, immediately downstream from it, are of a fibrous peat, the remains of thick marsh vegetation which formerly flourished, and still does, all through the upper river regions. Often this material breaks loose from the shore and forms large floating islands which support a heavy growth of plants.

The character of Lake Washington, a body of water larger than the two previously mentioned lakes, is physically similar. These lakes, and Lake Winder, just north of Lake Washington, are related to the river as beads on a chain.

The connecting channel is relatively long but the low banks are not well defined. They are sometimes narrow and not over 30 feet across, and sometimes nearly as wide as the surrounding plain itself, depending on the amount of current rain fall.

As it passes through Lake Winder the river channel becomes more distinct and is choked with fewer plants, and firm, sandy bottoms become evident. Cypress islands begin to appear.

From Lake Winder northward, the river flows through Lake Poinsett and on into the Puzzle Lakes. On the east side of Lake Poinsett a short stream leads into Lake Florence and thence into Rockledge Creek where Rockledge Landing is located. Much activity that occurred at the steamboat landing on Rockledge Landing is recorded in this book. Rockledge Landing comes close to Indian River. Only 3 miles separate the two streams. What remains of Rockledge Landing can be reached by traveling to the west end of Barton Boulevard in the city of Rockledge.

Once the river enters the Puzzle Lakes the channel meanders into a confusing maze of branches and dead-end sloughs. In times of drought, this portion goes nearly dry.

During the spanning season Shad often favored the waters of Puzzle Lake when depositing eggs. Early sportsmen told of scouping up Shad by the bucket-ful.

INBOARD STERNWHEELERS

Steampower came to the Upper St. Johns River in the 1870s, and it was the force that enabled the river to realize its destiny as the lifeline that kept the economy going, bringing from the outside world the necessities required to sustain life in a little known, mosquito infested part of the Country.

Sometime in the early 1870s, a distinctive type of riverboat began steaming to the Upper St. Johns River to welcoming shouts of residents of Titusville and Rockledge. It was a no-frills, inboard, sternwheel workhorse especially designed for upper-river schedules, that had no distinct channel and many obstacles hidden under water.

Small, ugly and far from being sturdy, these small 80-foot long steamers, lasted on the average of 8 to 10 years. Although, the ASTATULA, a money maker for all her years running on the St. Johns River, was still in good operating condition when she was taken off her schedule about 1912.

One traveler wrote of fleas, bed bugs and roaches, plus a lack of heat in February. Many complained of the 6 X 6 X 6 cubby holes referred to as staterooms. Yet during periods of low water, when channels were only waist deep, these small steamboats could carry full loads.

Often patched up, sometimes with cannibalized parts. these inboard steamboats were still operating on the Upper St. Johns River, when larger and more popular steamers were sidelined by the coming of the railroads.

BLOCKADE RUNNERS USED ROCKLEDGE LANDING

About 1870 Captain Thomas J. Lund, Sr., came to the St. Johns River area and began putting his steamboat line together. When he obtained the steamboat VOLUSIA and began running her from Jacksonville to Lake Monroe, aboard his steamer was none other than a deckhand named Allen, who was a Stevedore aboard the JAMES BURT when she was used as a blockade runner during the Civil War.

Allen told Captain Lund that the JAMES BURT made dozens of trips to what later came to be called Rockledge Landing. It was during the Civil War. Blockade runners came into Jupiter and Indian River Inlets, bringing much contraband in the form of coffee, salt, ammunition and other much needed commodities. Rockledge Landing was used as a point of contact since it was only three miles from the Indian River, and once on the St. Johns River, the contraband was taken to points in North Florida via the steamer JAMES BURT.

Allen escorted Captain Lund aboard the VOLUSIA on exploratory trips to the upper reaches of the St. Johns River and pointed out the county road that connected east Brevard County with the Kissimmee River on the west. The road was located on the shore of Lake Winder in the vicinity of the community Savage. The county installed a lighter on Lake Winder for the convenience of those pioneer settlers travelling from one end of the large county to the other. One fork of the road led to Rockledge and the other to Eau Gallie. Mail carriers used these roads while delivering mail on horseback.

On another trip, they steamed up to Lake Washington and made forays on the old Capron Trail, which connected the forts during the Seminole Indian War.

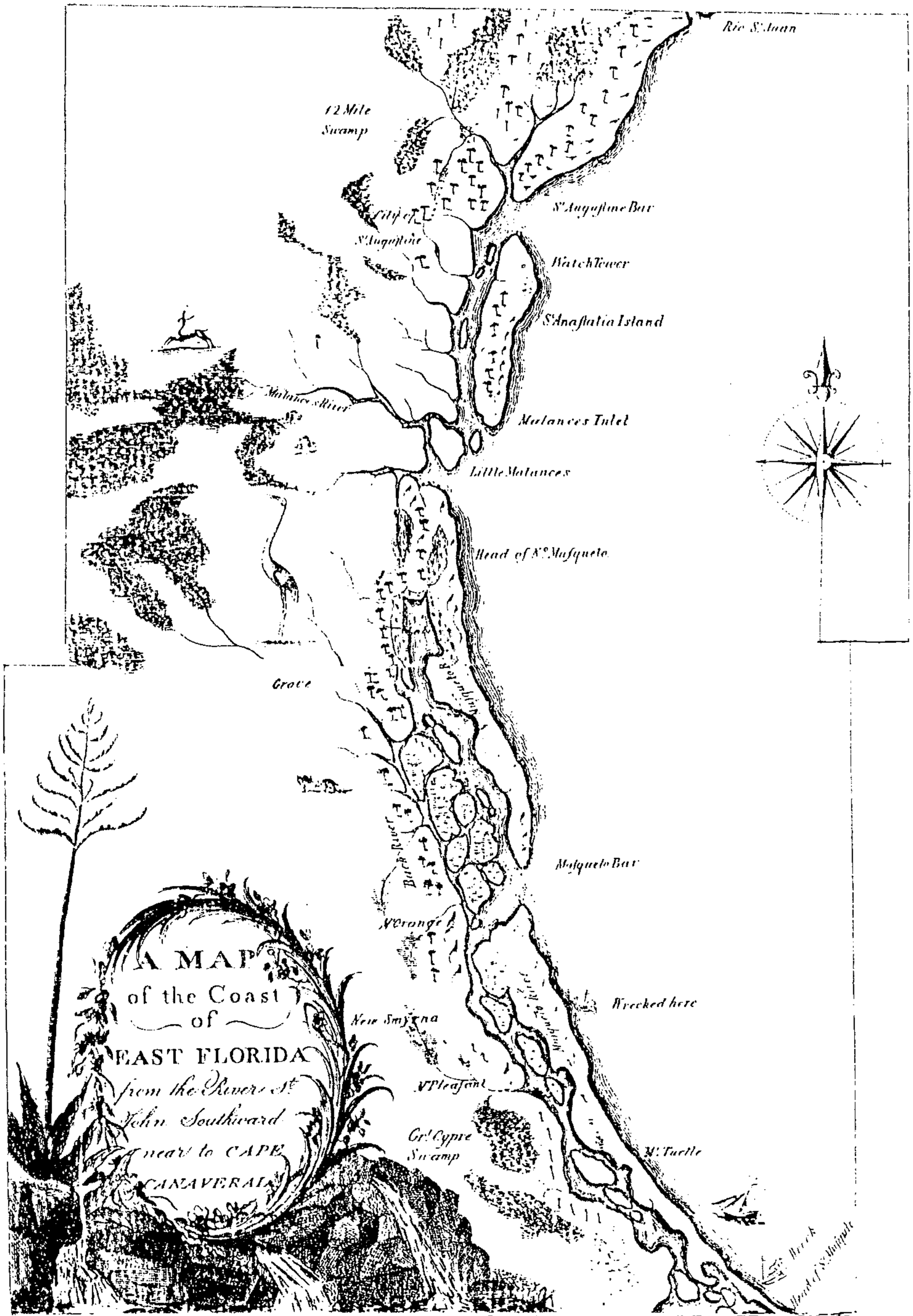
COMPETING FOR THE PASSENGER DOLLAR

Since this book is primarily about the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line of Steamboats, the reader shouldn't assume that Hart & Smith had a monopoly on the Upper St. Johns River route.

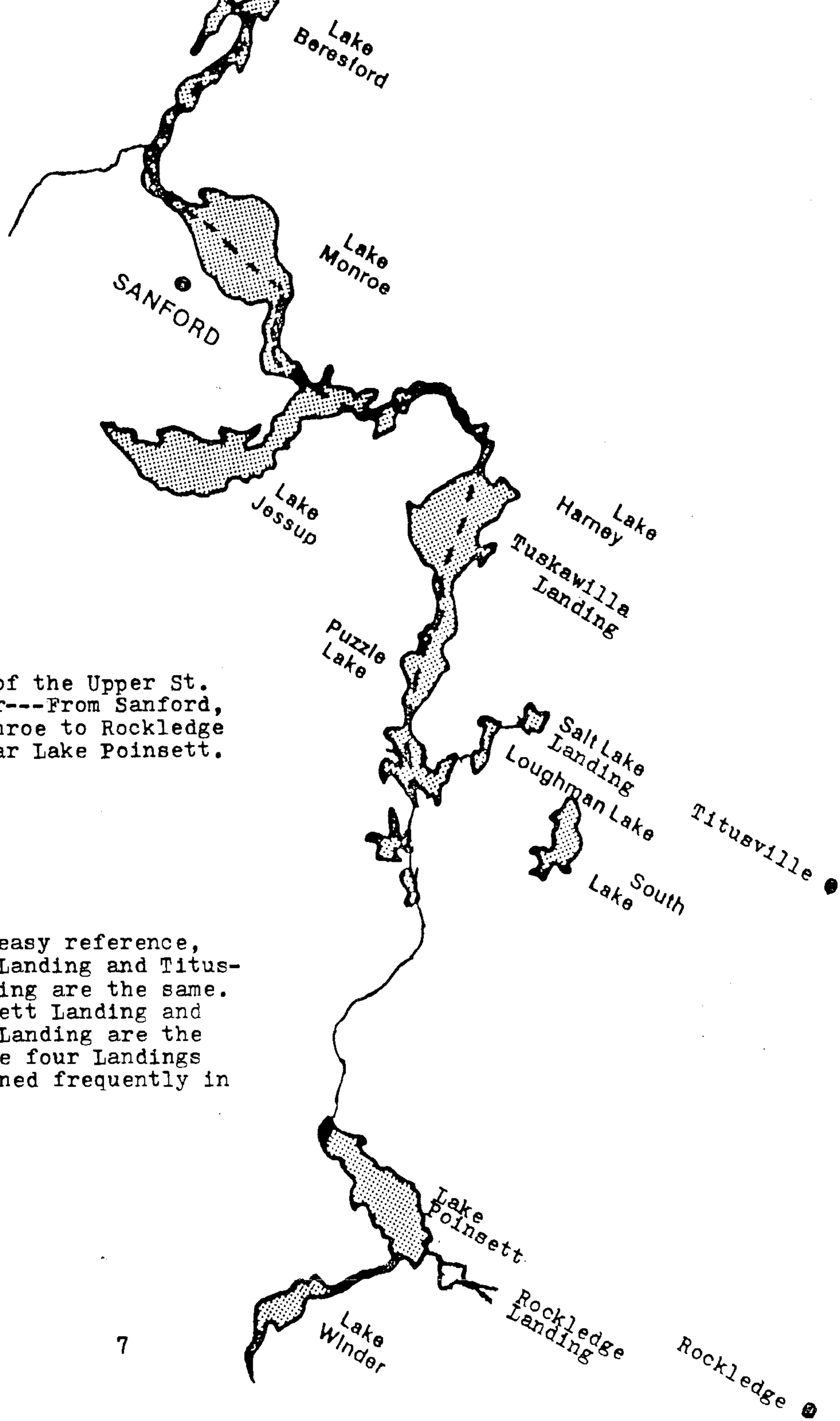
Nothing could be further from the truth.

There was much competition for the passenger dollar. At least a dozen steamers were making the scene along with Hart & Smith's steamers.

Much competition came from The Lund Pioneer Steamboat Line with their four steamers. Others include the EVERGLADE, ISIS, and the PICOLATA.

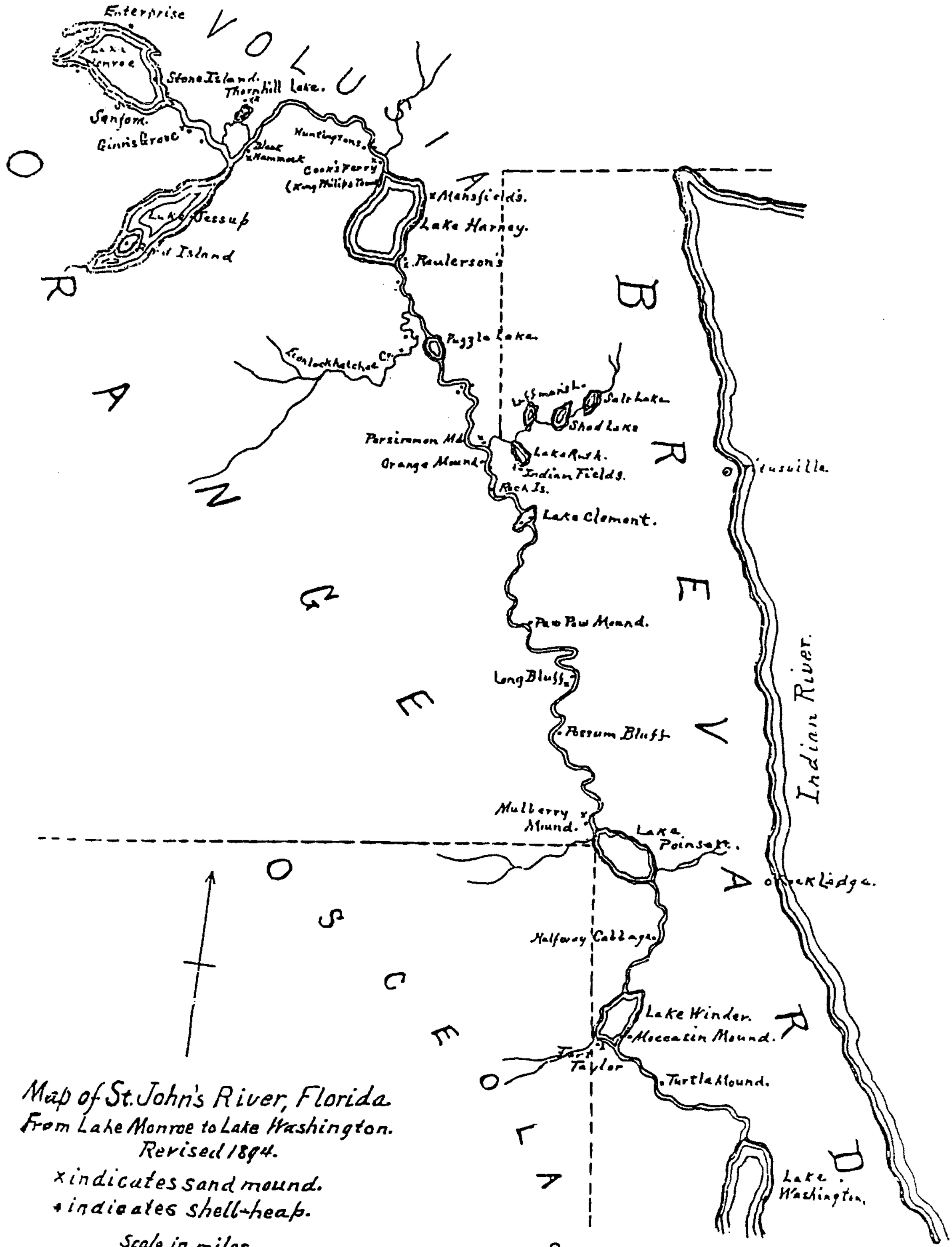


A very old Spanish Map of East Florida names RIO ST. JUAN for our St. Johns River. The Upper St. Johns portion was simply called the "BACK RIVER."



A portion of the Upper St. Johns River---From Sanford, on Lake Monroe to Rockledge Landing near Lake Poinsett.

NOTE: For easy reference, Salt Lake Landing and Titusville Landing are the same. Lake Poinsett Landing and Rockledge Landing are the same. These four Landings are mentioned frequently in this book.



Map of St. John's River, Florida.
From Lake Monroe to Lake Washington.
Revised 1894.
× indicates sand mound.
• indicates shell-heap.

Scale in miles.
1 2 3 4 5

NEW STEAMBOAT LINE

The Hart & Smith Rockledge Line of Steamboats was formed by Colonel Hubbard L. Hart and Captain Joe H. Smith in the early 1880s. Shortly thereafter a notice appeared in The Florida Star, A Titusville weekly newspaper:

"Captain Joe Smith and Colonel H. L. Hart will at once put on a line of steamers to run between Sanford and Rockledge Landing on Lake Poinsett, which is the end of transportation on the St. Johns River, and within two and one half miles of Rockledge on the Indian River. The operators note that their steamboats will make connections at Sanford with the DeBary Line and Hart's Ocklawaha River Line.

"The steamboat MARION will be the pioneer boat, which Captain Smith, for the present will be in command.

"Messrs. Smith and Hart contemplate building next summer a large, very light draft stern wheel steamer for the Rockledge Line, which will be completed in time to move the crop of oranges from the Indian River region, and also to accommodate passengers." The new boat was the ASTATULA.

In November 1880, the steamboat MARION was sold to Colonel Hart for $2,000 and when the Rockledge Steamboat Line was formed, the MARION immediately became the flagship of that line and began making twice a week trips from Sanford to Rockledge Landing, and Captain Joe Smith took over as superintendent of the line, and brought in the steamboat WAUNITA.

The steamboat ASTATULA was built for Colonel Hart at Palatka, Florida in 1881, with Captain Henry A. Gray as Master. The ASTATULA had one steep ladder in the center line. The cabin deck and single cabin were rounded off forward, and the cabin was so narrow it permitted a full length promenade deck. During her five years of service on the Upper St. Johns River she served Brevard County and Rockledge well. Bringing in hundreds of passengers and taking out thousands of crates of delicious Indian River citrus fruit. Tourists were always complimenting the Steward for his food and service.

The Hart & Smith Rockledge Line of Steamers used light pine wood for fuel which was supplied from cribs along the edge of the river. Attendants conducted the sales during the day. At night a lockbox on the wharf was used to receive "wood tickets" giving the name of the steamboat and the amount purchased. These tickets, signed by the captain or the purser were often circulated as currency up and down the river. Many families along the river received income from the sale of wood fuel.

STEAMBOATS OF THE HART & SMITH ROCKLEDGE LINE

MARION She was the first steamboat to join the new Hart & Smith Rockledge Line, but she was no newcomer to the Upper St. Johns route, having made the run since 1880. 78 feet long, with a 18 foot beam, and like other Upper St. Johns River steamers, had an inboard sternwheel.

WAUNITA The WAUNITA was built at Jacksonville. She was 77 feet long with a 22 foot beam. Her first assignment was hauling tourists on the Ocklawaha river. Captain John Smith, her owner, told friends: "After a hard day's work, sleeping aboard the WAUNITA was about as close to Heaven and nature as a man could get."

ASTATULA The ASTATULA was launched on Lake Harris in 1881 and was put on the Silver Springs run by Colonel Hart. Being but 80 feet long, with a 20 foot beam, she could maneuver the Upper St. Johns River with ease. She joined the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line in 1883 and made two round trips from Sanford to Rockledge weekly. She immediately became the Queen of the Upper St. Johns River and the flagship of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line. She was also the workhorse of the line, seldom needing repairs and always on time. The ASTATULA was so well built, she was still running on her route in 1912.

OSCEOLA The OSCEOLA was named for the famous Seminole Indian Chief. An early newspaper, the Sanford Orbit, noted in an 1884 edition: "The transfer of the OSCEOLA will add still another steamboat to the ever increasing fleet on the Upper St. Johns River. She doubtless will be used in connection with the operations of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line, and will become a prominent feature in the development of the tourist travel to the Upper St. Johns River. Actually, the OSCEOLA was brought in to haul out the increasing production of Indian River oranges, pineapples and winter vegetables. In addition to hauling cargo, she also carried passengers.

ARROW The ARROW was an older steamboat when she joined the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line. She was built in Delaware and saw service during the Civil War while making runs on the Chesapeake Bay. While flying the Hart & Smith Banner, Captain Charles Schoonmaker was her master. He was quite familiar with the Upper St. Johns River, having been on the Sanford, Lake Jessup, Lake Harney, Titusville and Rockledge route for several years. The ARROW, being the largest ship on the Hart & Smith roster, only ran to Rockledge Landing during high water periods. The ARROW was a sidewheel steamer.

After setting up business on the Upper St. Johns River, The Hart & Smith Rockledge Line began advertising in Florida newspapers:

"FOR INDIAN RIVER; Hart & Smith's Rockledge Line. The steamer ASTATULA, will leave Sanford every Tuesday for Rockledge, and will leave Sanford for Salt Lake and Titusville every Friday.

"Returning, will leave Rockledge Landing every Wednesday at 4:00 P. M., and Salt Lake every Saturday at 9 A.M. for Sanford.

"Prompt close connections made with daily line steamers for Jacksonville and all points North.

"FARE: Deck fare $2.00; with meals $3.00; with stateroom and meals $5.00."

Passenger service improved to such an extent that a ticket office was opened to accommodate the hundreds of guests checking into the Rockledge hotels. An early east coast business directory read as follows:

"Hart & Smith's Rockledge Steamboat Line. J. H. Smith, General Manager; E. B. Van Deman, General Agent; E. C. Culpepper, Agent. Offices in the New Rock Ledge Hotel, Rockledge, Florida."

So many tourists complained to Captain Joe Smith about the bone rending hack ride from Rockledge Landing to Rockledge that with the coming of the 1883-84 tourist season, comfortable stage coaches were introduced for the three mile trip, for which a fare of fifty cents was charged. The mule driven hacks continued hauling cargo and baggage.

As more and more passengers and freight came to Lake Poinsett and Rockledge Landing, the need was felt for regular transportation to the Indian River and the Rockledge hotels, hence the following notice of incorporation appeared in the November 24, 1880 issue of the Florida Star:

LAKE POINSETT AND ROCKLEDGE RAILROAD:

"Notice is hereby given that in accordance with the provisions of an act of the Legislature of the State of Florida, entitled 'an act to provide for the Incorporation of Railroads and Canals,' approved February 19th, 1874, We the undersigned have formed a company to be styled, named and known as The Lake Poinsett and Rockledge Railroad Company, for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and operating a Railroad, from Lake Poinsett on Upper St. Johns River, in the County of Brevard, to Rockledge on Indian River, in the County of Brevard, State of Florida, for public use in the conveyance of persons and property. All of said railroad in Brevard County to be almost two and one half miles (2½) in length." SIGNED:

ROBT. A. HARDEE, C.B. MAGRUDER, J. Q. STEWART, JENKINS M. HOLMES

Notice of Incorporation of Lake Poinsett & Rockledge Railroad.

NOTICE is hereby given, that in accordance with the provisions of an act of the Legislature of the State of Florida, entitled an act to provide for the incorporation of railroads and canals, approved February 19th, 1874, we, the undersigned, have formed a company to be styled, named and known as the Lake Poinsett & Rockledge Railroad Company on Indian River, for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and operating a railroad from a point on Lake Poinsett in Brevard county, State of Florida, to a point on Indian River, in the county of Brevard, State of Florida, for public use in the conveyance of persons and property; said road to be run through the county of Brevard, and to be five miles in length.

JOSEPH N. WILKINSON.
H. H. WILKINSON.
S. J. FOX.
ROBT. A. HARDEE.
GARDNER S. HARDEE.

Dec 29 90d.

Notice of Incorporation of the Titusville & Rockledge R. R. Company.

BY AUTHORITY of an act of the legislature of the state of Florida entitled an act to provide a general law for the incorporation of railroads and canals and approved February 19, 1874: Notice is hereby given as required by said act that a company has been formed under the name of the Titusville and Rockledge Railroad company to be invested with all rights, powers, privileges, and franchises conferred upon companies formed under said act for the purpose of constructing maintaining and operating a railroad for public use in the conveyance of persons and property. The main line of said road to be about twenty miles in length and will be constructed from a point at or near Titusville on Indian River in Brevard county Florida to a point on said river at or near Rockledge in the same county.

Joseph N. Wilkinson.
H. P. Wilkinson.
G. S. Hardee.
C. A. Hentz.
Wm. H. Sharpe.
James D. Spratt.
C. B. McGruder.

January 28, 83. 3m 40

LAKE POINSETT AND ROCKLEDGE

RAIL ROAD!

Notice is hereby given, that in accordance with the provisions of an Act of the Legislature of the State of Florida; Entitled an Act to provide for the Incorporation of Rail Roads and Canals, approved February 19th 1874. We the undersigned have formed a company to be styled, named and known as the Lake Poinsett and Rockledge Rail Road Company; for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and operating a Rail Road, from Lake Poinsett on upper St. Johns River, in the County of Brevard, to Rockledge on Indian River, in the County of Brevard, State of Florida, for public use in the conveyance of persons and property. All of said road in Brevard County, to be about two and one-half miles (2 1-2) in length.

Robt. A. Hardee, J. Q. Stewart.
C. B. McGruder Jenkins M. Holmes.
3m 31

STEAMER MARION!

Running in connection with the DeBary Line
Two Trips Weekly.
Leaving Sanford for Rockledge Mondays and Thursdays.

Leaving Rockledge Tuesdays & Friday

NOTICE OF INCORPORATION,

Indian River & Northern Transportation COMPANY.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that in accordance with the laws of Florida, we, the undersigned, have formed an association to be styled and known as the Indian River and Northern Transportation Company for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and operating a Railroad from a point on Indian River at or near Rockledge to a point on Lake Poinsett on the St. Johns river in Brevard county, Florida, for the purpose of conveying persons and property. Said road to be three miles in length or thereabout.

MINOR S. JONES.
ALEXANDER A. STEWART,
JAMES A. MCCRORY.

Titusville, September 21, 1883. 22 3m.

Several railroads chartered but none arrived in Rockledge.

When the incorporators of The Lake Poinsett & Rockledge Railroad failed to raise the necessary money by selling shares in the railroad at $100 a share, the corporation was dissolved and a new corporation was chartered. The Florida Star issue of March 16, 1882 gives the details:

"Notice is hereby given, that in accordance with the provisions of an act of the Legislature of the State of Florida, entitled 'An Act to Provide for the Incorporation of Railroads and Canals,' approved February 10, 1874, We the undersigned, have formed a company to be styled, named and known as The Lake Poinsett & Rockledge Railroad Company on Indian River, for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and operating a railroad from a point on Lake Poinsett in Brevard County, State of Florida, for public use in the conveyance of persons and property; said road to run through the county of Brevard, and to be five (5) miles in length." SIGNED: Joseph N. Wilkinson, H. H. Wilkinson, S. J. Fox, Robert A. Hardee, Gardner S. Hardee.

This second charter noted that the railroad was to be five miles in length. The possibility was to have the trains run to Rockledge and thence north two and a half miles to the Cocoa area. Or perhaps the rails would be laid south of Rockledge where extensive citrus groves were located.

THE INDIAN RIVER & NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION COMPANY

In the fall of 1883 still another corporation was formed. Their goal, like the others, was to reach Indian River from Rockledge Landing, and as these corporations had the best of intentions, they failed to raise the necessary capital to begin the laying of tracks, and they faded into history. Their incorporating notice was published in the Florida Star paper:

"Notice is hereby given that in accordance with the laws of Florida, we, the undersigned, have formed an association to be styled and known as Indian River-Northern Transportation Company, for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and operating a Railroad from a point on Indian River at or near Rockledge to a point on Lake Poinsett on the St. Johns River in Brevard County, Florida for the purpose of conveying persons and property. Said road, to be 3 miles in length or thereabout. SIGNED Minor S. Jones, James A. McCrory & Alexander A. Stewart---September 21, 1883."

Research reveals that once trains were running from the lake to Indian River, and since only sailboats connected Rockledge and Titusville, tracks would be laid from Rockledge north to Titusville.

THE SCENIC UPPER ST. JOHNS

Passengers using the early Upper St. Johns River steamers were alternately thrilled and frightened by the terrible screams of prowling panthers. The sky cry of circling eagles over unpolluted stretches of unspoiled swamplands.

The guttural croak of bullfrogs living it up in the marshlands of the St. Johns river and the red bullet eyes of surfacing 'gators at night in river, lake and swamp.

Acrid smoke from isolated campfires of Seminole Indians billowing skyward into the sun.

The annoying, unhealthy, irritating whine of mosquitoes, untamed by feeble smudge pots and man's homemade ointments.

And of course, the scenic sunrises and sunsets and moonlit nights.

All along the journey from Sanford to Rockledge Landing, you were in frontier territory: Raw, unconquered, untamed, despite inroads by zealous hunters who were slaughtering not only wildlife but plumed birds. Thousands of beautiful birds were killed just to get a pound or two of plumes.

Early river travelers often told of the beautiful Caroline Parakeets the pink curlews, and flamingoes that lined trees along the steamer route. Apparently it took only a few years for sportsmen and hunters to clear out the birds. While spoonbills and an occasional flamingo is seen, it has been a hundred years since the demise of the Carolina Parakeet in this vicinity.

ISOLATED REGION

To give the reader some idea of how isolated Brevard County was a hundred years ago, a Congregational Minister, Reverend Dilly was spending the winter in Melbourne. At that time there were no banks in the county and Reverend Dilly had an immediate need of funds, but he had only a checkbook which meant nothing.

The next morning he boarded a sailboat for Rockledge, where he transferred to a stagecoach for Rockledge Landing on Lake Poinsett. He then boarded the steamboat MARION. After an overnight river trip, he arrived at Sanford, Florida where he went to the Lyman Bank and made arrangements for a bank draft to arrive from an out-of-state bank.

Reverend Dilly spent two days on the road making a journey which can easily be made today in less than two hours.

SLOW TRANSPORTATION

Getting winter vegetables to northern markets a hundred years ago was something to be reckened with. Because there was no migratory labor force for harvesting, planting was staggered. Beans were planted every two weeks from September to February and harvesting took place well into the early summer. Beans were packed into hampars, loaded onto the steamboats and taken to the nearest railroad station, which was in Jacksonville, where they went north, arriving in the dead of winter when high prices prevailed.

In those early days, two steamboats loaded with string beans or tomatoes could affect the market. Winter vegetables were something of a rarity. With slow shipping, the Florida winter vegetables sometimes didn't arrive in particularly fresh condition, but in spite of this, they generally sold for a good price.

EARLY TRANSPORTATION

The early steamboats of Brevard County had to be less than 85 feet long in order to maneuver around short bends without getting grounded, consequently, they were slow and small. These steamers were not only a blessing, but an absolute necessity. The very lifeline of the county and the pioneer settlers depended on the arrival of these boats.

At first only two steamers were in operation. This was back in the late 1870s when the PIONEER and the VOLUSIA were making weekly trips from Jacksonville to Titusville. These steamers were owned by the Lund Family operating "The Lund Pioneer Steamboat Line."

For many years, until 1885, the great drawback of Brevard County and the Indian River country had been its lack of quick transportation.

In order to reach this gorgeous place, it was necessary to follow the intricate windings of the Upper St. Johns River until they neared Indian River and then cross the last few miles with teams.

Another route, which was seldom used, was travel the forty five miles from the interior of the state by stage or hack to Titusville, over a "rough" trail that only the young and healthy could tolerate.

Because there was no demand, the journey via coastal steamer down the Atlantic Coast was seldom used.

NAVIGATING THE UPPER ST. JOHNS RIVER

Navigating the Upper St. Johns River was hard work, and it was dangerous. Channels shifted from one part of the river to another, sometimes confusing the pilots so that their boats ran aground. Sand bars appeared in some places where the water on a previous run had been deep. Trees would fall into the river and get stuck unseen and under water, thereby creating further obstacles.

The Upper St. Johns twisted and turned through the countryside like a serpent. Some of the bends would take a steamboat right around until after a short while, it would be heading back in the direction from which it had come.

Hurricanes often caused floods, and the flatlands would become covered with water for miles in every direction. At times during high water periods, on the Upper St. Johns River, instead of going around a bend, a steamboat could shoot straight ahead and across the land, and create new channels. This was referred to as a "cutoff," and when this occurred, the old channel usually "filled in."

Since the St. Johns is one of the few rivers in the world that flows north, steamboats heading south on the river are actually travelling up the St. Johns.

Several early steamboats on the Upper St. Johns river were built expressly for navigation in our region. They were propelled by a small recessed wheel built in the stern to protect it from snags, and it is probable that no such construction was used elsewhere in the world. The list of such steamers include: TUSKAWILLA, OSCEOLA, MARION, OCKLAWAHA, ASTATULA, WAUNITA and the HIAWATHA. All of these steamboats were at one time or another in service on the Upper St. Johns River.

CAPTAIN JOSEPH L. SMITH

A hundred years ago, before the days of railroads, of passable roads, there was but one way to arrive in Brevard County, via the Upper St. Johns River, and it was the old pioneer steamboat men who knew the trick. One of the earliest was Captain Joe H. Smith.

Smith was not a stranger to life on the river, as he grew up along Chesepeake Bay. He decided to seek fame and fortune in Jacksonville, and became associated with the steamboat business on the St. Johns River.

Back when Rockledge had only three houses and was called Rock Ledge Hammock, Captain Smith was running a steamboat out of Jacksonville. He was a mail contractor and for years it was he alone who brought in the mail for all of Central Florida, usually in one mail pouch.

In 1872 Smith was master of the FLORENCE which he called "the finest on the river." The FLORENCE belonged to the Brock Line. In August of 1874, the FLORENCE, with Captain Smith at the wheel, made a round trip from Jacksonville to Palatka, making regular stops, and set a record that stood for years. He made the run in less than 14 hours.

Captain Smith was an unsung hero of early Brevard County history. He was responsible for bringing thousands of tourists on his steamboats, many of them sportsmen, who stayed at the Rockledge hotels. They came for their share of 'gators, wild turkeys, bear, deer, ducks and fish. He brought in others for health reasons, and still others to enjoy the flora, fauna and the sunshine. Many of our pioneer settlers came to Brevard County on Smith's boats, bringing with them all their earthly possessions to help settle the Indian River region. Some came mainly for the steamboat trip.

In the early 1880s, Smith formed a partnership with Colonel H. L. Hart, and established the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line of Steamboats. They put the steamboats WAUNITA, MARION and ASTATULA to run from Sanford to Rockledge Landing on Lake Poinsett. The route was an immediate success.

Joe Smith was appointed Superintendent of the Hart & Smith Line, but his love of steamboats and the lure of the river offered him so much pleasure that he insisted on alternating the position by piloting the WAUNITA to Sanford once a week, spending the remaining days in the company's ticket office in Rockledge and on the loading docks at Sanford.

Smith was saddened when, due to declining business, he was forced to close down the Hart & Smith Steamboat Line in 1886, but he kept his interests on the river and brought his WAUNITA to Indian River and went to work

for the newly formed line, The Indian River Steamboat Company. Still later he entered the oyster and fish industry.

Captain Joe Smith passed away at age 80. His obituary was printed in the Florida Star issue of November 22, 1912:

"Many old timers on the river will learn with regret of the death of Captain Joseph H. Smith, one of the captains of the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line of Steamers, and a Captain of the Indian River Steamboat Company's boats in the 'good old days,' and later engaged in the wholesale fish business at Titusville. He died in Jacksonville, Saturday, November 16, 1912, at age 80."

COLONEL HUBBARD L. HART

Colonel Hubbard L. Hart, a businessman and citrus grower was one of the first to see the possibility of an Upper St. Johns River steamboat line that would make the community Rockledge a famous Florida tourist center.

Prior to the Civil War Hart had been running small steamers on the St. Johns River, carrying the mail to isolated places. While mail was the main commodity being transported, a few passengers, mostly tourists and sportsmen were usually on board.

When the Civil War broke out Hart found it convenient to rendezvous at Rockledge Landing with blockade runners to pick up essential wartime cargo which he delivered to Confederate forces.

During the war Hart's small boats were often seen on the Upper St. Johns River. Near the end of the conflict, one of his steamboats was captured near Palatka, Florida by the Union Army.

In the early 1880s when the upper St. Johns River became snag free, Colonel Hart went into business with Captain Joe Smith and formed the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line of Steamboats. Colonel Hart came out of the Civil War property rich and owner of several steamers. When the Hart & Smith Line saw the light of day, Hart provided the steamer MARION and Smith brought in his WAUNITA. As time went on, additional steamers were flying their colors.

The Hart & Smith Line brought about many changes in the river traffic. For example; it opened up the run to other steamboat companies and before long half a dozen additional steamers were making the run to Rockledge.

The Hart & Smith Line was a success due to the reputations of Colonel Hart and Captain Joe Smith. Both men were known far and near as reputable rivermen.

A DELIGHTFUL REGION

The Upper St. Johns River was the region between Lake Monroe and Lake Poinsett, the latter being three miles west of the community Rockledge. This beautiful stream flows northward between contracted shores heavily bordered with oaks, magnolias, cypress, pines and palmettoes, and draped with the long festoons of Spanish moss.

Alligators are still plentiful in the reedy sleeves of the stream and myriad wild fowl of beautiful plumage flit through the vine-embowered forest.

The comfort of the Hart & Smith steamboats and the inaccessibility of this region make it the highway of a great portion of the winter travel of our semi-tropical Brevard County and the Florida Southeast Coast.

The Upper St. Johns River trip became so popular with sportsmen and tourists The Hart & Smith Steamboat Line became one of the most prosperous lines on the river. Rockledge had become a tourist stop with some noteriety and the river trip from Sanford to Rockledge Landing actually became a tourist attraction. Many was the time tourists had to be turned away when there was no place to sit on the steamboat WAUNITA.

The Indian River Hotel built at Rockledge in the 1880s was constructed with a view of inducing northerners to come to Rockledge by boat, and when visitors heard of the abundance of turkeys, quail, plume birds, alligators, deer and bear in the wilderness nearby, and of the large fish in the lakes and river, Rockledge became a popular place for sportsmen and tourists alike.

In the evening the steamer MARION reaches Lake Poinsett or as some call it, Rockledge Landing. You are then placed aboard a stage and carried to a fashionable Rockledge hotel, of which there are three. At Rockledge, transportation can be obtained for those going down river Indian.

The trip up the St. Johns is unlike any other---the river presenting breathtaking scenes entirely novel. The stream is in some places two miles in width, and often spreads out into great lakes from one to twelve miles wide, but as you enter the Upper St. Johns, the river narrows at times to less than a hundred feet.

The St. Johns is undoubtedly the most beautiful of Southern rivers, and was well named by the Indians Welaka, or "string of pearls." The river trips begin at Jacksonville and stops at all the principal landings.

EARLY ROCKLEDGE HISTORY

Local history tells us that Rockledge became world known as a result of the Upper St. Johns River Steamboat route that brought settlers and tourists to the Indian River at Rockledge.

The first step toward making of the Rockledge community a winter resort was taken by A. L. Hatch. He built a small hotel which was well conducted. Mr. Hatch, being a horticulturist, planted beautiful palms and flowers about the hotel grounds and soon he had a veritable tropical garden. The attraction of his hotel and the growing of oranges called for better transportation and in 1882 a small steamer service (The Hart and Smith Rockledge Line of Steamboats) was put on the river between Sanford and Rockledge Landing on Lake Poinsett. Soon Mr. Hatch had a well patronized hotel known as "The Rockledge House."

About this same time Mr. Stephen Ryder, a storekeeper and postmaster of Rockledge put up another hotel on the Indian River which he called "The Tropical House." He later sold his hotel to Fred F. Taylor, who moved and reconstructed the hotel by a beautiful redesign and a new name "The Plaza."

In 1881, Joseph N. Wilkinson, who was in poor health, came with his family in search of health, and spent the winter with A. L. Hatch. He was so pleased with Rockledge that he purchased a half interest in the Rockledge House. Later he purchased the other half. In 1885 Wilkinson began work on the Indian River Hotel, which he opened in February 1886. When completed the Indian River Hotel was the finest and largest hotel on the east coast of Florida between St. Augustine and Key West.

Shortly after the opening up of the Hotel Indian River, Mr. H. Shaves bought the property just south of the Indian River Hotel and constructed thereon an excellent hotel, known as "The New Rockledge Hotel."

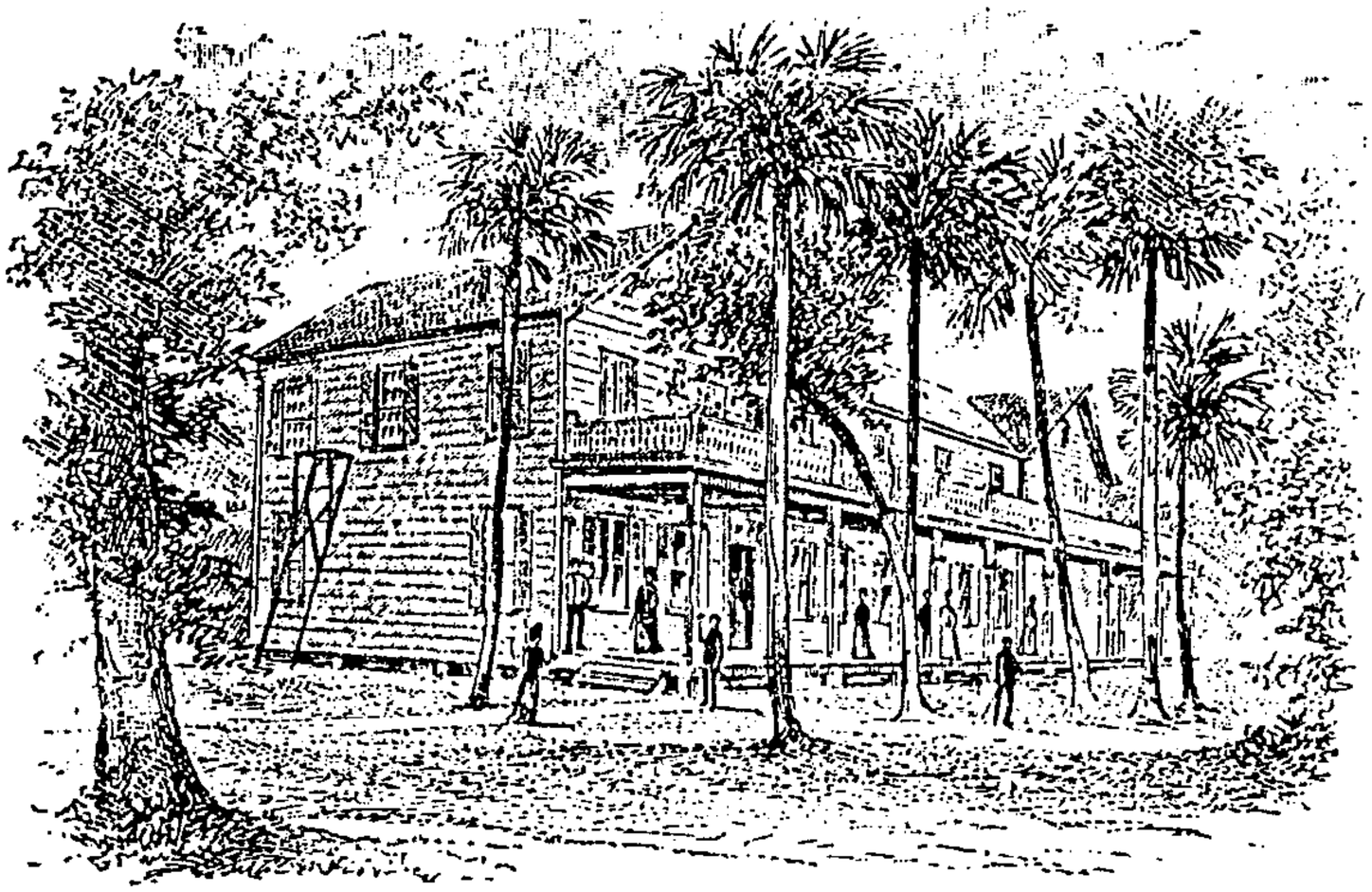
When the Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railroad arrived in Titusville in 1885, these new Rockledge hotels were filled to the rafters with guests. Rockledge became known everywhere as "The Atlantic City of the South." In 1888 President Grover Cleveland, his family and staff visited Rockledge. A huge reception was held for him at the Indian River Hotel. Beginning in 1899 President Warren G. Harding began his first of many visits to Rockledge. He continued vacationing here after becoming president.

In 1893, Flagler built a railroad spur from the main line down to the Indian River to a point between the Plaza and Indian River Hotels, where passengers departed the train within 50 feet of the hotel lobbies.

ROCKLEDGE HOUSE,

Location: Rockledge, West Shore Indian River,

FLORIDA.



OPEN FROM DECEMBER 1st TO MAY 1st.

ROCKLEDGE is most beautifully situated on the famous INDIAN RIVER, which, for the beauty of its scenery, the variety and quality of its fruits, and the equableness of its climate, is unequaled in the State.

FOR FISHING and HUNTING,

CANNOT BE EXCELLED ANYWHERE IN THE STATE.

THE HOUSE, IN ALL ITS ARRANGEMENTS,

IS STRICTLY FIRST-CLASS,

And is reached by Steamer on the St. Johns River.

J. W. YOUNGER, MANAGER. H. P. WILKINSON, PROPRIETOR.

Source: Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West RR 1883 Brochure

THE STEAMBOAT MARION

Colonel Hubbard Hart had a good eye when it came to knowing the value and worthiness of steamboats. He knew a good steamboat value when one was put up for sale. So it was back in 1881 that Hart was able to purchase the 78-foot, MARION for the ridiculous price of $2,000. He immediately placed her on his scenic Ocklawaha river route, retaining Captain Gray her original owner, as master. Palatka, Florida was her home port.

Strange in appearance, yet cleverly specialized, were the small recessed sternwheel steamboats that invaded the Upper St. Johns River between 1870 and 1900. The MARION was typical, and was built to navigate the dark, crooked watercourse between Palatka and Rockledge Landing where obstacles, hidden snags, swamps and low water places prevailed.

When the Hart & Smith Rockledge Steamboat Line was established, the MARION was the first steamer to fly the new company's banner, and there were many occasions when she was the only steamer flying that banner, and by herself taking care of all passengers and cargo headed for Rockledge. When the ASTATULA joined the Hart & Smith fleet, it was the MARION running on Monday and Wednesday and the ASTATULA making it to Rockledge Landing from Sanford on Tuesday and Thursday.

Without his knowledge, Captain Joe Smith had an escaped criminal working for him on the MARION. He cleverly disguised himself as a negro cook. He made several trips up-stream on the MARION, until one morning as the steamer was approaching Rockledge Landing he spied a deputy sheriff standing on the wharf. The fugitive was never seen again and he never returned to collect his back pay.

The Florida Star, a Titusville weekly, noted on December 6, 1884: "55 Goats are still in pens at Titusville Landing, awaiting transportation north. Captain Reed of The Hart & Smith Line refused to haul them," (and everyone knew why).

Captain Joe Smith once told a group of passengers that the MARION was the Belle of the River and the ASTATULA was the Queen of the River.

The MARION and sister ships, WAUNITA and ASTATULA played a large part in building up Rockledge as a tourist center. Just about everything required to construct the famous Indian River Hotel was hauled by these boats including lumber, hardware, windows, cement, roofing material, etc. When the hotel opened for business the same steamers brought in passengers to fill the hotel, which was the largest hotel south of St. Augustine.

Steamer MARION departing Rockledge Landing

Photo So. Brev. H/S

CAPTAIN JOE SMITH-BUSINESSMAN

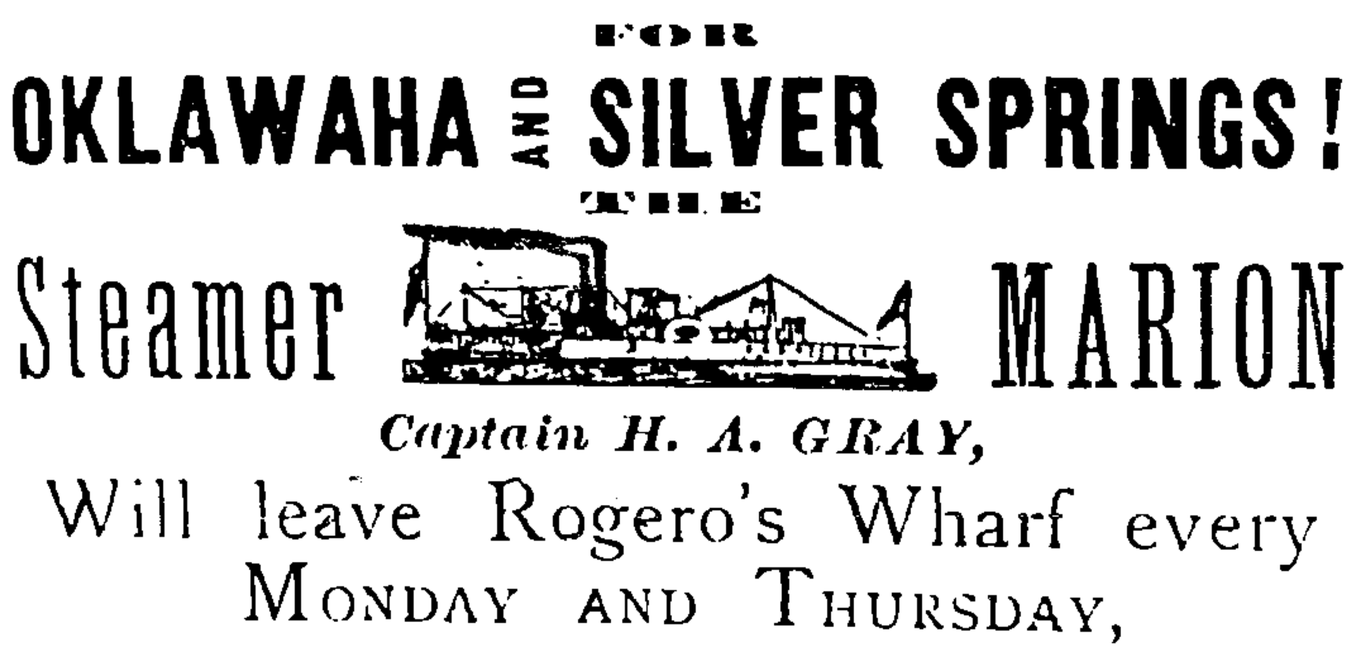
As soon as passengers had transferred to a stage coach which had been awaiting the arrival of the MARION, Captain Smith turned the steamer over to the Purser, who would supervise the transfer of cargo to the warehouse.

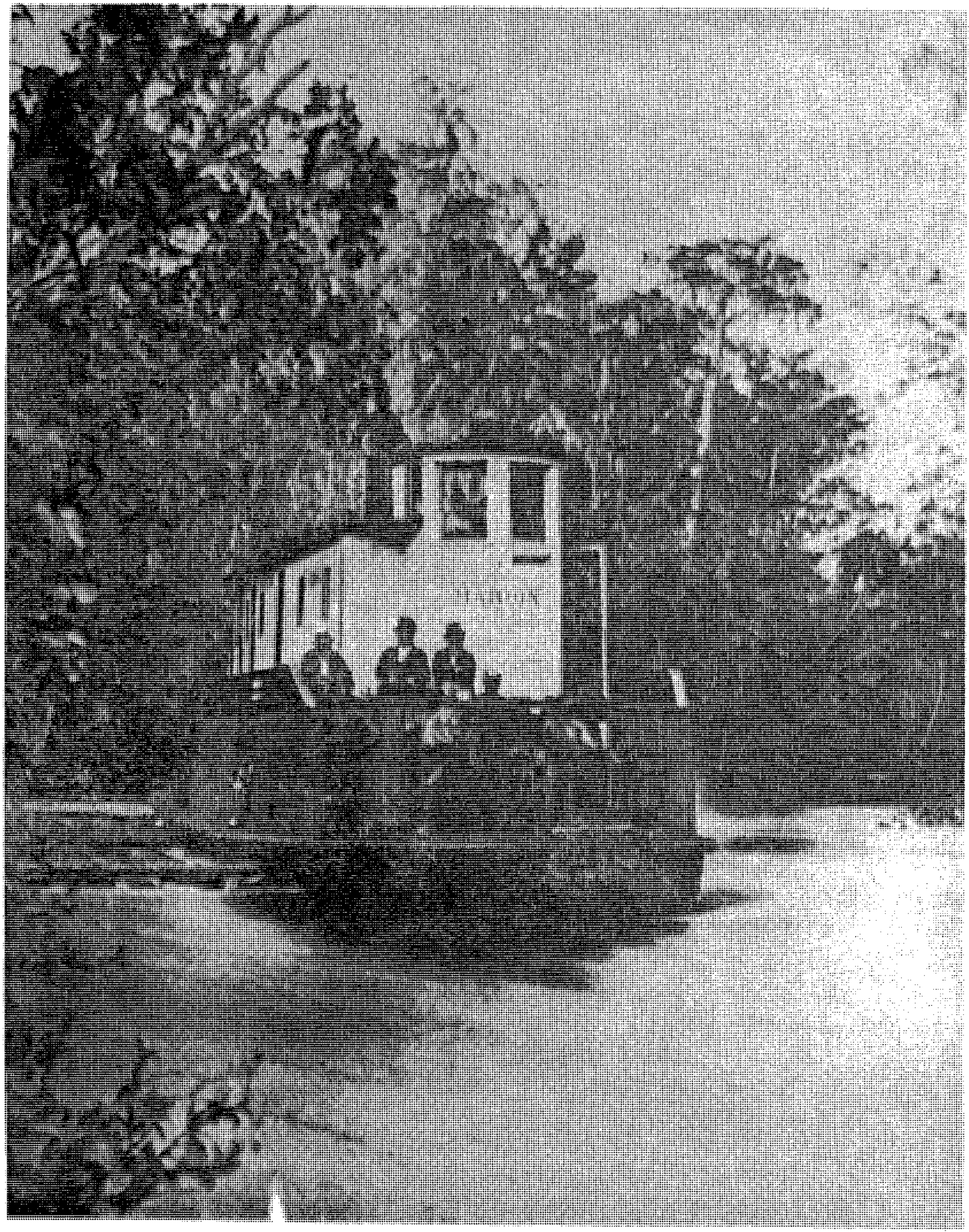
As was his habit, Captain Smith crowded into the stage with the passengers for the three mile trip to the Indian River Hotels where most of the tourists stayed, while awaiting further transportation downstream.

A hundred years ago, a steamboat captain's job was much more than just keeping his boat on schedule. He had the job of drumming up business, and it was in this connection that Joe Smith sailed across the Indian River to the community Georgiana, to see a preacher, Rev., White, who had a shipment of 12,000 oranges which had to be in Jacksonville the following week. Back then citrus was transported in barrels and large square wooden bins, and just getting the oranges to Rockledge Landing and loaded on the MARION was a monumental task.

Early that afternoon Captain Smith returned to Rockledge and to the Hart & Smith Steamboat Line office to conduct company business, such as the accounting for funds taken on the recent trip from Sanford, to turn in the company mail picked up at Sanford, and to pick up passenger lists and manifests for cargo being shipped the following morning aboard the MARION. Before going home to his family, Joe Smith made arrangements for several cords of wood to be delivered to the MARION. He also went to the Ryder Merchandise Store, where he turned in a list of provisions which were to be delivered to the cook aboard the MARION.

Captain Joe Smith finally arrived at his residence where his family awaited his arrival. After a good meal, the good captain spent the rest of the day fertilizing and working in the family orange grove. The following morning Captain Joe Smith, was back at Rockledge Landing aboard the MARION.





Early Picture of the MARION

Ed Mueller Collection

STEAMBOAT LANDING LOCATIONS

Rockledge Landing and Lake Poinsett Landing are one and the same. Rockledge Landing is not located on Lake Poinsett proper, but on Rockledge Creek which runs through Lake Florence and then into Lake Poinsett. The region about the landing has changed much since the 1880s and since the construction of Interstate 95, the steamboat landing is no longer defined. To reach the landing travel west to the end of Barton Blvd. When traveling north on Interstate 95, look to the east when passing mile marker 198.

Titusville Landing and Salt Lake Landing are one and the same. Salt Lake is several miles from the St. Johns Channel and can be reached by traveling through a few small lakes and Snake Creek. As late as the 1950s, Salt Lake could only be reached on land with a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Today the lake can be reached easily via a dirt road west of Titusville. County Officials tell us the Salt Lake region will be well developed by the year 2000.

EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT OF STEAMBOAT SERVICE

The Jacksonville Union, issue of June 21, 1882 noted: "We learn on perfectly reliable authority, that Colonel Hart of Palatka, and Captain Joe Smith will place a nice steamer, capable of accommodating fifty passengers, on the Indian River in time for the next season's business.

"They have been running the steamer MARION the past winter from Sanford to Rockledge Landing on Lake Poinsett, on the Rockledge route.

"They will put on another steamer to run in conjunction with the MARION from Sanford to Lake Poinsett, which is but three miles from Rockledge, on the Indian River. This will give almost a daily boat.

"The Indian River boat will run from Rockledge north to Titusville, Dummitt's Grove, and to the south to Ft. Pierce, Jupiter and the Indian River inlets, and to within five miles of Lake Worth.

"This will be a great improvement on the present, and we look for a rush of homesteaders and tourists to invade the Indian River territory next winter."

NOTE: The Indian River steamer mentioned above was the CINDERELLA. But she proved to be to heavy for the shallow Indian River. On her initial entry into Indian River, she went aground in the "Narrows" north of Hobe Sound and required 25 days to reach Titusville.

An early tourist guide published by the DeBary-Baya Merchant's Line deserves a place here: "The steamer MARION connects here (Sanford) with the steamers of the DeBary-Baya Line for Lake Poinsett, where carriages will be found to convey the tourist to Rockledge, three miles distant, on Indian River, also with steamers for Salt Lake and Titusville."

The MARION was constructed in 1871 at Palatka, Florida. She was built and her construction supervised by Captain Henry Gray, who was her first owner and master.

Sidney Lanier, a popular poet and writer of the late 1800s, wrote after taking a trip to Silver Springs on the MARION: "The little Ocklawaha steamboat MARION, a steamboat which is like nothing in the world, so much as a Pensacola gopher with a preposterously exaggerated back. As we advanced up the stream our wee craft even seemed to emit her steam in more leisurely whiffs. The white crane, the curlew, the limpkin, heron, and the water turkey were scarcely disturbed in their quiet avocations as we passed and quickly succeeded in persuading themselves after each momentary excitement of our gliding by that we were really after all, no monster."

The MARION was rebuilt so many times that in the early 1880s when she became under control of Hart & Smith Rockledge Line, she couldn't be recognized from earlier photos.

Although this couldn't be confirmed, local history tells us that the MARION was named for Marion County, Florida, where Silver Springs, a popular steamboat destination, was located.

Rivermen on the St. Johns River claimed the steamboats of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line were not much to look at, in fact, they were downright ugly compared to the large, beautiful, palatial steamboats that ran north from Sanford. But when one considers the conditions under which Hart & Smith steamers navigated, there was no way their looks could be improved. To the average traveler, these steamboats were described as quaint, crowded, small and one lady passenger described the MARION "as a replica of Noah's Ark."

During her stay on the Upper St. Johns River, the MARION ran under several masters, including: Captains Henry A. Gray, Joe Pendleton, Joseph H. Smith, A. N. Edwards, W. H. Harrison, Richard J. Adams, D. A. Dunham and Charles Schoonmaker.

The MARION was the first steamboat to tie-up at the Hart & Smith wharf at Rockledge Landing, and was soon followed by the WAUNITA, ASTATULA, OSCEOLA and the ARROW.

A. A. TAYLOR RIDES THE MARION

Dawn broke just as the steamboat MARION rounded the east side of Lake Poinsett, headed through Lake Florence and tied up at Rockledge Landing.

The first gentle rays of the sun bathed the mainland shore of the Landing in a yellowish haze, but soon a blood-red ball seemed to bounce above the mangroves and brought the stilted loading dock and warehouse into view.

The MARION came even with the sandridge called Rockledge Landing before the sun was an hour old. Captain Joe Smith, standing on the pilot house, cupped his hands to his mouth and sent a bull-throated greeting to the men near the warehouse who would soon be unloading the steamer.

The near thunder of Captain Smith's voice aroused young A. A. Taylor, and he sat up in his bunk to gaze out of the porthole of the tiny cabin he shared with another passenger. As quietly as he could, the youth slipped down from his upper bunk, picked up his carpet bag, and went on deck to freshen up. A deck hand pointed to a tin basin and a bucket of water.

The fresh light of the still misty morning showed Albert Taylor to be quite young, just out of college, and with brownish hair, wide spaced honest eyes, and a high intelligent forehead. After a quick wash and a shave, the youth returned to his cabin and dressed in his best clothes. Within a couple of hours he would be joining his parents who had purchased one of the large Rockledge hotels, and made Rockledge their permanent address.

There was no mirror in the poorly fitted cabin, but Taylor knew how he looked. He smoothed the wrinkles from his embroidered vest, and tugged at the sleeves of his frock coat. Then, after flicking the dust from his hat, he stepped out on deck to bask in the still crisp morning air, and waited for the hack that would carry him to Rockledge.

A BANKER'S DILEMA

After moving to Central Brevard County, Albert A. Taylor, along with 2 men named Holmes, started Cocoa's first bank, The Brevard County Bank and Trust Company. One morning an individual came to the bank to cash a check for five dollars. Noting Taylor's look of concern, he asked, "How much do you charge for a bad check?"

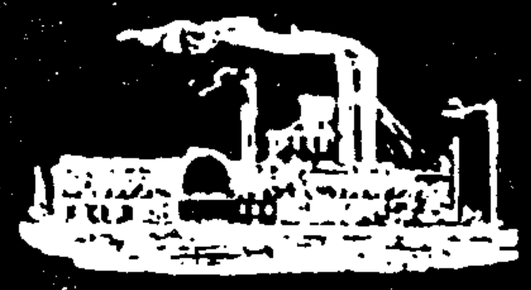
"Fifty cents," Taylor replied.

"Then I'll just make this out for five fifty."

ROCK LEDGE LINE
FOR
INDIAN RIVER!

ON AND AFTER OCT. 18, 1882,

THE STEAMER



MARION,

Capt. CHAS. SCHOUNMAKER,

Running in connection with DeBary line of steamers, will leave Sanford and Enterprise every Monday and Thursday at 9 o'clock p. m. for Rock Ledge, Indian River, and Lake Poinsett Tuesdays and Fridays at 7 a. m.

Returning—Leave Lake Poinsett Tuesdays and Fridays at 4 p. m., arriving at Sanford and Enterprise Wednesdays and Saturdays at 10 a. m., connecting at Sanford with Fast Mail Route, Fred'k DeBary and H. B. Plant.

Hacks and freight wagons meet every steamer for Rock Ledge and points on Indian River.

ONLY THREE MILES CARRIAGE RIDE.

Apr 13 HART & SMITH, Proprietors.

Steamer Astatula will leave Sanford Tuesdays at 9 o'clock A. M. for Poinsett, returning Wednesdays from Poinsett. On Friday on arrival of mail boat for Salt Lake, leaving Salt Lake at 10 o'clock Saturday morning.

The People's Line.

THE NEW AND FINE

CHATTAHOOCHEE

CAPTAIN JOE SMITH.

Everything First-Class!

Our Table a Specialty!

A. FISHER, Traveling Ag't.

FOR INDIAN RIVER,
HART & SMITH'S
ROCK LEDGE LINE

The Steamer Marion will leave Sanford and Enterprise on Mondays and Thursdays for Rockledge and landings on Indian River via Lake Poinsett. Returning, will leave Lake Poinsett landing on Tuesdays and Fridays at 4 o'clock, p. m., making close connections at Sanford and Enterprise with palace steamers of the DeBary Line, through tickets for Jacksonville.

TITUSVILLE ROUTE.

Steamer Astatula leaves Sanford on Fridays for Titusville and other points on Indian River, via Salt Lake. Returning, leave landing at Salt Lake, at 9:30 a. m. on Saturdays. The Astatula will leave Sanford and Enterprise on Tuesdays for Rock Ledge and landings on Indian River. Returning leave landing at Lake Poinsett on Mondays at 4 p m making close connection with DeBary Line both ways. For further information apply on board DeBary Line steamers or agents, or, E. R. Vandemarp, Agent at Sanford, Brock House agent at Enterprise.

Capt. JOE SMITH, Manager.

LUND'S
PIONEER LINE,
FOR

Lake Jesup.

THE STEAMER ARROW.

Rockledge Line.
FOR INDIAN RIVER.

Summer Schedule, 1883.

STEAMER "WAUNITA"

Leaves Sanford every Monday and Thursday at 9 a. m. arriving at Lake Poinsett Landing at 6 a. m. next morning connecting with hacks and boats for all points on Indian river.

RETURNING

Leaves Lake Poinsett Landing on Tuesdays and Fridays at 4 p. m. arriving at Sanford at 7 a. m. next morning.

Capt. Joe Smith, Manager.

SIDNEY LANIER RIDES THE MARION

Sidney Lanier tells in his book, "Florida and Miscellaneous Prose," how to sleep aboard the MARION:

"Let me tell you how to sleep on a St. Johns River steamboat in May. (Lanier was aboard the MARION headed for Silver Springs). With a small bribe persuade Jim, the steward, to take the mattress out of your berth and lay it slanting just along the railing that incloses the lower part of the deck, in front, and to the left of the pilot-house. Lie flat-backed down on the same, draw your blanket over you, put your cap on your head in consideration of the night air, fold your arms, say some little prayer or other, and fall asleep with a star looking right down your eye."

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

The steamboat MARION was said to be the most reliable steamer on the Upper St. Johns River route. Her engines ran smoothly, she was a stable ship that seldom broke down. She was on the Rockledge Landing run for seven years without mishap, was very accurate and generally on time.

The following letter was written aboard the MARION by a friendly tourist and was printed in the Florida Star newspaper on March 24th, 1882:

"If any man doubt, Mr. Editor, that the good people of Florida have right and reason to rejoice at her prospects, he has only to read the results of a late interview between Governor Bloxham of Florida and a Northern newspaper correspondent, and then take a trip into the country anywhere to see the practical confirmation of the Governor's statements. 'Proof of the pudding' is apparent on all sides.

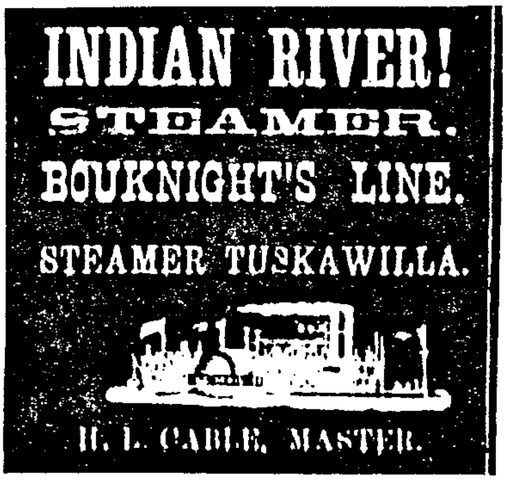
"I am now returning from a little jaunt on the St. Johns River, full of enthusiasm. On this very steamer, from the hold to the pantry, are innumerable suggestions of increasing prosperity. Even as I write, my mind and stomach are both full of evidence. And it may not be amiss to say that in this instance success is well merited, for the officers of the MARION, beginning with the veteran Captain Joe Smith, and ending with the Steward, are, just what they should be.

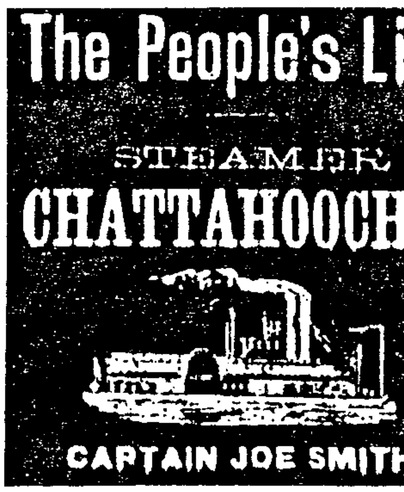
"The tireless energy and affability of Steward DeLancy produces a homelike feeling always pleasant to travelers."

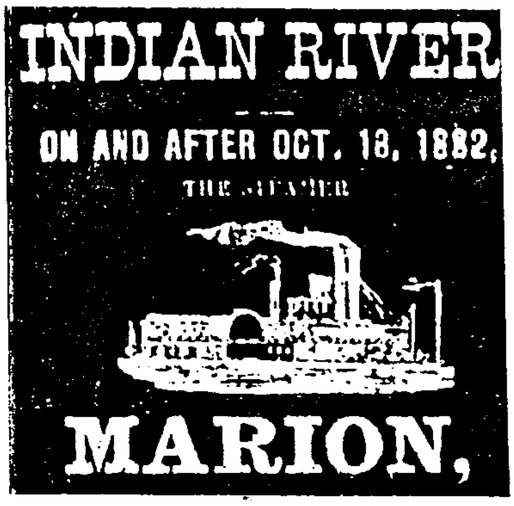
will be landing at the Lake Harney wharf. This landing was 1
miles northwest of Mims, Florida."

After several renovations and alterations the MARION wa
having eleven staterooms. Ten for passengers and one for Cap

When the Hart & Smith Steamboat Line discontinued busin
was used by Colonel Hart as a spare utility steamer, filling
where her services were required. According to C. Bradford M
book, Paddle Wheel Inboard "the MARION made several late sea
Jacksonville in 1890, but she must have gone to rest soon af
no more of her."



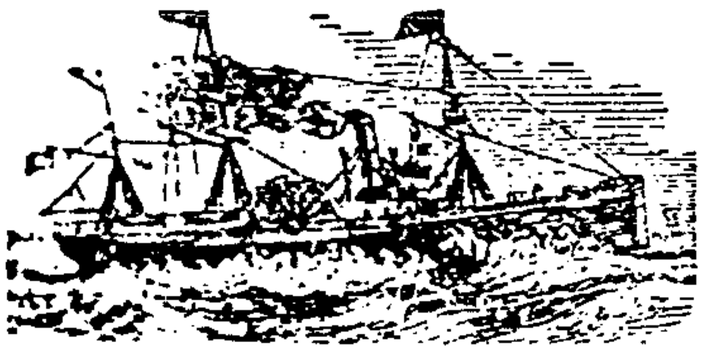




MILEAGE FROM SANFORD TO ROCKLEDGE

Sanford	0	Buzzard's Roost	32.2
Mellonville	1	Cabbage Slough	32.6
Enterprise	4	Puzzle Lake	32.8
Brickyard Slough	7.3	Buck Lake	37.4
Lake Jessup Landing	9	Ellis Lake	41.2
Coffee Slough	10.5	Hatbill Point	41.5
Hickory Slough	11.8	Loughman Lake	43.0
Mud Lake	13	Snake Creek	44.0
Lemon Bluff	14.0	Salt Lake	45.0
Mullet Lake	14.4	Paw Paw Mound	53.8
LeFils Slough	14.7	Halfway Lake	59.4
Deep Creek	22.2	Possum Bluff	64.4
Lake Harney North	23.4	Lake Poinsett	77.5
Lake Harney South	28.0	Lake Florence	80.4
Cow Island	28.4	Rockledge Landing	81.5

Above mileages furnished by Mr. David H. Girardin of St. Johns River Management District.



ROCKLEDGE LINE

Indian River Steamers.

CAPT. JOE H. SMITH, MANAGER

Sanford, Fla. Dec 23 1885

HART & SMITH LETTERHEAD

BEAUTIFUL LAKE POINSETT

Lake Poinsett has long been the discussion between Florida historians as to whose name it honored.

Until recently it was thought that it was named for Joel B. Poinsett, the popular Secretary of War during the Seminole Indian War during the years 1837 - 1842.

Recent research in the National Archives reveal that in the above years, an all-out attempt was being formulated to drive the Seminoles down the west side of the St. Johns River. Another force of soldiers was sent down the east coast waterways, mainly: Mosquito Lagoon and the Indian River.

Just prior to setting these plans in motion, General Jesup ordered that the Upper St. Johns River be explored and charted all the way to its headwaters.

At that time historians thought perhaps the St. Johns River had its origins in Lake Poinsett.

The attempt to explore the Upper St. Johns was begun via the steamer SANTEE on November 10, 1837. On board was the commanding officer of Fort Mellon, Colonel Harney. Also on board was Captain E. C. Poinsett, commander of a company of artillery.

In addition to exploring the origins of the river, the troops were also on the lookout for Seminoles and their villages and strongholds. The troops were also looking for possible sites for fortresses, and it was on this trip that locations were found for Fort Christmas, Fort McNeil, just west of Cocoa near Lake Poinsett and Fort Taylor located on the west bank of Lake Winder.

The small steamboat SANTEE, which had been requisitioned for duty in the war, took the troops as far as Lake Harney, where at the south end of that lake, she was unable to navigate further, so a group of men under command of Captain Poinsett took to the small boats and made their way up the St. Johns to Lake Poinsett and Lake Winder.

Colonel Harney and Captain Poinsett made several trips from Fort Mellon down to Lake Poinsett, Lake Winder and Lake Washington. By then Fort McNeil and Fort Taylor had been established and the St. Johns River was used when bringing supplies to the forts.

The author believes that Lake Poinsett was named in honor of Captain E. C. Poinsett, who explored and made several trips through the lake, while Secretary of War Joel B. Poinsett never set foot in the region of the lake.

CAPTAIN JOE SMITH'S WAUNITA

Well known St. Johns Rivermen laughed when it became known that Joe Smith purchased the steamboat WAUNITA sight unseen. Sight unseen meant that she was under eight feet of water and stuck in mud in Lake Monroe. But they quit laughing when Joe pulled her out of the mud and renovated her in Jacksonville. Soon thereafter the WAUNITA was added to the fleet of The Hart & Smith Rockledge Steamboat Line, and she proved that Captain Joe Smith knew what he was doing when he purchased her sight unseen. She proved to be slow and ugly, but reliable and a money maker.

Mr. I. D. Hardy in his book "Sketches of Florida Life," wrote of the perfect, delightful trip on the WAUNITA. He spent 2 pages expounding the merits of the trip, but his reminiscence of the up trip extend to his thoughts: "And the Rockledge hacks, which remind us forcibly of the vegetable carts at Covent Garden Market at the stage when they have just unloaded their freight, and have not got rid of the sticks and straws."

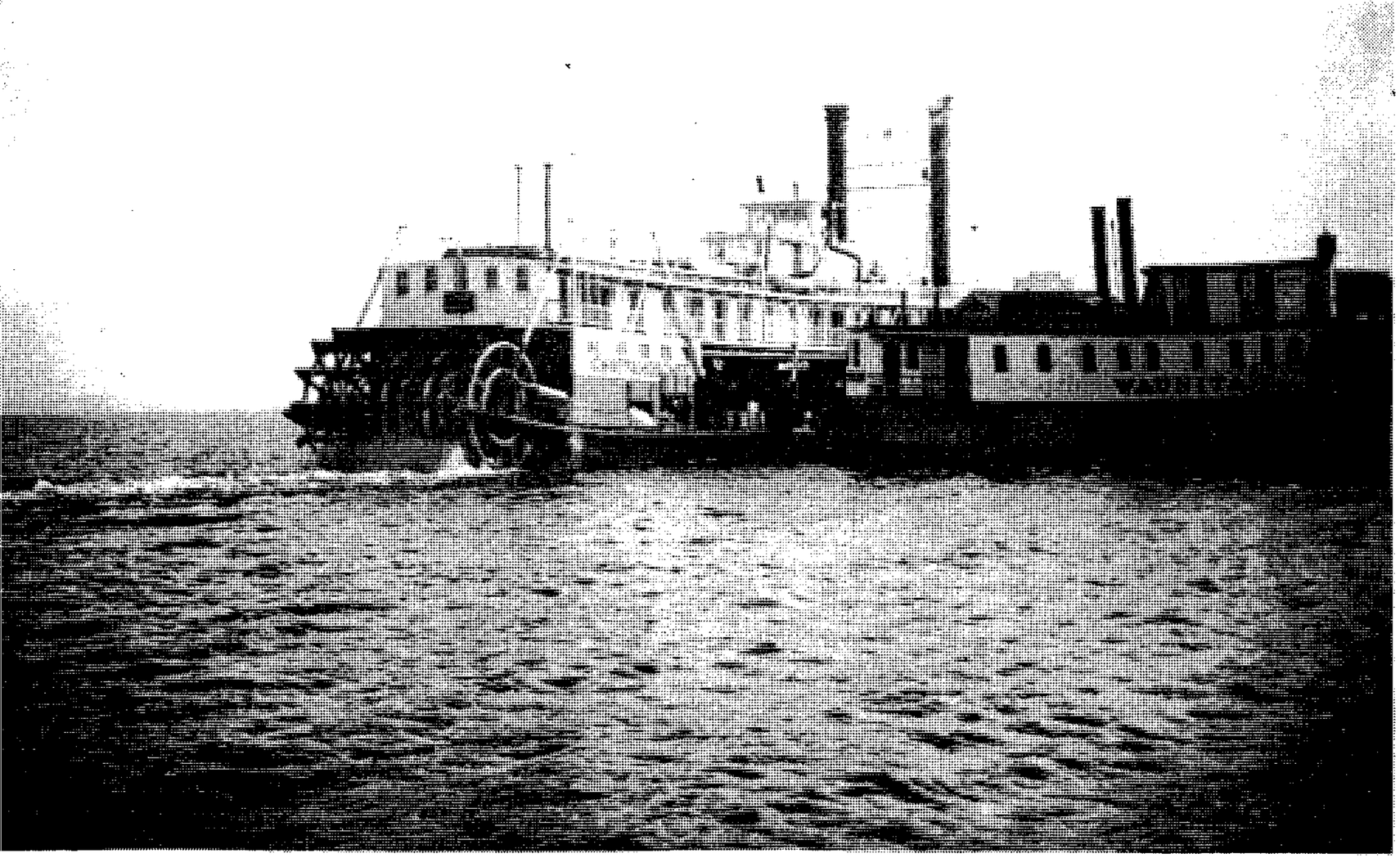
A passenger recalled: "For entertainment, after the work of the crew was over for the day, three dark crewmen provided music of a sort. One played bass by blowing in an empty jug, another played a tune on a mouth organ, and the third kept time by pounding on the deck with two sticks, and sometimes the pilot would join in by rattling two bones together in his right hand."

At times the crew of the WAUNITA ate scrumptiously. The cook usually prepared food for 15 diners, but there were occasions when nobody paid to eat. At such times Captain Joe Smith called the crew into the dining room where they ate their fill.

Captain Joe Smith always claimed that steamboats all had character, and his WAUNITA had a character all her own, and all she needed was a good pilot and a master who could tame her. He and Captain Schoonmaker were the taming twosome.

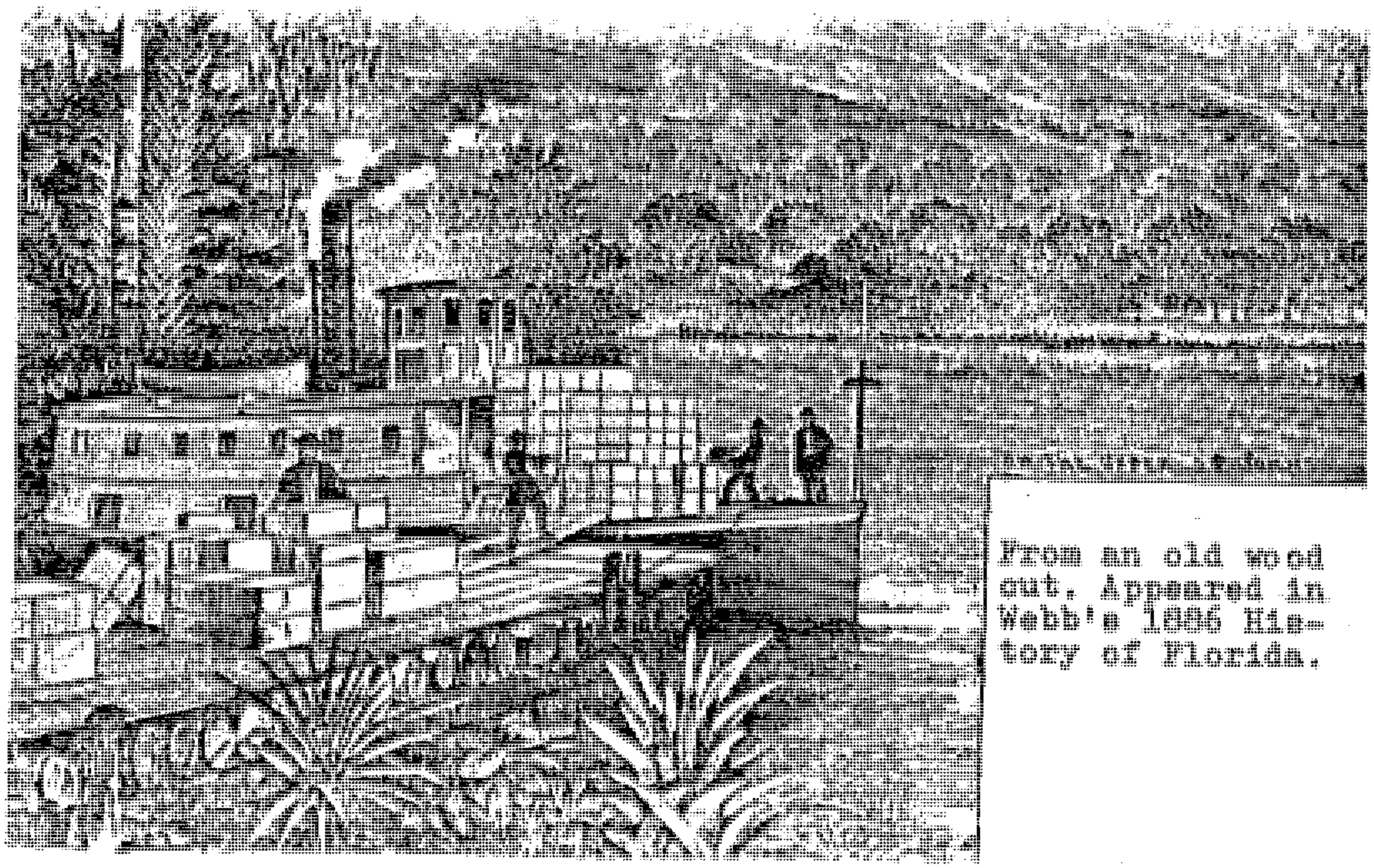
The WAUNITA was built at Jacksonville in 1882. She was 77 feet long, with a 22 foot beam and drawing 36 inches of water. She was built for Dr. S. J. Bouknight, who sold her to Captain Joe Smith. Like other Hart & Smith steamers, she had a recessed sternwheel. Her first assignment was hauling passengers on the Ocklawaha River.

Newspaper ads noted: The WAUNITA, a Rockledge steamer, leaves Sanford for Rockledge every Monday-Wednesday & Friday at 10 A.M. Returns every Tuesday-Thursday & Saturday. Stagecoach fare to Rockledge fifty cents.



at Hart & Smith wharf Sanford

Ed Mueller Collection



From an old wood cut. Appeared in Webb's 1886 History of Florida.

BOUKNIGHT'S DAILY LINE

Of Ocklawaha River Steamers,

Waunita and Tuskawilla

The WAUNITA Leaves for Silver Springs Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 9:30 a. m

The TUSKAWILLA Leaves for Silver Springs Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 9:30 a. m

Office: North Side Lemon Street, PALATKA, FLORIDA. S. J. BOUKNIGHT, Proprietor.

WAUNITA'S SILVER SPRINGS SCHEDULE

THE POPULAR NIGHT TRIPS

The most popular trip to the Upper St. Johns River was the night trip which left Sanford late in the afternoon and arrived at Rockledge Landing the next morning. The following paragraphs describes a typical trip:

A shriek from the boat's whistle signalled the start of a river voyage and the steamer WAUNITA moved out into Lake Monroe and was soon in the channel of the river and on her way to Lake Poinsett and Rockledge Landing. Since the WAUNITA catered to tourists, she purposely left on her trip at four in the afternoon.

The few miles out of Lake Monroe were covered rapidly and the WAUNITA swung to a southerly course when it reached the river. Along the way, a stop was made at Enterprise, where mail, freight and express were exchanged.

By the time the WAUNITA left Enterprise the sun had begun to set in the west and shadows were lengthening. The real jungle of the Upper St. Johns was marked by the tall pines and water oaks looming along the way. Cypress trees were so thick at places on the bank, the passengers sitting on deck could reach out and grab handfuls of Spanish moss.

The river was narrow and crooked and some of the curves were short enough to force the WAUNITA to work her way around them. Some of the trees were so close to the banks of the river the boat knocked off bark while easing around the narrow bends.

Dinner was served at 6 p.m., and the food was plentiful and good and the service excellent.

After dinner the passengers moved out onto the top deck of the steamboat. Negro deck hands built a fire from fat pine knots in the iron furnace near the pilot house. The lady passengers were wearing wraps, but the weather was not unpleasant.

The furnace was built of heavy metal and had an open front so that the blaze served as the boat's headlight and illuminated the forest and river ahead. The effect created for the passengers was one of delightful enchantment.

Wildlife abounded along the river. The glare of fire coming from the top of the WAUNITA occasionally caught the eyes of an alligator. Sometimes it was a racoon or deer, or with luck a panther. The creatures had seen the boat often and would wait until it neared before moving off.

The passengers were delighted at the panaroma unfolding before their eyes and left the deck reluctantly, about 11 p.m., to go to their cabins.

The Hart and Smith Rockledge Line highly advertised this night trip as the highlight of one's Florida vacation, and thousands of tourists made the cruise. Many tourists made the down trip at night and the up trip in daylight, which gave them a change of scenery.

At approximately 8 a. m., the WAUNITA ended her run and passengers boarded a stage coach and scattered in Rockledge. Some continued on down the Indian River, while others checked into one of the Rockledge hotels.

A northern journalist who was dissatisfied with the trip up the St. Johns River, on his return north wrote: "Steamboating is quite primitive at Rockledge Landing. As we approached that place I saw on the steamer landing one white man, two mules and a dog to catch the rope."

Some of Hart & Smith's advertisements carried the following message: "Positively no fleas or bedbugs on our steamboats."

Hart & Smith occasionally sponsored excursions from Rockledge and Titusville to Sanford, where the ladies could shop and purchase the latest in fashions, and often locate items not available in the trading posts along the Indian River; scarce items like, canned delicacies, pastries, magazines, medicines, tobacco and ammunition.

From Merritt Island, Cocoa, Rockledge and the surrounding area, young boys hurried to the Rockledge Landing or Titusville Landing on the St. Johns River to see the steamboats land and tie-up. Recognizing the sound of her whistle, they already knew which steamer it was. These boys were eager to see who got off, who got on and what interesting cargo arrived.

During the 1880s young men in Titusville and Rockledge saw an average of a dozen steamboats each week. Pilots signaled with the steam whistle as the steamer neared the landing. The boys were able to watch deckhands and roustabouts prepare for the landing when a rope was thrown from the boat and pulled taut as needed to tie-up the steamboat securely.

WAUNITA & OKEEHUMKEE at Titusville Landing

Ed Mueller Collection

A BRAVE YOUNG MAN

An eight year old lad, Frank Torbert, passed through Titusville yesterday (September 1, 1892), on his way to Fort Pierce, where his parents reside. He came alone from Inverness, Florida, placarded with a sheet of paper sewed on the back of his coat and consigned to the kind care and attention of railroad conductors and steamboat captains. He is a bright, unusually intelligent little chap and would hardly need a tag if he wanted to cross the continent.

Our Captain Smith, admiring the little fellow's brightness, asked him if he wouldn't like to be a steamboat man? He studied a moment, then asked Smith if he was one. (In 1892, Smith was working on the Indian River).

Being answered in the affirmative he replied quietly, but readily, after carefully sizing up the good Captain--"No, thank you, I guess I don't." (From the Tropical Sun, September 1, 1892).

THE REVEREND MICHAEL BLACK

Reverend Michael Black was returning from Jacksonville where he attended a Methodist Church convention. He conducted Sunday Morning Worship Services aboard the steamer WAUNITA that day in the early 1880s. It was probably the first Sunrise Services ever conducted in Brevard County.

That afternoon, Reverend Black did some fishing from the WAUNITA. Captain Joe Smith jokingly remarked: "Preacher, don't you know it's wicked to catch fish on Sunday?" Reverend Black, of Merritt Island (not having had a bite all afternoon) replied: "Who's catching fish?"

DESCRIPTION

Steamers of the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line passed by old gnarled cypress trees on the way to Rockledge Landing, their twisted limbs clothed in majestic beauty of gray Spanish moss, in sharp contrast with the brilliant greens of the water grass around the next bend in the river.

American egrets serve as a frame for age-old burned out stumps along the edge of the St. Johns. The birds were not greatly disturbed by Steamboats or people. They merely move out of the way and continue their quest for a meal.

Huge barren oaks provide roosts for hundreds of white water birds that cover them so thickly they appear to be coated with a blanket of snow.

THE STEAMBOAT ERA

The coming of steamboats to the Upper St. Johns River from Jacksonville in the late 1870s started Rockledge on its way to being a viable community.

One of the valuable assets the steamboat brought were the hundreds of tourists, sportsmen and pioneer settlers, many of whom liked what they saw and stayed to live out their lives here.

The importance of the steamboats was beyond comprehension. Prior to this time, it took a week or longer to reach Jacksonville and the outside world. The steamboats made it possible for the pioneer settlers to obtain the necessities of life and at the same time it was convenient for them to ship out oranges and winter vegetables by the boatload.

LIFE ABOARD A STEAMBOAT

Soft, mellow breezes whispered through the staterooms on the WAUNITA steamboat. It was peaceful aboard, a pleasantness that old rivermen remembered as the best of their days on the paddlewheelers that plied the Upper St. Johns River before rails opened up early Brevard County.

When Captain Joe Smith was interviewed in the year 1901, he noted: "We had a 5 man crew, including a good cook. After a hard day's work, sleeping aboard was about as close to Heaven and nature as a man could get. No noises, no neighbors, nor roads---just the murmur of the river and that silent old WAUNITA.

POSTMASTER G. L. NICHOLS

When Mr. G. L. Nichols of Sharpes, Florida was interviewed in August of 1922, after completing 25 years as Postmaster at Sharpes, he talked of the early days prior to the turn of the century. He came to Central Brevard County in 1884 for a visit from his old home in Waterbury, Connecticut, at which time to reach the Indian River country, you came to Sanford, then came by a smaller steamboat to Rockledge Landing. Mr. Nichols says the boat which brought him here was the WAUNITA, with Captain Joe Smith in command, and the late Cocoa Postmaster Charles Schoonmaker as pilot, and that it was a really fine boat attractively fitted up with excellent table service, the run from Sanford requiring an entire day, making dinner aboard necessary.

MORE ABOUT THE WAUNITA

C. B. Mitchell, in his book "Paddle Wheel Inboard," tells of an Englishman who made a trip aboard the WAUNITA:

"This little vessel which navigates the Upper St. Johns River where a larger craft could not pass, is very comfortably fitted up, small as it is. We cast appreciative glances around the prettily decorated little saloon, with its sofas and rocking chairs; we inspect the tiny sleeping rooms, with their clean white berths, and presently carried out two easy chairs on to the little strip of deck forward of the saloon, and sat down to enjoy the landscape in peace and comfort, and in the society of our fellow passengers, who also, one and all, in fact the 'all' was not a crowd. The strip of deck was narrow and many brought their chairs and camp-stools outside.

"So delightful was traveling on the WAUNITA that one member of the party exclaimed, 'now I call it real good of the Captain and company to give us this beautiful trip for $5! And went on to praise the certainly excellent meals which are served to us in the neat little saloon...the tender venison steak, the cutlets, the eggs, the fish and the hot cornbread.'

"In the morning we find ourselves at our landing place on Lake Poinsett (Rockledge Landing). But we do not land until we have enjoyed a good hot breakfast on board the WAUNITA."

A LEISURELY TRIP

Author and travel writer George M. Barber, made a trip aboard the WAUNITA inthe mid 1880s, and published the following description:

"The steamers of the Hart & Smith Steamboat Line treaded the very narrow and wonderful Upper St. Johns River were each an aquatic curosity. Constructed with 2 decks, a snug little square-shaped wheelhouse, high-up forward, and a little lobby aft, with a row of small staterooms between, that were unexcelled for the accommodations they offered in the scanty space offered. On the wheelhouse roof, or on the lower deck was a large iron brazier where a bonfire of pine knots lighted the way at night. Driven by a small steam engine provided energy to turn the sternwheel.

Everyone aboard at night marvelled at the pilot's ability to guide the steamer and find the channel. The wonderful ability of the pilot, his foresight or eyesight, inspired us all with profound admiration."

THE HEYDAY OF STEAMBOATING

The heyday of steamboating on the Upper St. Johns was in 1883. Several steamers were making biweekly trips to Titusville and Rockledge Landing and a prosperous period was being experienced in Brevard County.

Mrs. E. M. Roesch, whose husband began Eau Gallie's first newspaper in 1909, The Eau Gallie Gazette, made the trip in 1883, as noted in her memories which she wrote in 1944:

"We boarded the steamboat CITY OF JACKSONVILLE and proceeded on up the river, arriving at Sanford about five in the evening. On this boat we met three men from Montreal, Canada. A Mr. Dase Kay, Mr. Harry Hodgson and Mr. Ackie Hodgson. All three settled in Eau Gallie, and with their arrival plus their families, the population of that place doubled overnight.

"At Sanford we boarded a smaller steamer, the WAUNITA, with Captain Joe Smith in charge, and proceeded towards Rockledge. As the river became narrower and the bends in the river difficult to make, the deckhands would push the boat around the bend with a pole. We proceeded along until four in the afternoon, when we landed near Rockledge on Lake Poinsett. We got into a scow and a pair of mules pulled us to land. As we landed a big deer stood looking at us. Ackie Hodgson shot the deer and put it on the stage that took us to Rockledge. We stayed at Ryder's Hotel (Ryder also owned a store and was postmaster of Rockledge). The Gleason boys, George and Will from Eau Gallie met us in their sailboat the VIXEN. As there was a stiff wind from the north, which lasted five days, the boys waited for the wind to cease.

"Mr. Hodgson gave the deer he shot to Mr. Ryder, proprietor of the hotel and we bought it back every meal, as that was all the meat we had to eat for five days while we stayed in Rockledge. Finally the Gleason boys said all aboard. We got on the sail boat and and arrived in Eau Gallie that evening just before dusk.

"It took all of ten days for us to make the trip from Jacksonville to Eau Gallie in 1883. Recently we made the trip in three hours by auto.

"On arrival at Eau Gallie we stayed at The Florida Agricultural College which had been converted to a hotel. Governor Gleason donated a piece of ground to the State of Florida for an Agricultural College. As the State did not accept the Eau Gallie location, it eventually reverted back to Gleason who converted the building into a hotel. Later the College was erected at Lake City and still later moved to Gainesville under the name University of Florida."

ROCKLEDGE LANDING

Back in the mid 1970s the author accompanied the late Chuck Skelly out to the end of Barton Boulevard. Here he pointed out where Rockledge Landing was located. On the way to the landing Chuck told me his grandfather Gardner Hardee was the first person to settle in Rockledge, owned the first house there and when a post office was established, he and the Hatch, Magruder and the Williams families gave the new community Rockledge its name, but gave it two words Rock Ledge.

Chuck pointed toward Lake Florence, noting that it was named for his Aunt Florence, one of Hardee's daughters, and on the other side of Lake Poinsett, way back in 1838, soldiers watched for Indians approaching during the Seminole Indian War.

He told me that in the 1870s, his grandfather Hardee along with other early pioneer Rockledge settlers who had large citrus groves that were bearing, but there was no way to transport the fruit to market, so they decided to do something about the problem.

"They hauled a rowboat to the St. Johns River, right here where we're standing. They then stocked it with provisions and started out to chart the channel of the river. They rowed and poled all day and set up a white flag when the channel was located. At night they camped on some island and had their supper. Before rolling up their blankets, for the night, a log fire was started to keep the snakes and alligators away.

"After several days, they reached Enterprise, a small steamboat landing on Lake Monroe near present day Sanford. What arguments or persuasion they used was quite effective. They actually interested a group of men with funds who put on a line of small paddle wheel steamboats.

"My grandfather Hardee was the first to explore the Upper St. Johns.

"The steamboats were scheduled to run twice a week, but often ran just weekly. When fuel ran low, the boat was tied-up to a knoll and all hands were put to work chopping wood. The boats belonged to Captain Thomas J. Lund. They were the VOLUSIA and the FOX.

"A company was formed by G. S. Hardee, H. S. Williams and Joe Paxton, who also was a pioneer orange grower, drew up a charter, built a wharf and warehouse on Rockledge Creek where the incoming and outgoing freight could be stored and easily handled. They named this place Rockledge Landing."

This was the beginning of steamboating on the Upper St. Johns River.

Rockledge Landing 1884--Waiting for the ASTATULA

Doug Hendriksen Collection

DESCRIPTIVE ROCKLEDGE LANDING

I wish I had the language to tell how the St. Johns River looks to me. Sometimes dark and brooding, sometimes sinister and evil looking, and then at times so bright with sunshine making a silver sheet across the water. At night when the moon rises from behind the trees, its like a path of gold.

Dawn gently pushes away the black sky, while the morning haze fighting off the sun's early, burning rays, doggedly maintains its foothold above the ground in a losing battle, hiding around the palmetto stands along the St. Johns marshlands at Rockledge Landing, only to return another day.

Afternoon comes slowly but certainly to the St. Johns, a change of mood as the morning wears away. The clouds have grayed, the birds have disappeared for a midday nap. Even the sounds are gone---as though nature already had become accustomed to the day and no longer felt obligated to sing its praises. There is emptiness and total aloneness that somehow increases a longing desire to return soon again to the Upper St. Johns. It is time to head back, back past the same sights familiar territory now but quieter. But there is a feeling of comfort, too, in knowing that on the St. Johns, this day will be like tomorrow and a thousand more tomorrows.

When it is near the end of the day; the sun hovers lower and lower and the wind-bent palms and the steamboat stacks become black silhouettes against a sky smeared purple and fire red. The St. Johns suddenly changes face. As darkness begins to settle, the crew of the WAUNITA readies for the night portion of the trip.

Night running was hazardous along the Sanford-Rockledge Landing route. In order to light the way, fat pine knots were carefully secured in front of a cast iron brazier. When lighted, these flaming chunks of wood cast an orange glow over the water. The glare cut the darkness enough for the deck hands stationed on either side of the boat to poke their poles into the water to discover whatever obstructions might lay below the surface.

Much to the annoyance of sleepers at the tourist hotels in Rockledge Captain Joe Smith, as soon as he came within sight of Rockledge Landing, which was usually late in the night, began to sound his whistle and he kept it blowing until he had reached his landing. The whistle was a signal for hacks and wagons to pickup freight and passengers at the landing.

Captain Smith was often blamed for the large families that resided in the community of Rockledge.

THE HART & SMITH STEAMER ASTATULA

The January 19, 1881 issue of the Titusville Florida Star newspaper, took notice that "Colonel Hart has just launched a new steamer for the St. Johns River route, called the ASTATULA, or 'Lake of Sunbeams,' the Indian name of Lake Harris on which is located the community Astatula. Captain D. A. Dunham was at the wheel on her maiden trip.

The ASTATULA's first assignment was up the Ocklawaha River to Silver Springs which was described in advertisements as "an adventure into the unknown." Tourists were alternately thrilled and scared to death by ghostlike figures and shadows made by the searchlight fire of burning logs atop the pilot house after dark; and the piercing eyes of wildlife along the banks of the river. Tourists making the night trip on the Ocklawaha spread the news of the steamboat ride far and wide, giving the ASTATULA and Colonel Hart wide acceptance.

The ASTATULA was 80 feet long, with a 20 foot beam and had a recessed paddlewheel. She was unusual in that instead of a staircase between decks, everyone climbed up and down a steep ladder. The ASTATULA was small and the extra room, spelled more space for passengers and freight. Like other Hart & Smith steamboats, the ASTATULA was constructed for navigating unchanneled waters, such as found on the Upper St. Johns. Her recessed sternwheel kept out of harm's way when steaming through regions where snags abounded.

The ASTATULA's schedule called for her to leave Sanford and Enterprise at 10 A. M., Monday and Wednesday and return from Rockledge Landing on Tuesday and Thursday. On the Wednesday run, a stop was made at Titusville Landing. At this time, Captain Charles Schoonmaker was her master.

Newspaper ads regarding the ASTATULA always carried the following notice: Owner, Hart & Smith Rockledge Line; Captain Joe H. Smith, Manager; E. C. Culpepper, Sanford agent; E. B. Van Deman, Rockledge agent.

When the ASTATULA tied-up at Rockledge Landing people from all around hurried to the river's edge to see her land, always curious to see who got off, who got on and what interesting freight arrived. In most cases there would be more new settlers headed into Brevard County, plus the usual number of sportsmen and tourists. Freight was probably a lower deck full of pine lumber, all the same length, 12 feet. The remainder of the cargo consisted of canned foodstuff and general merchandise consigned to one of the trading posts along the Indian River.

THE LAKE HARNEY LANDING

In the early 1880s, a regular line of steamer traffic was inaugurated and known as the Upper St. Johns and Lake Poinsett (Rockledge Landing) route, with steamers of the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line providing most of the transportation.

During periods when the river was impassable due to low water, the Hart and Smith steamboats would load and unload at Lake Harney Landing, otherwise Lake Harney was just used as an alternate route. At Lake Harney Landing, the steamers would be met by hacks owned by Colonel Henry T. Titus and taken along a 12 mile rude wagon road to Titusville.

With the inauguration of this steamer service began a period of improvement and prosperity for the river country, and from that steamer service can be dated the beginning of tourist travel on the Upper St. Johns. Also, the Indian River territory was no longer an unknown territory to the outside world.

One of the greatest advantages of this route, according to the early pioneers, was that a person could know when he would arrive and when he could leave. At last the pioneer settlers of East Central Florida had a quick and easy link of communication with the outside world.

This new mode of transportation caused State Senator H. S. Williams, one of the founders of Rockledge to take notice:

"Our shipments of fruits and vegetables and freights were generally favorable. New settlers of means came in to help us build up the place and we can now point to a railroad tapping our river, a fleet of steamboats traversing its broad bosom, hotels ornamenting its lovely banks, a daily mail service and telegraphic communication. But just a few years ago, the news was a week old when we received it; now we know all the important transactions of the whole civilized world of the day before."

WORKING ON A STEAMBOAT

Working on a St. Johns steamboat was grueling work. There was no overtime (everyone was hired by the month), but there were no layoffs. The steamboat captains were accustomed to get a week's work of everyone, but if good time was made up stream, then Saturday or Sunday was declared a holiday. Occasionally after a trying trip, the captain would pass out a ration of whiskey, and the singing and friendship of a successful up-stream trip was celebrated.

STEAMER OSCEOLA.

Will Leave

SALT LAKE

Every Wednesday & Saturday

at 10 a. m. connecting at

Sanford and Enterprise,

with daily steamers for

JACKSONVILLE.

—:o:—

Returning Leaves

Sanford and Enterprise,

Every Tuesday and Friday at 9 a. m.

Cabin fare to Sanford or Enterprise, $3.; Meals and state room included, $5.; Deck fare, $2.

J. H. SMITH.

Feb 1 Manager.

STEAMER MARION,

Will Leave

SALT LAKE

Every Wednesday & Saturday

at 10 a. m. connecting at

Sanford and Enterprise,

with daily steamers for

JACKSONVILLE.

—:o:—

Returning Leaves

Sanford and Enterprise,

Every Tuesday and Friday at 9 a. m.

Cabin fare to Sanford or Enterprise, $3.; Meals and state room included, $5.; Deck fare, $2.

J. H. SMITH,

Feb 1 Manager.

STR. ASTATULA.

Will Leave

SALT LAKE

Every Wednesday & Saturday

at 10 a. m. connecting at

Sanford and Enterprise,

with daily steamers for

JACKSONVILLE.

—:o:—

Returning Leaves

Sanford and Enterprise,

Every Tuesday and Friday at 9 a. m.

Cabin fare to Sanford or Enterprise, $3.; Meals and state room included, $5.; Deck fare, $2.

J. H. SMITH.

Feb 1 Manager.

FOR INDIAN RIVER.

HART & SMITH'S

Rockledge Line.

The Steamer, "ASTATULA."

Will leave Sanford and Enterprise, every Tuesday and Friday for Lake Poinsett Landing, connecting at Rockledge with steamers for Titusville and all points on Indian River and Lake Worth. The Astatula will call at Salt Lake for Titusville on Tuesday's trip.

RETURNING

Will leave Lake Poinsett every Wednesday and Saturday at 4 p. m. Prompt close connections made with daily line steamers for Jacksonville and all points North.

Capt. Joe Smith,

8 tf Manager.

ABOARD THE ASTATULA

C. V. Hine in his book "On the Indian River," tells of his trip aboard the ASTATULA.

"The little ASTATULA, the aspiring steamboat, with no more than the dimensions of a tug, but making up in height what she lacks in length and width, impatiently blows her whistle, and we shove off.

"Every now and then, as the tiny ASTATULA sped on her way, a long legged heron, with plumes of brightest blue, would rise up from its seat on a fallen tree trunk where it had been playing the part of the lone fisherman, and with a guttural cry, fly over the woods and far away.

"Once in a while, a shameless alligator, not yet sick of civilization, but only shy of it, slipped off its log, as if it remembered the time not long back, when the tourist sportsmen were allowed to shoot from the river boats and play havoc with their lives as well as those of their fellow voyagers.

"When night and blackest darkness comes, and all is gloom and one overbearing shadow, the scene is blank if the eye seeks to pierce the distance; but near us all is ruddy glow; water, branch and trunk are bathed in a shimmering red---ever changing, moving from branch to branch and water-swell to water-swell. I looked above me to find the cause of these phantoms of the night. I see blazing logs of pitch-pine.

"Beneath us, the tourists on the upper deck, a voice is heard, then another, and then a chorus. This sudden burst of melody from the boathands on the lower deck, startling at first harmonizes the watery world about, lifts up our hearts in gladness and makes the outer world again akin to us. Song follows song and hymn and these hymns, sung by these original minstrels are strangly familiar to our northern ears.

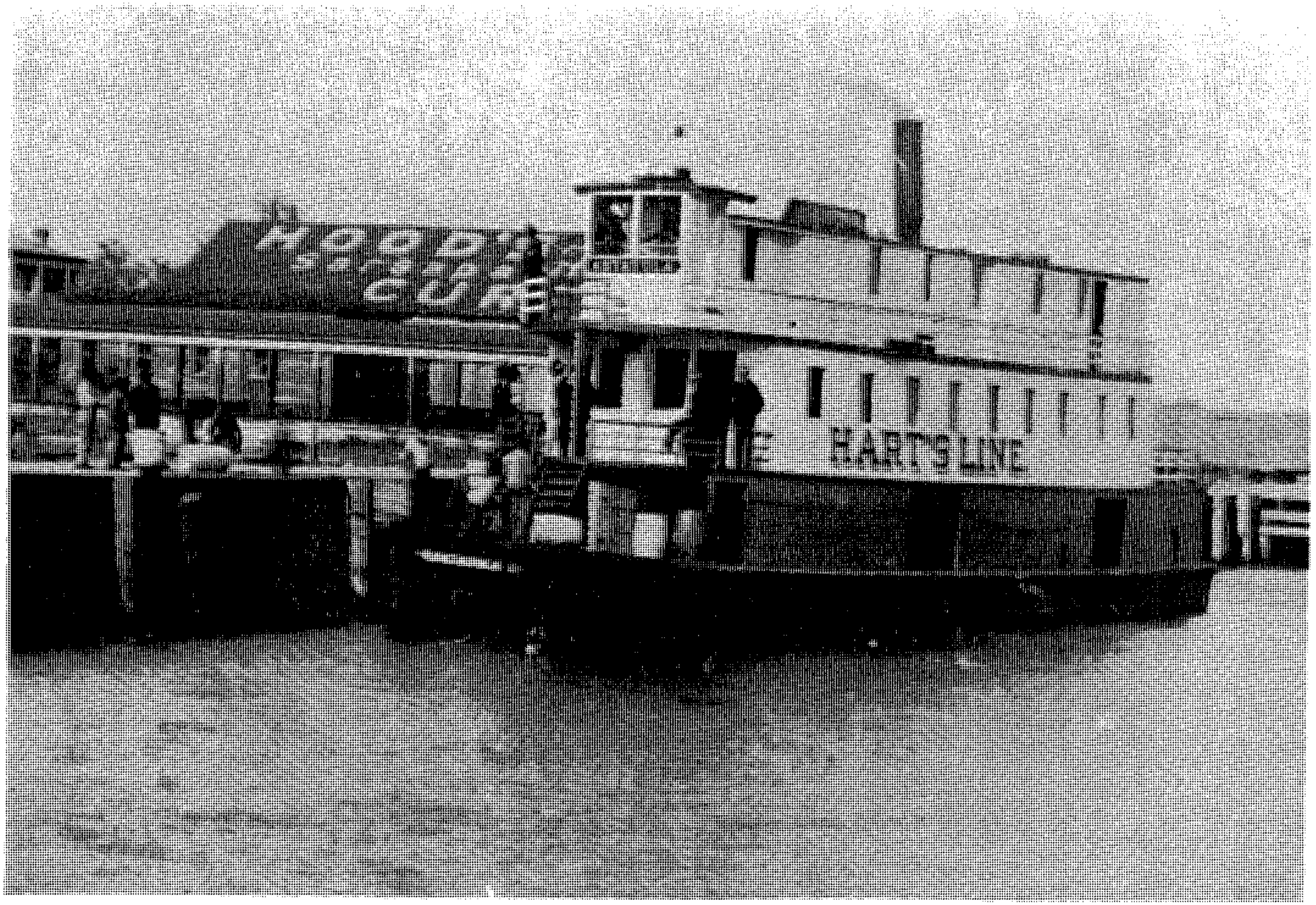
"This impromptu, out of door concert in January closes with a goodnight song and a general going to bed in the ASTATULA's tiny staterooms.

"About midnight there is seen afar off, like a will-o-the wisp, a whirling flag of flame. There is marked on the background of this flying flame the background of a Negro whirling this primitive lamp of the wilderness; and by the light of these red-glaring torches, commerce-in the silent hours of night. Quickly the orange crates are taken on deck and we puff on again into further darkness.

"Finally the ASTATULA lurches to a halt at Salt Lake and Titusville is reached. Sometime later that morning the ASTATULA makes Rockledge Landing."

All aboard the ASTATULA

Photo - So. Brev. H/S



Steamer ASTATULA at Palatka, Fla.

State of Florida Photographic Archives

PROBLEMS ABOARD SHIP

Most steamboat trips made by The Hart and Smith Rockledge Line were scenic, quiet and trouble free, but on several occasions there was nothing but trouble.

On April 15, 1885, Marcus Carpenter, steward of the steamer WAUNITA, was shot and killed in self-defense by Policeman Taylor, of Sanford, while the boat was attempting to leave for Rockledge Landing.

The Titusville Florida Star Newspaper noted: "Captain Reed was engaged in an altercation with Carpenter, who advanced upon him with a weapon, but was struck by a shot from the policeman's pistol before he could accomplish his purpose. The coroner's jury rendered a verdict of self-defense."

On another occasion two hands on the ASTATULA, the fireman and his assistant fought over the ownership of a gold watch as the steamer approached Rockledge Landing. Everyone thought the fireman was dead and he was thrown into a wagon, but when it arrived at Rockledge, the fireman was gone and so was the gold watch.

Personnel on board these early Upper St. Johns River steamboats seemed to be constantly getting into arguments, fights, knifings and altercations among themselves. Many times the steamers would pull into a landing with one of the deck hands chained to the pilot house. At other times the Captain, being the ship's master, would administer various forms of punishment when the occasion arose.

Legend says that the most infamous lady along the St. Johns River was not a steamboat but a "little old lady" from Palatka, Mrs. W. F. Fuller. In 1884, Mrs. Fuller attended the Pan American Exposition at New Orleans where she bought a "beautiful" floating water plant from Venezeula. The plant proliferated in her garden pool, bearing purple flowers like those of the northern hyacinth. Mrs. Fuller called her plant a "water hyacinth," and when the pool became crowded, she dropped a few plants into the St. Johns River, which soon found its way into the Upper St. Johns River.

By this time Mrs. Fuller's lovely plant was recognized as a menace, it was too late. Eradication is now deemed impossible and millions of dollars are spent each year on hyacinth control.

During the winter season, the ASTATULA alternated with her sister steamers, WAUNITA, MARION and the ARROW in making five and six trips a week to Titusville and Rockledge Landing. Once or twice a week the steamboats would steam into Lake Jessup Landing and drop off passengers and cargo bound for Orlando. Captain J. F.Reed, a seasoned steamboat riverman was usually master of the ASTATULA on the Lake Jessup runs.

On April 1, 1886 (April Fool's Day) a young seaman fell overboard from the ASTATULA, drink was the cause. This was the last trip made by the ASTATULA for the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line of Steamers.

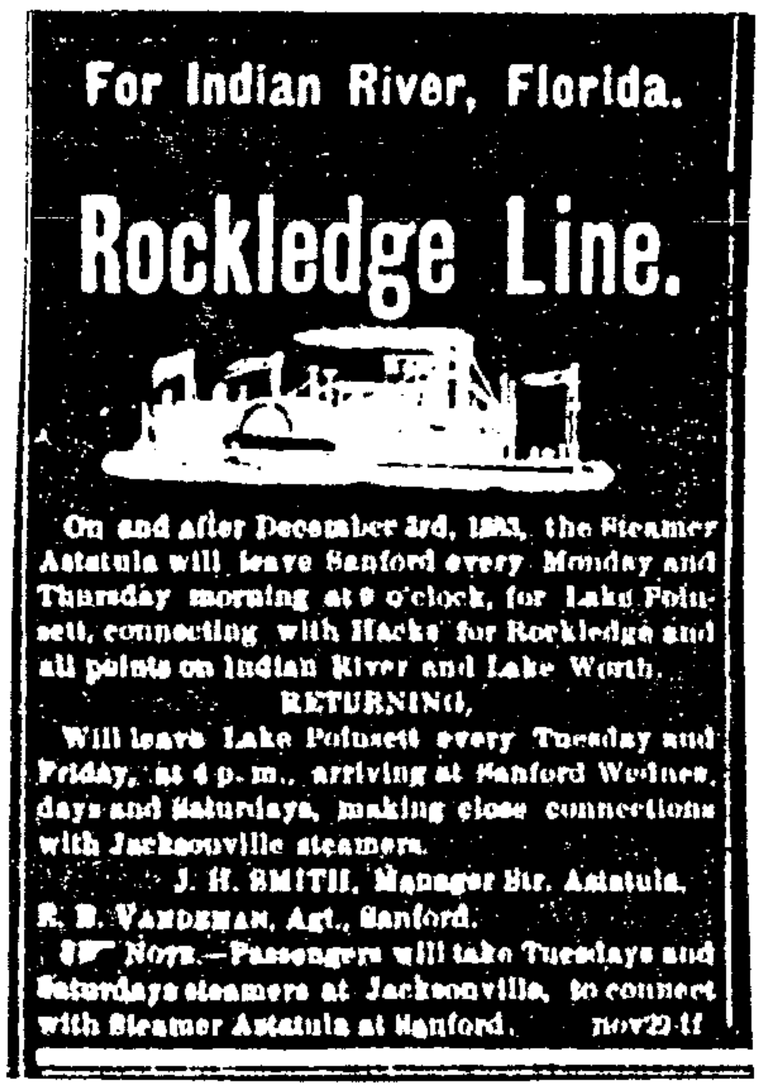
The ever popular steamboat ASTATULA was not only the workhorse of the Hart & Smith Line, she was also the Queen of the line. But more important, she was very profitable, seldom being "laid-up" for repairs, and she was noted for maintaining her schedule.

She was exceptionally well-built and although she was forced to compete with larger and more comfortable steamers, and go to out-of-the-way places where low water prevailed and to places where the larger steamboats never dared.

If the ASTATULA's sailing manifests were available today, they would show the names of many a distinguished traveler who had some interesting stories to tell about the beauty of scenery, life aboard the steamboat and interesting features of their river trip.

The ASTATULA was still running on the St. Johns River in the second decade of the 1900s and still competing with steamers twice her size and one-quarter her age.

She was replaced not because of her age but because of her small size.


For Indian River, Florida.

Rockledge Line.

On and after December 3rd, 1883, the Steamer Astatula will leave Sanford every Monday and Thursday morning at 9 o'clock, for Lake Poinsett, connecting with Hacks for Rockledge and all points on Indian River and Lake Worth.

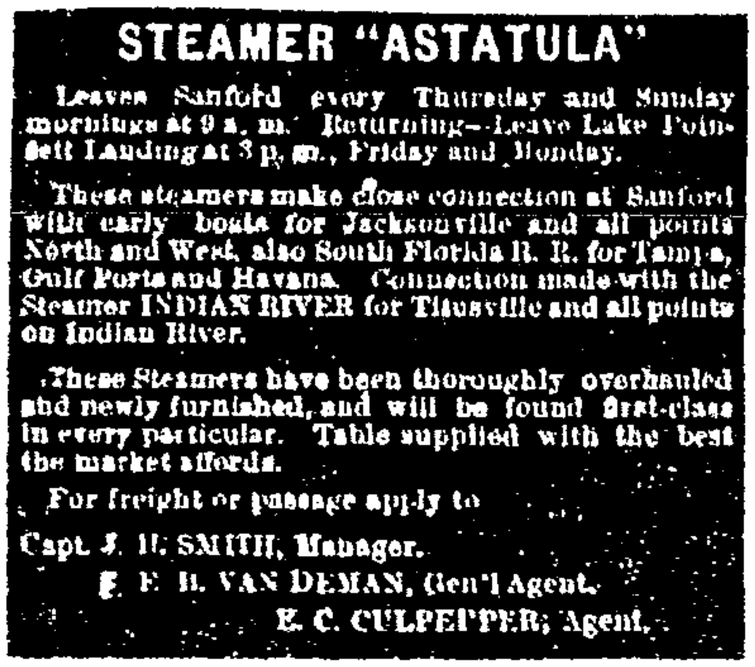
RETURNING,

Will leave Lake Poinsett every Tuesday and Friday, at 4 p. m., arriving at Sanford Wednesdays and Saturdays, making close connections with Jacksonville steamers.

J. H. SMITH, Manager Str. Astatula.

R. B. VANDEMAN, Agt., Sanford.

☞ NOTE.—Passengers will take Tuesdays and Saturdays steamers at Jacksonville, to connect with Steamer Astatula at Sanford. nov29-tf


STEAMER "ASTATULA"

Leaves Sanford every Thursday and Sunday mornings at 9 a. m. Returning—Leave Lake Poinsett Landing at 3 p. m., Friday and Monday.

These steamers make close connection at Sanford with early boats for Jacksonville and all points North and West, also South Florida R. R. for Tampa, Gulf Ports and Havana. Connection made with the Steamer INDIAN RIVER for Titusville and all points on Indian River.

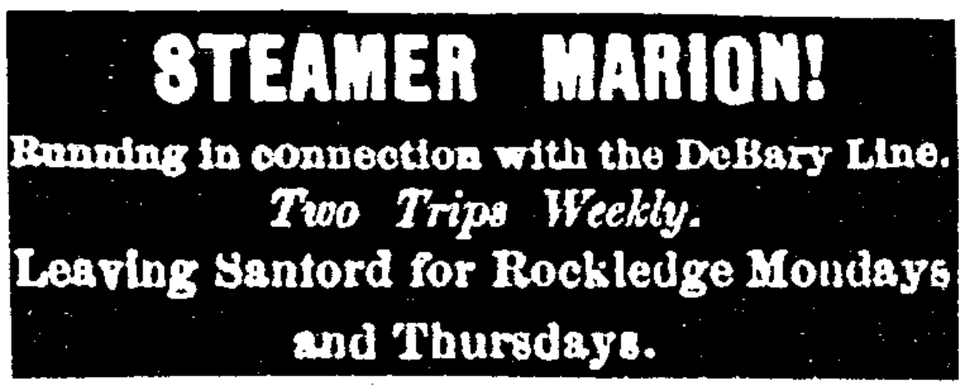
These Steamers have been thoroughly overhauled and newly furnished, and will be found first-class in every particular. Table supplied with the best the market affords.

For freight or passage apply to

Capt. J. H. SMITH, Manager.

E. F. B. VAN DEMAN, Gen'l Agent.

E. C. CULPEPPER, Agent.


STEAMER MARION!

Running in connection with the DeBary Line.

Two Trips Weekly.

Leaving Sanford for Rockledge Mondays and Thursdays.

Baby alligators were a novelty and specialty item with tourists who traveled aboard Hart & Smith steamboats. Their newspaper ads got as much publicity as possible, some picturing sportsmen shooting alligators from the bow of the ASTATULA. Tourists purchased one foot alligators by the dozen at Kate Eyer's souvenir shop in Rockledge.

EARLY AD: "Do not fail to embrace this opportunity to enjoy the extraordinary aboard the ASTATULA of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line, a new line which recently opened up travel to Titusville, Rockledge and to all southeast Florida points."

During the height of the 1884 pineapple harvest, the ASTATULA set a record, making 5 round trips to Sanford from Rockledge Landing in a week. Back then Brevard County was the pineapple capital of the world.

Even though pineapple culture was profitable, the fruit had to be handled a dozen times prior to reaching markets. Loaded on a steamboat at Fort Pierce, Florida, the pines were unloaded at Rockledge on the Indian River, and hauled by teams three miles to the St. Johns River, loaded on the ASTATULA or a sister ship, thence to Sanford where a larger steamer hauled the pineapples north to Jacksonville, where trains took them further north.

When the ASTATULA was transferred to the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line, she relieved the OSCEOLA. She became an instant hit with the tourists and was a money maker for Hart & Smith. Like other Hart & Smith steamboats, fares from Sanford to Rockledge Landing were $2 for deck seats, with meals $3, with meals and cabin $5.

She made her first run, flying the Hart & Smith banner, on February 18, 1883. Captain Charles Schoonmaker was seen in the pilot's house on that first trip.

Since Rockledge Landing was one of two ports of entry into early Brevard County, the ASTATULA and her sister ships of the Hart & Smith Line brought in just about everything required to sustain life in this remote section of Florida. On returning to Sanford, the ASTATULA accommodated paspengers, citrus fruits, barrels of fish, winter vegetables and throughout the summer months, pineapples were stacked everywhere, even about the pilot house.

On special occasions the ASTATULA would operate on Sunday, perhaps to alleviate backlogs or maybe an excursion upstream. On these occasions, Captain Smith insisted that religious services be conducted on board.

The captain of the ASTUTALA was required to maintain a log of each day's activities. Unfortunately none have survived over the years.

A TRIP ON THE ASTATULA

Passengers board the steamboat ASTATULA at Sanford with a great deal of apprehension, unsure of what the future holds for them on their up-river trip into the wilderness. Soon they are on their way and beautiful Lake Monroe is left behind.

At first the river is narrow, but soon opens up again to a broad, grassy, rather shallow region for two or three miles and before long Lake Jessup can be seen about a mile away on the right. The lake is part of the river route to Orlando. This lake is about the same area size as Lake Monroe. Due to its narrow entrance, it was one of the last lakes to be discovered on the Upper St. Johns River.

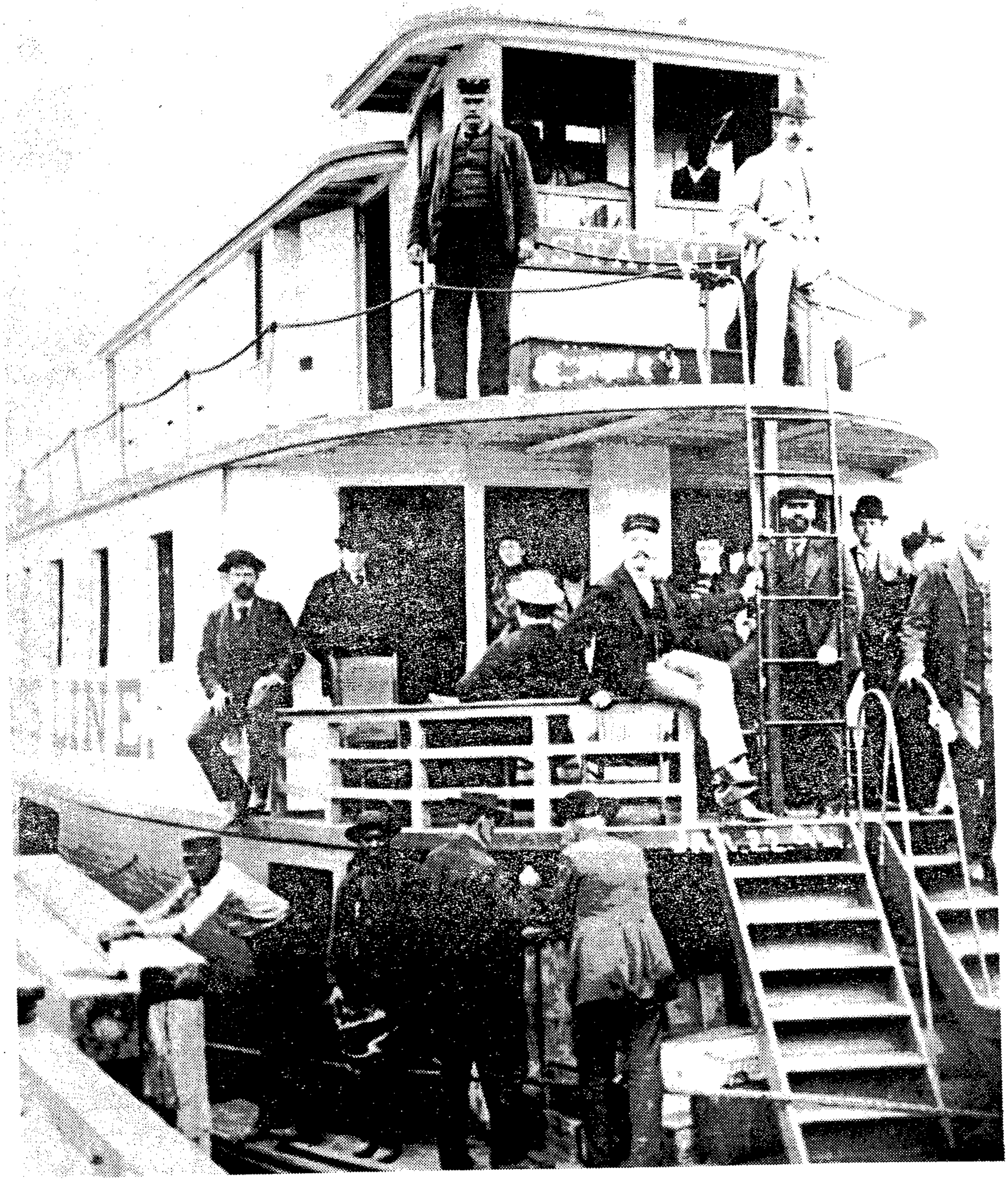
The river again narrows, and enters a small opening which is called Mullet Lake. Just above Mullet Lake we enter a narrow twisting and deep area overhung by tree limbs and great tailings of Spanish moss, and occasional fallen trees, and flanked on the west by a swampy nightmare known as "Alligator's Haven." Shooting alligators here is the delight of sportsmen. They often stand to the rear of the steamboat and take target practice at plumed birds and alligators, often accommodated by Captain Gray, who slows down so better aim can be taken.

Along most of the water between Mullet Lake and Lake Harney, woods on both shores are swampy and it is not uncommon to see deer swimming down the river or peeping through the greenery from shore. Wild hogs, black bears, possums, racoons, wildcats and often panthers make their home in leafy retreats along both flanks.

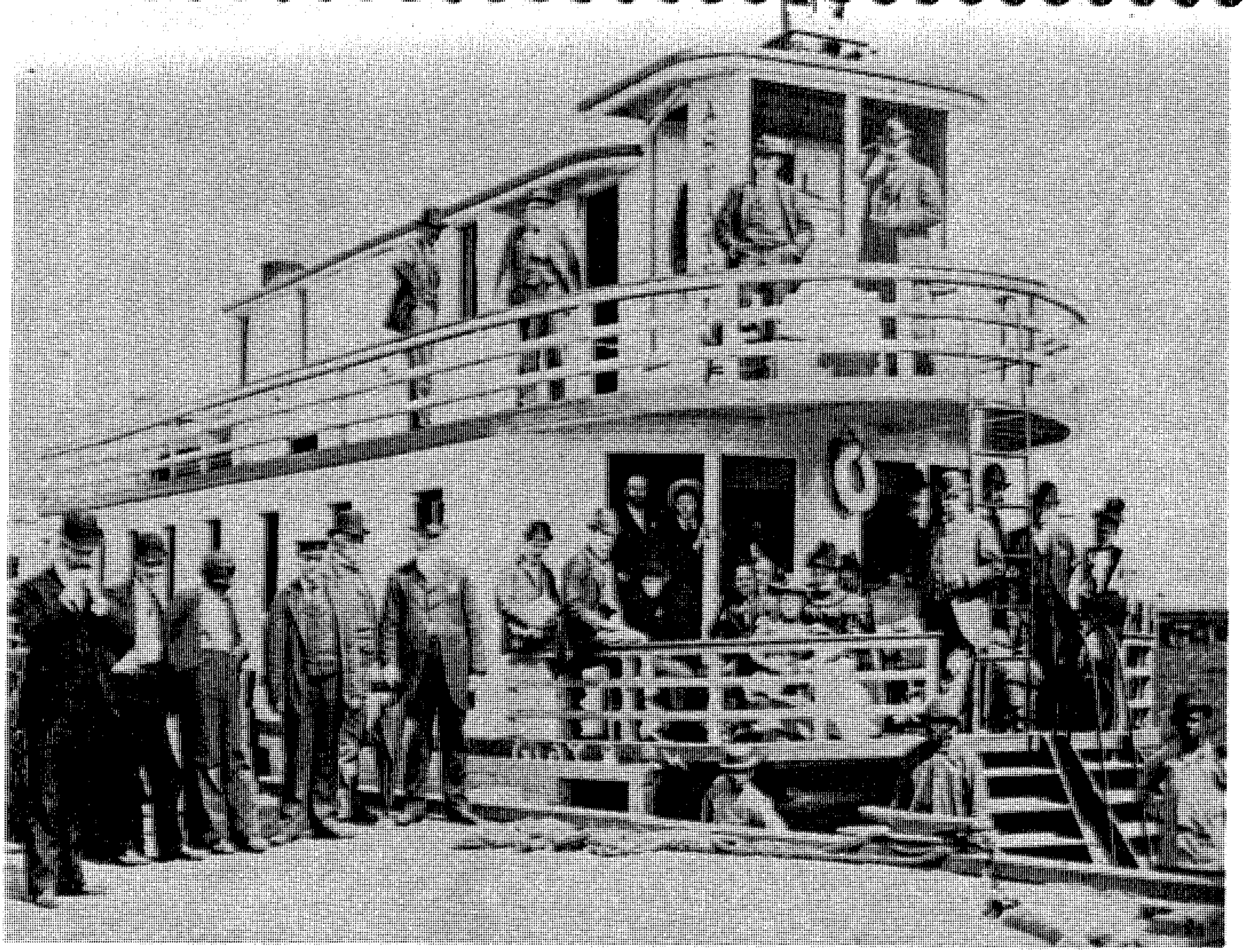
Although the water is low in this area, Lake Harney is reached without difficulty. Like Lakes Jessup, Poinsett and Winder, Lake Harney is also large and all were named for Seminole War heroes. Lake Harney is passed without incident. (See pages 6, 7 and 8 for maps)

The Upper St. Johns at first observation seems almost untouched by the works of man, but after passing Lake Harney we begin to see some signs of civilization with glimpses of orange trees and cattle. Above Harney the region of the Puzzle Lakes is entered. Here the river splits into innumerable sloughs and to the west it quickly becomes obstructed.

The entrance of Titusville Landing at Salt Lake usually gives tourists a startling glimpse of wildlife along the Upper St. Johns. American egrets, white ibises, great blue herons, black-crowned night herons, anhingas, snowy egreat and other varieties line the shore like one big aviary. After a three hour wagon trip from Salt Lake, we reached Titusville.



ASTATULA - Leaving for Silver Springs, Fla. Ed. Mueller Collection



ASTATULA - Captain Henry A. Gray (Top - 2nd from left) State of Flarida Photographic Archives

LAST TRIP BY THE ASTATULA

Mr. C. Bradford Mitchell, tells of the demise of the ASTATULA in his book "Paddle Wheel Inboard:"

"The end lasted eight years. It began with two events of 1912. First ASTATULA made her final curtsey. She was a quaint little steamboat, part lady and part child. She had come into the world just in time to share the Golden Age of the line, she had survived the steamboat war on the winning side, and she had lived into the evil days as a top-heavy little dowager, travelling less and less after 1904, when HIAWATHA took the burden off her shoulders. Of all the Ocklawaha boats, except perhaps SILVER SPRING, I would like best to have travelled on her, with Captain Gray.

"She was committed to the riverbank not far from the marine ways at Hart's Point, and gradually stripped of her tophamper as the years passed. For a while she was a low box on a raft - with a door-like aperture in the stern and a tall, tottering stovepipe. Then she was a nest of water-soaked timbers, and finally, thirty years later, two rotting stern-wheel supports slanting above a carpet of water hyacinth."

WHY A STEAMBOAT IS CALLED A "SHE"

A steamboat is called a she for the following reasons:

A steamboat is called a she because there's always a great deal of bustle around her.

Because there's usually a gang of men around.

Because she has a waist and stays.

Because she takes a lot of paint to keep her looking good.

Because it's not the initial expense that breaks you, it's the upkeep.

Because she's all decked out.

Because it takes a good man to handle her.

Because she shows her topsides, hides her bottom, and when coming into port, always heads for the buoys.

THE STEAMBOAT OSCEOLA

The steamboat OSCEOLA was an older boat when she became part of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line. She made her first run for Hart & Smith in 1883, and she became the fourth steamer for that line. Captain Schoonmaker was in charge on her first run for Hart & Smith. Sanford was her home port and her schedule required two round trips a week to Titusville and Rockledge Landing, arriving back in Sanford to make connections with steamboats for the north.

A Sanford newspaper, The Sanford Orbit, noted in its January 4, 1883 issue: "The transfer of the OSCEOLA will add another steamer to the ever increasing fleet on the Upper St. Johns River. She doubtless will be used in connection with the operations of Hart & Smith's Rockledge Line and become quite a prominent feature in the development of the tourist travel to the Upper St. Johns."

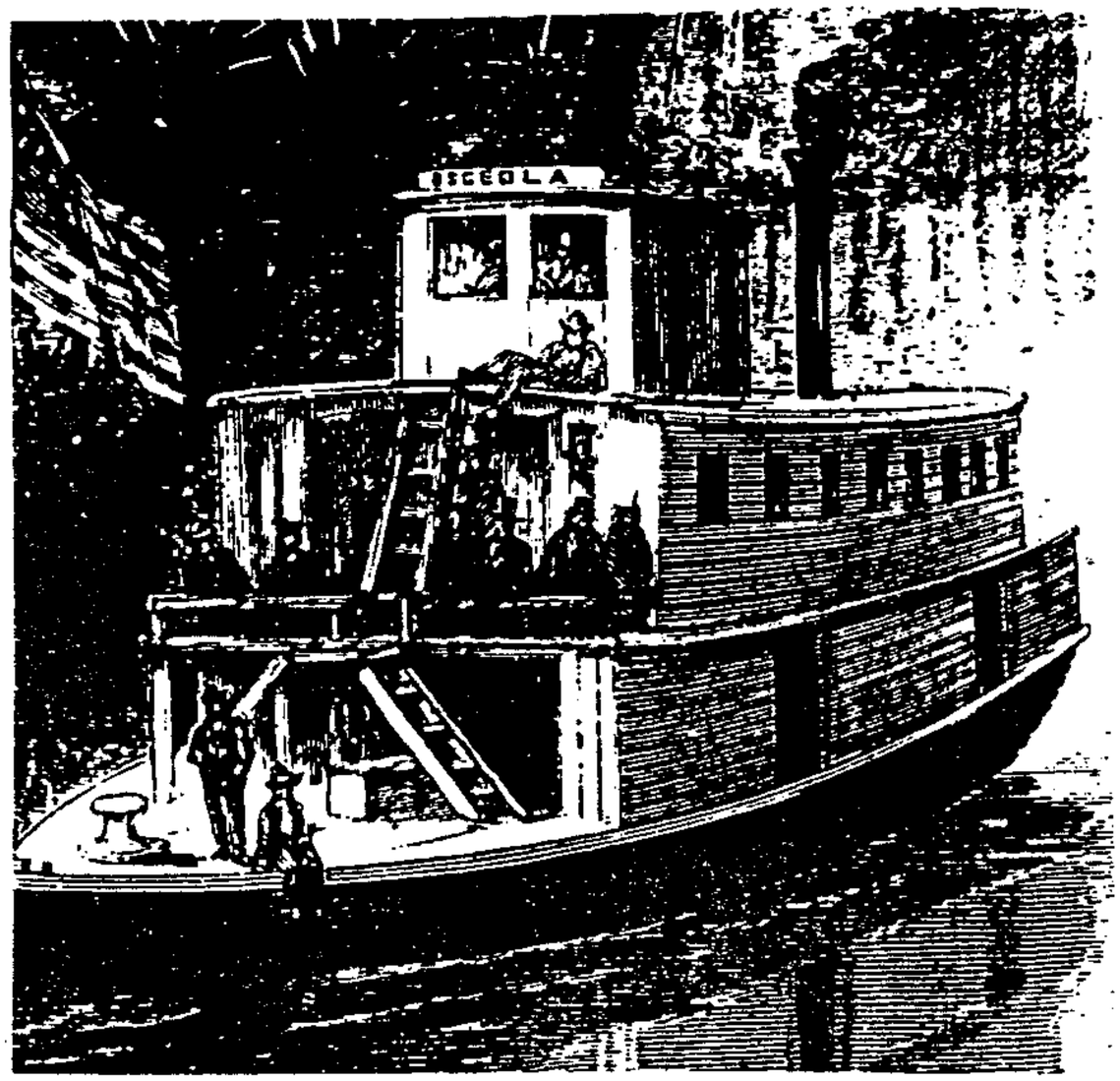
A notice in the Florida Star newspaper on February 1, 1883 noted: "11 came up on the OSCEOLA steamer last Friday and about the same number left on the return trip." The same paper noted: "The steamer OSCEOLA, Captain Schoonmaker in charge, makes two trips weekly between Sanford-Titusville and Rockledge Landing, arriving at Titusville and Rockledge Landing on Tuesday and Friday. Returning leaves Rockledge Landing Wednesday and Saturday at 10 A.M."

The OSCEOLA was built in the mid 1870s and could comfortably accommodate up to 50 passengers and like other Upper St. Johns River steamboats, she had a recessed stern wheel. While making overnight runs to Rockledge Landing she made five to six miles per hour, but if in a hurry, eight miles per hour was tops.

Over the years while operating on the St. Johns River, the OSCEOLA had an assortment of masters. In addition to Captain Schoonmaker, the following were masters of the OSCEOLA: Captain H. A. Gray; Captain J. H. Smith; Captain A. N. Edwards and Captain David A. Dunham.

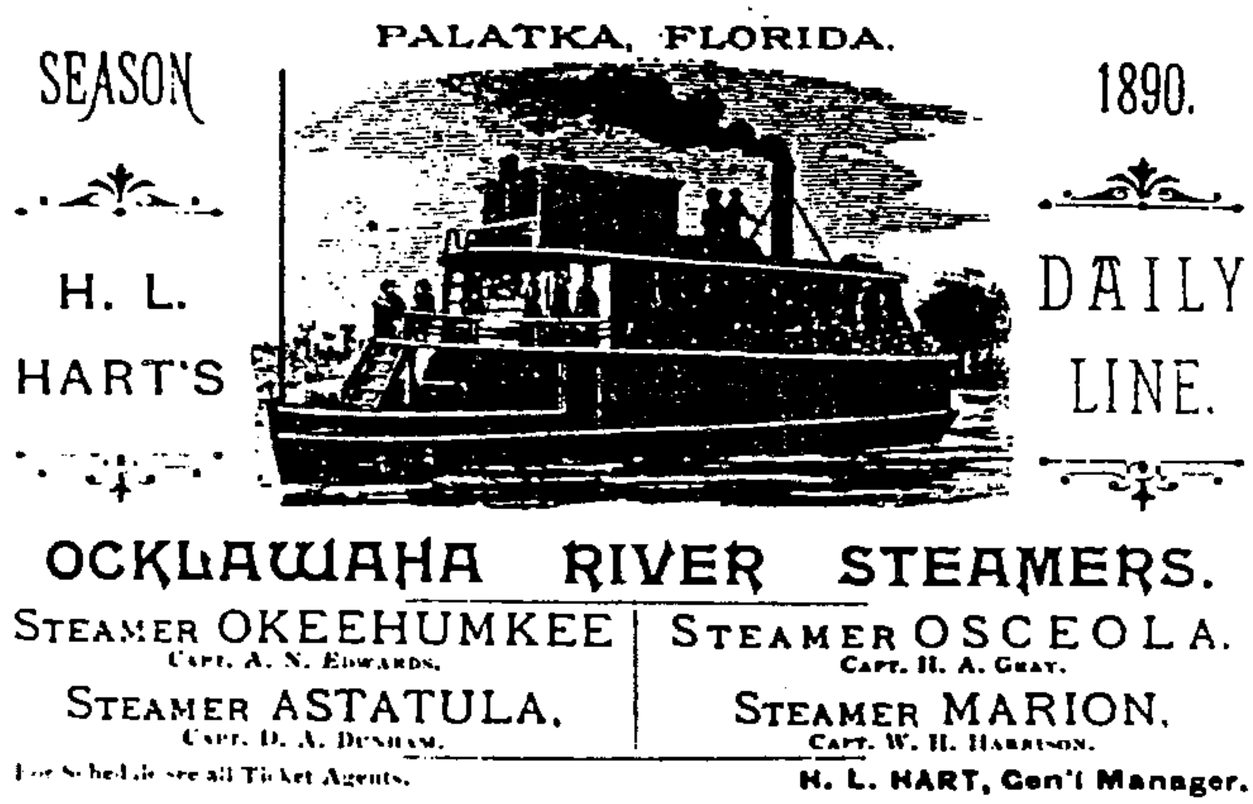
As the population of Orlando, Florida increased, the Hart & Smith Line included Lake Jessup Landing as a stop for the OSCEOLA, where hacks carried passengers and freight to the upcoming Orlando metropolis. Deck fare from Sanford or Rockledge Landing to Lake Jessup was $1.00.

Like other steamers of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line, one way fare from Sanford to Rockledge Landing on the OSCEOLA was: Cabin with meals $5.00; Deck fare with meals $3.00; Deck fare without meals $2.00.



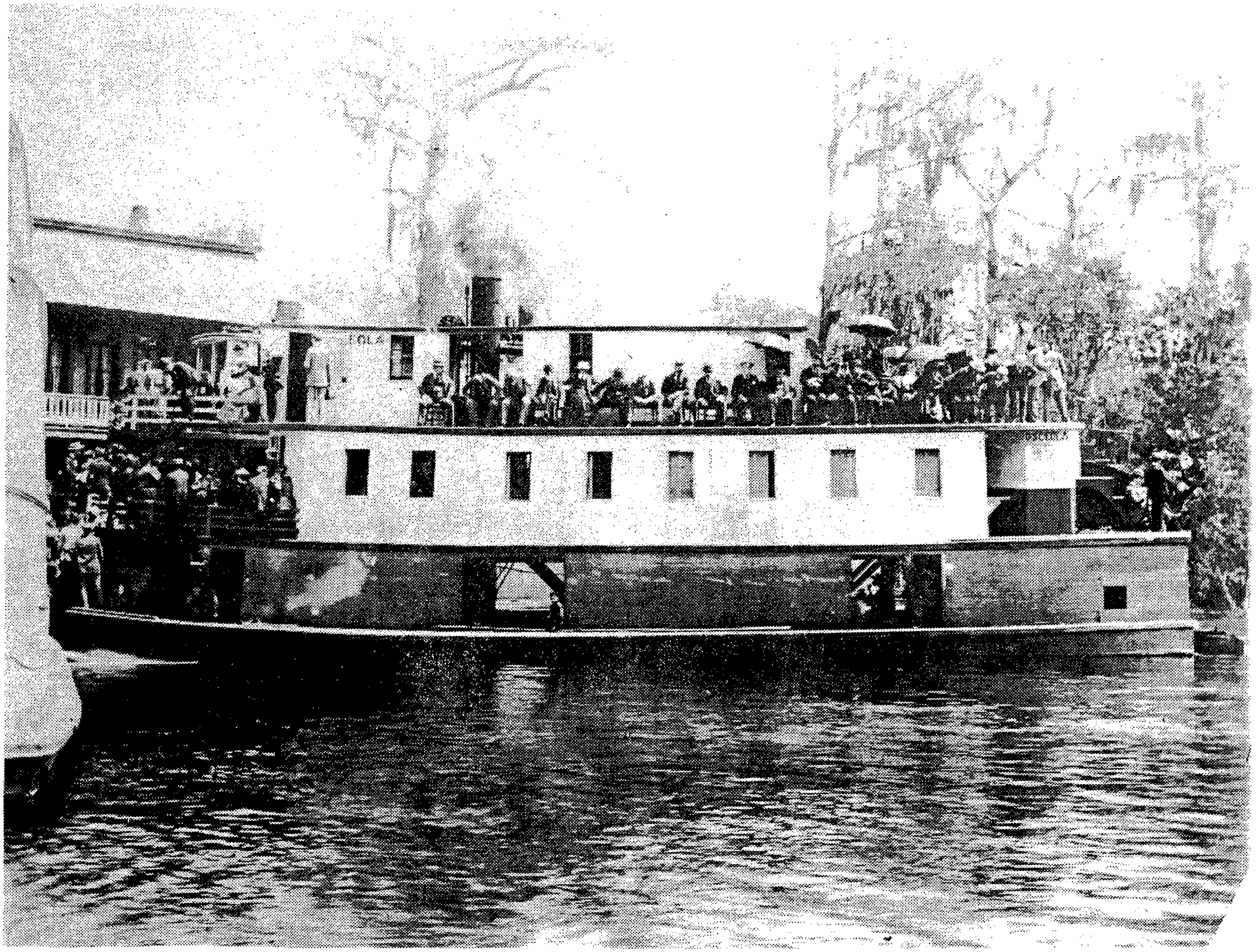
Early picture of the steamboat OSCEOLA on the Upper St. Johns River.

1890 advertisement reveals the steamer OSCEOLA still making daily runs.



OSCEOLA (Coming 'round the bend)

Ed. Mueller Collection



Rockledge residents aboard OSCEOLA on trip to Silver Springs. Ed. Mueller Collection
After renovation, OSCEOLA looks like a new steamer.

APPRENTICE PILOTS

Pilots working on the quaint river steamboats got their start on the river for various reasons: a boy's ambition, family tradition, accident or luck, financial necessity, a hundred other reasons. Many boys especially those who lived in river towns, dreamed of being crew members on the boats that blew for a landing. Some of those boys never considered any other kind of work because their fathers, uncles, grandfathers, or brothers had worked on steamboats before them.

Captain Joe Smith got to be a pilot and captain out of determination. "I sold sandwiches and coffee to rivermen at age nine. I ran errands for the crew, cashed their checks, bought their tobacco and generally hung around the steamboats, hoping one day to get a job as cabin boy. Once I fell off the DOROTHY B., into deep water when I was age 10. I went under and took in a lot of river water, and as they say, if you ever get a drink of old muddy river water into you, it's always there. So I guess that's where I got baptized by the river."

THOSE COMFORTABLE STEAMBOATS?

Although the Upper St. Johns River passenger steamboats had an assigned passenger capacity, as many as had money were taken aboard, often to the point of not having enough room for everyone to sit down.

Faster and more comfortable steamboats were added occasionally, until 1886 when serious competition from the new railroad from Sanford to Titusville, took the passenger steamboat companies into a decline, from which they never recovered.

While the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line was constantly trying to improve the comfort of the passengers, it must be said that, at times, steamboating left much to be desired, especially on windy days, when passengers were alternately soaked with spray from the river, and scorched by sparks from the stack and there was much talk about the noxious fumes from the steamer, making breathing nearly impossible.

But for the most part, steamboat passengers were happy at the end of their journey. The thrill of gliding through unexplored virgin territory on their way to Rockledge gave them memories that lasted for a lifetime.

THE STEAMBOAT ARROW

The steamboat ARROW was one of the landmark steamboats to run on the Upper St. Johns River. She could be located most anywhere on the river. She was built in Delaware prior to the Civil War and after many years of running on the East Coast, she was brought to the St. Johns and put on the Jacksonville to Sanford run.

Popular Captain Thomas Lund brought her to the upper St. Johns River to replace the VOLUSIA, when that steamer exploded at her wharf on the Jacksonville waterfront in December 1882.

The ARROW left Sanford for Titusville and Rockledge Landing on Mondays and Wednesdays and returned on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Even though she had a large passenger capacity, ARROW seldom came to the Upper St. Johns River with more than two dozen passengers. Once she made the trip with one passenger aboard.

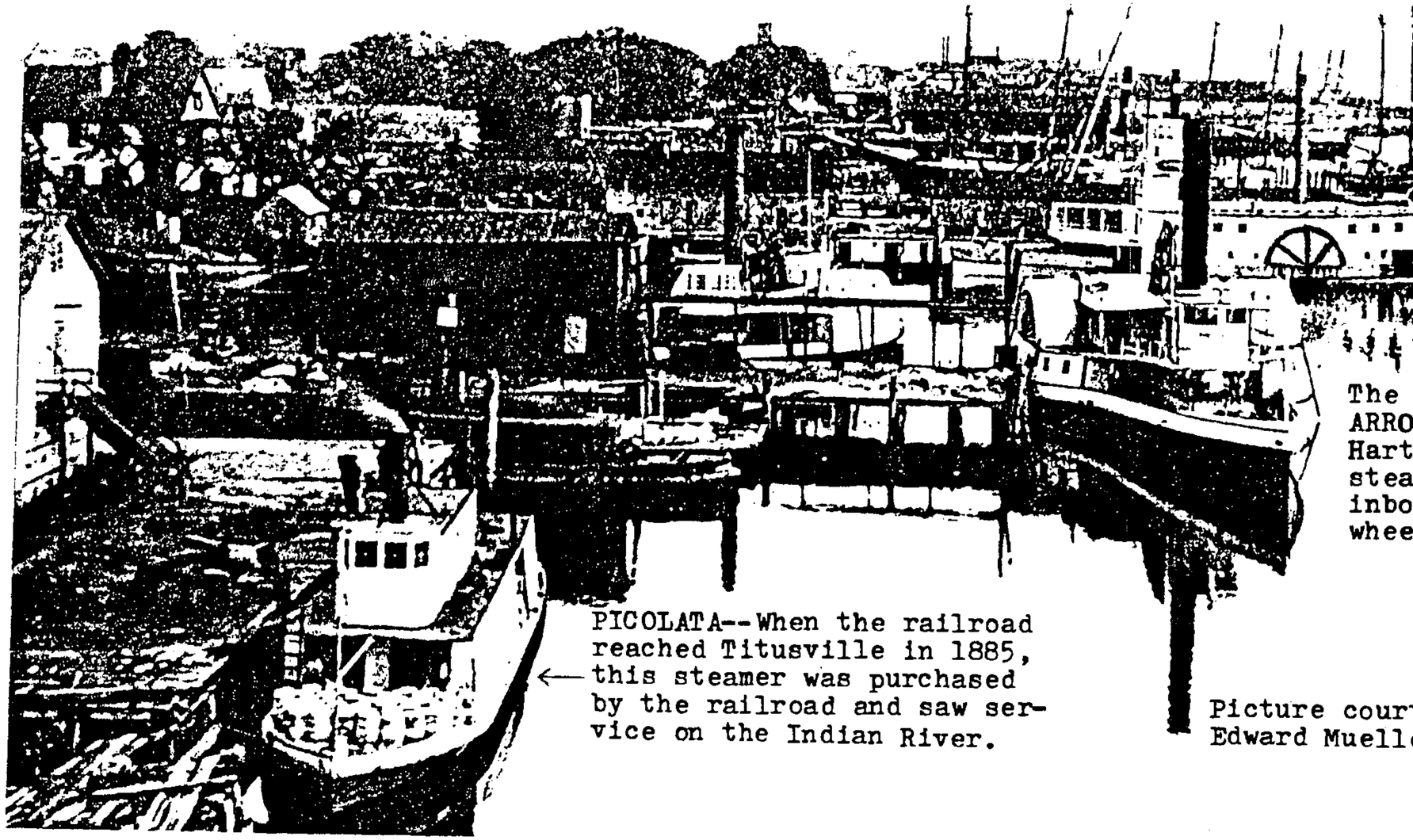
One of the ARROW's most notable trips took place in May of 1883, when President Chester Arthur boarded her for a trip up the St. Johns. The president was on a Florida fishing vacation at that time. He said that he had a most enjoyable experience while aboard the ARROW. The May 14, 1883 issue of the Florida Star, a Titusville weekly newspaper noted: "While aboard the steamer ARROW President Arthur said: 'Florida mosquitoes are not so bad as Washington Office Seekers.'"

The following salute to the ARROW and her crew appeared in the April 5, 1883 issue of The Florida Star: "Returning from a recent brief run to Titusville it was our good fortune to be a passenger on the steamer ARROW. The ARROW is commanded by the polite and efficient young officer Captain T. W. Lund, Jr, though the father is often at his post of duty on the decks.

"The ARROW is a remarkably comfortable boat. Her staterooms are large and airy; her steward is prompt and polite, her cousine excellent and her officers experienced and accommodating.

"She is at present on the Titusville-Rockledge Landing run, via Lake Jessup." The ARROW was the last steamer to join the Hart & Smith fleet.

In May of 1884, the ARROW came under control of The Hart & Smith Rockledge Steamboat Line and Captain Schoonmaker was installed as her Captain. Schoonmaker was quite familiar with the Upper St. Johns region since he had been making the Sanford-Rockledge Landing run for several years.



PICOLATA--When the railroad reached Titusville in 1885, this steamer was purchased by the railroad and saw service on the Indian River.

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ARRO
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Edward Muell

MORE ABOUT THE ARROW

Captain T. W. Lund, Sr., after leaving the life of a riverboat captain, settled in Titusville, Florida and became that town's mayor. He told a group of friends that he first saw the ARROW when she was brought down to Jacksonville from the Potomac River in Maryland, in 1879. "She was a large boat for the Upper St. Johns River, being 140 feet long, and it took two engines to keep up her speed. She was built in a Delaware shipyard and gave her owners many years of faithful service.

"In 1882 when my steamboat VOLUSIA exploded her boilers at Jacksonville and was a complete loss, I was told that the ARROW was up for sale. I immediately signed the papers and put her on the Jacksonville--Titusville schedule. At first I was skeptical that perhaps she was too old to maintain her schedule, but being an old trouper, she did fine. Only once did she require assistance. It was in June of 1883, water on the Lake Monroe bar was so low the ARROW received assistance from the ASTATULA in order to reach Sanford."

Captain Lund noted that prior to coming to Florida, the ARROW worked the waters around Washington, D. C., and many senators, and high ranking politicians boarded her at one time or another.

During the period when the ARROW was flying the banner of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line many amusing incidents took place on board. Probably the best was one evening after supper, the crew turned the dining room into a lounge and before long a poker game got started.

After a few hands a well dressed gentleman was discovered cheating his fellow players. It didn't require much time to dispose of this dishonest cad. His clothes were removed down to his shorts and he was thrown overboard.

The next day as the ARROW was returning to Sanford, and while passing a small island in Lake Harney the gambler was frantically trying to get attention and perhaps a quick rescue!

The 140 foot long ARROW had ample room for freight and passengers and during the winter months she hauled thousands of crates of citrus fruit to northern markets. And in July and August when pineapples were harvested the ARROW arrived at the rail head in Sanford with thousands of pineapples. Prior to the turn of the century Brevard County was shipping out thousands of crates of pineapples annually.

The ARROW sank at Jacksonville in 1885 and since the railroad had taken over her territory, she was abandoned and left to the elements.

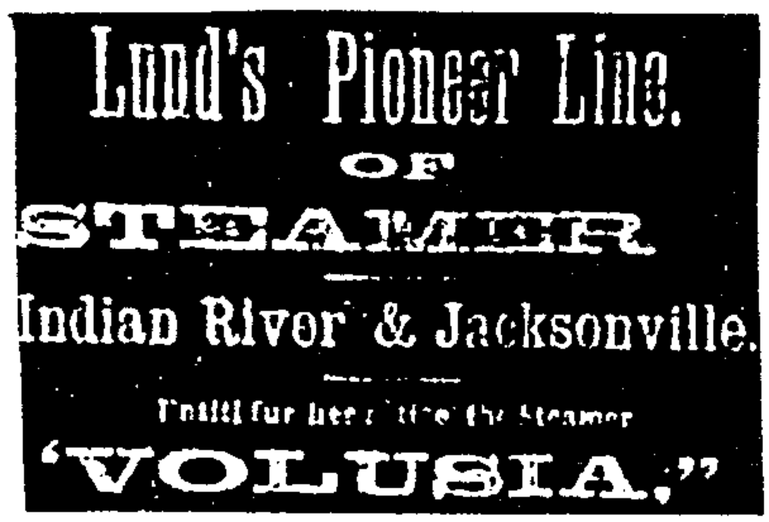
THE STEAMBOAT FLORA

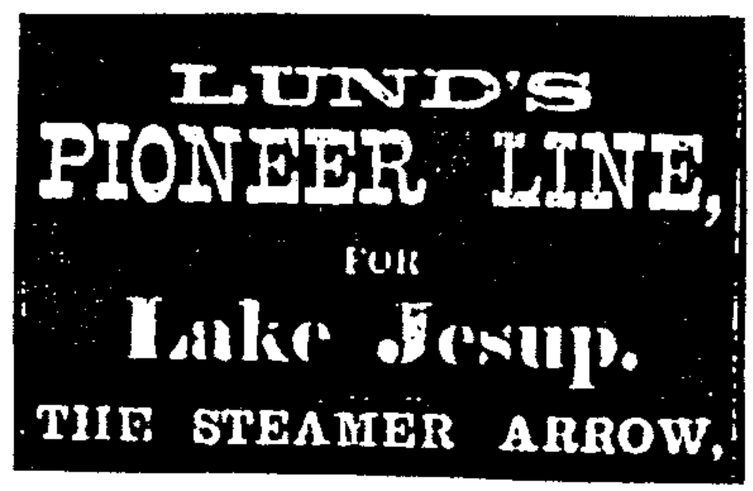
From 1870 - 1895 Captain Joe Smith owned half a dozen steamers, among which was the FLORA, a good-looking 75-footer.

Very little is known about her. Neither her arrivals or departures were noted in steamboat circles, but Captain Smith brought her to Rockledge Landing many times prior to the forming of the Hart & Smith Steamboat Line.

A short notice in the Florida Star, issue of March 16, 1881 mentioned: "While on her way to the Upper St. Johns River, the steamer FLORA came upon the Lund Pioneer Line steamer FOX, caught fast on a mud flat near Possum Bluff, with all hands and passengers out on deck with poles, trying to push her free. The FLORA gave assistence."

Landing on the Upper St. Johns





EARLY BREVARD COUNTY

During my research of Brevard County, I have often been asked why in the early history of our county was there so few residents? My answer has always been "a lack of transportation."

Until steamboats began coming up the St. Johns River from Jacksonville to Sanford, and still later further up the St. Johns to Titusville and Rockledge, it was only possible to enter Brevard County through the inlets from the Atlantic Ocean located at Fort Pierce and Jupiter.

Because there were no roads or bridges, it wasn't possible to enter by horseback or with wagons. So difficult was the entry into Brevard County for the first 35 years of its existence, it was one of the largest counties in the country (four times its present size) and at the same time, had a population less than 1,000.

Due to its isolation, Brevard County's population never reached 5,000 until the early 1900s, and it wasn't until steamboats were placed on the Upper St. Johns River that the county began to grow.

These steamboats at first came to bring in supplies and haul out citrus. Soon word got around that Rockledge was a great place to spend the winter and from then on the steamboats had more passengers and cargo than they could handle.

It was during this time period the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line of Steamers was chartered.

PRESIDENTIAL VISITS

Two of Hart & Smith's steamboats gained some noteriety while operating on the Upper St. Johns River.

Edward A. Mueller noted in his book "Steamboating on the St. Johns, 1830 - 1885:"

"On Thursday, January 8, 1880, President Grant, General Sherman and entourage left Jacksonville for Enterprise by steamboat, the GEORGE R. KELSEY, and stopped enroute at Orange Park and Green Cove Springs. The following day, Friday, at 8 a.m., the steamboat ARROW picked up the party and carried them to Enterprise....."

Harpers Weekly issue of February 14, 1880, portrays the visit of President Grant and party and describes the trip on the Ocklawaha River to Silver Springs aboard the steamer OSCEOLA.

EARLY TRANSPORTATION

To give the reader some insight into the perils of early Indian River travel, the following paragraph by Mr. Edward P. Branch describes a trip on the Indian River in January 1886:

"In 1885 I decided to open a general merchandising store in Melbourne and made reservations for the trip via railroad and steamboat. The trip from Jacksonville to Sanford was routine and the Sanford to Rockledge journey was made aboard the FOX, of which Captain Lund was the officer in charge, was a delightful trip, perhaps because it was made after dark. When we arrived at Rockledge Landing, Captain Lund discovered that a passenger, D. L. Mallory, was missing and a complete search of the FOX failed to locate Mr. Mallory. It was in 1893 when I found what happened to Mallory. It seems that he was standing next to the pilot house the night he disappeared. He was about to turn in when the FOX brushed a large tree branch, which knocked Mallory off balance, and while attempting to maintain an upright position, he caught hold of the tree branch and held on while the FOX passed quietly underneath. His cries for help went unheard. On a business trip to Jacksonville in 1893 I saw Captain Lund and he informed me that after the FOX passed underneath the tree, Mallory hung on for his life and eventually was able to climb up the tree where he spent the night cursing his luck and swatting mosquitoes. The following day Captain Lund picked up Mallory on the return trip to San-ford."

Upon reaching Rockledge, Branch was to learn that the steamboat IN-DIAN RIVER had just left for Melbourne and if he was lucky, he could stay overnight and hope the INDIAN RIVER would make a trip the next day.

"I found a little sailboat, owned at Lake Worth. The schooner was the RUBY DYE. We started after lunch and reached Melbourne after dark. What a comfortable, lazy way of traveling it was. The skipper had to sit with his hand on the rudder; but I could sit in the little cabin or stretch out on top of it and watch the sky, the shores, the water, and an occasional sail. A sailboat goes by wind and weather, and not by a time table. You can put more gas in an auto, or use the whip on a horse to increase the speed; but you cannot hurry a sailboat. You may just as well get over your hurry, and take it easy. The only noise is the rippling of the water around the boat. You can read if you wish or indulge in day-dreams or take a nap."

Such was the easy-going way of travel on the Indian River a hundred years ago.

THOSE IDYLLIC STEAMBOATS

Most Brevard County residents were far from being middle class. For the most part, they were "just making it." Not even able to afford a steamboat ticket.

It was in this relation to such a background that residents viewed the St. Johns River steamboats with awe and thought of them as floating palaces with inside toilets, saloons, card rooms and decks with awnings.

While freight claimed so much attention from the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line, their facilities for passenger travel were not neglected and before long, the passenger and tourist business began to outrank the citrus and pineapple industry as the more dependable source of income.

The steamboats meant that a person could lounge on deck, surrounded by a cosmopolitan company, while he traveled in a day, distances that formerly took a week, and isolated communities like Titusville, Rockledge and those on Merritt Island could now have such luxuries as store whiskey, dress shoes and wheat flour.

At that time steamboats were finer than any transportation available. First class passage could be compared to first class hotels.

Steamboats put Rockledge on the map literally.

Battered relic of a bygone day. An old paddle-wheel river steamer lies in ruins on the riverbank near Palatka. Years and years ago, many a river-boat steamed down from Jacksonville to Palatka, Silver Springs and Sanford.

STEAMBOATS EVERYWHERE

While some of the Upper St. Johns Riverboats attained greater fame than others, for one reason or another, some of these include the MARION, ASTATULA, WAUNITA, VOLUSIA and the FOX. And there were numerous others less well known which made their contribution to the importance of river traffic on the Upper St. Johns River. Some of the other names still remembered are the DAYLIGHT, LOLLIE BOY, ISIS, TUSKAWILLA and the OSCEOLA.

As to most of these boats, no recorded history remains, no one knows for sure what became of them as they were forced into retirement by the competition of the railroads. They vanished like so many other aspects of a more leisurely, more relaxed and more romantic era in Brevard County's growth --- the period from 1875 to 1885.

The sternwheelers of the old days have long disappeared from the St. Johns River. With their disappearance went much of the romance of the early pioneering days. The steamboats were used to carry cargo, mail and passengers in and carry out citrus, early winter vegetables and pineapples. These steamers were part of the attractions offered to visitors and tourists to the area.

Many individuals today wish that steamboats of this type might be placed back in service for pleasure cruises in our local waterways, believing that the venture for someone would prove profitable and attractive for all waterfront communities.

PILOTING A STEAMBOAT

In the course of navigating steamboats, Captain Joe Smith claimed personal acquaintance with every sand bar in the Upper St. Johns River. He had to know the area even better than the old Mississippi River pilots who guided river traffic through those treacherous waters in the days of Mark Twain.

The Captain of a steamboat had to know how to make his own repairs. The nearest dry dock was located in Jacksonville, and there was many a time when a repair had to be made without pulling the steamer out of water.

Smith and his crew learned to stay under water about two minutes at a time, so they could go over the side to drill a hole and drive a bolt or make some other such repair which could be done in 10 minutes in drydock but would take two or three hours under water.

THE LUND PIONEER STEAMBOAT LINE

When the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line began running steamboats on the Upper St. Johns River in 1882, the most popular steamers at that time were those belonging to the Lund Pioneer Steamboat Company, owned by Capt. Thomas J. Lund, Sr. Captain Lund was the first to offer through traffic from Jacksonville to Titusville Landing, with occasional landings on Lake Poinsett for Rockledge passengers.

The Florida Star, a Titusville Weekly Newspaper began publishing in 1880 and The Lund Pioneer Steamboat Line was one of its first advertisers. Their first advertisement appeared in September 1880, as follows:

"LUND PIONEER LINE! Steamer 'VOLUSIA,' Thomas J. Lund, Sr., Master.

"Will leave Jacksonville for Titusville every Saturday afternoon at 3 o'clock, Sanford every Monday morning at 7 o'clock, arriving at Titusville Landing on Salt Lake Tuesday morning.

"Returning, leave Salt Lake Tuesday 12 Midday, arriving in Jacksonville on Friday morning--connecting with Mallory's Line and steamers bound for New York.

"For further information apply on board or to John Clark, Agent, at Jacksonville waterfront, or the Lund House, at Titusville."

Upon arrival in Titusville, passengers found themselves stranded because of a lack of down river transportation. Sailboats were the mode of transportation of that period. It was in this connection that Captain Lund transferred his steamer PIONEER from the St. Johns to the Indian River, and put her on a Tuesday and Saturday Titusville-Sebastian schedule.

For the comfort of passengers a short-line (7-mile) railroad with mule drawn cars was constructed from the St. Johns River to present-day, downtown Titusville, where tourists could enjoy the comforts of the Lund House while awaiting transportation down river.

This so-called railroad was constructed of wood and, while the trip to Titusville was advertised as being comfortable, much was left to the imagination of the traveler. During the rainy season, the rails were usually under water, and often the mule drawn car was off-track. On occasions, passengers were put to work placing the car on-track.

The Lund Indian River system lasted until 1877 when about midnight one evening the PIONEER caught fire and burned to the waterline at Titusville. The short-line railroad, not being reliable was replaced with horse drawn wagons.

YESTERDAY'S ROCKLEDGE

The following paragraphs were published in an early edition of the Cocoa-Rockledge News:

"The Rockledge of today is different. Our postoffice was established in 1876. The first settlers began arriving in 1868, most of them Civil War Confederates. The chief commodity was oranges.

"In 1880 the Lake Poinsett route of the Upper St. Johns River was discovered and opened up by a semi-weekly line of steamboats from Sanford, making regular trips.

"From that date the whole section has improved rapidly. Settlers came in. Hotels were constructed, and a general era of prosperity was inaugurated.

"The place grew and grew so fast that the town of Rockledge was incorporated in March, 1887, and the incorporation was legalized by special act of the Florida Legislature that same year.

"Transportation, with all its facilities of regular and rapid communication, is so far superior to that of the steamboat era, that we feel hopeful of the near future."

ALONG THE UPPER ST. JOHNS

The Hart and Smith Rockledge Line of steamers published a brochure which had this to say of the scenery along the Upper St. Johns River, south of Sanford:

"Other rivers may be longer and deeper, with cataract and gorge to awe and magnitude, to excite admiration by this length of tranquil, lake-like water, with no vexing eddy or current to disturb repose, its banks lost in dense and deepest green is alone in its peerless beauty.

"Only the graceful heron, floating like a fragment of fleecy cloud against the gloriously blue arch, and the strong-winged hawk, sweeping above the shaded waters, have fully explored the loveliness of this river, which the frost king knows not of."

CHEAP TRANSPORTATION

Everything pertaining to the Upper St. Johns River steamboats was cheap. Passage was cheap, food was cheap and so was the cargo bill. Even the wages received were cheap. Most of the hands received a dollar a day. The captain received $150 and the pilot $100, depending on the ship's size.

DESCRIPTIVE DAY TRIP

Once we departed Lake Monroe we might have been entering a vast landscaped aquarium, only partially filled but enclosing our visible world. We suddenly came into clear blue water nearly eight feet deep, livened by small currents lapping gently at the trunks of laurel, oak and cypress as we glided upstream. We veered around clumps of bright green, healthy-looking water lilies and caught occasional climpses of poison ivy. An irridescent dragonfly darted past my nose, reducing by one our singing retinue of mosquitoes. A pileated woodpecker called. We paused to admire a fairyland company of tiny bright red mushrooms nestled on a half-submerged, rotting log. It was cool in the dim, windless quiet of trees and water. Only a faint mutter of insect sounds, hushed by multitudes of leaves, reminded us how near we were to God's Country. As we splashed deeper into the up river valley, our attendant mosquitoes left us. A Carolina wren called, a cardinal replied. Cicadas shrilled. A butterfly orchid clung to a branch, flinging out its spray of delicate flowers. Nature was busy storing water, filtering, recycling nutrients from runoff to native plants and into the shallow, sand-based soil, while modifying summer heat and winter chill. There was no need for an Audubon Society or Sierra Club or environmentalists or conservationists back then. Nature was taking care of everything.

DOCTOR STOKES-DENTIST

There were no Dentists in Brevard County during the steamboat era, but the residents did have access to one. Dr. Stokes, of Sanford, came up the river once a month on the MARION. He brought his portable dental chair with him, usually setting up his dental office in the Rockledge House Hotel. He often rented a sailboat and pulled teeth on Merritt Island, Titusville and Eau Gallie.

He continued coming up the St. Johns until the railroad reached Titusville. After that his patients could reach his office in Sanford in two hours. Dr. Stokes' advertisements appeared in the Florida Star Newspaper which announced his schedule.

ALL ABOARD FOR SANFORD

The wharves and docks in the St. Johns River a few miles west of Titusville and Rockledge were a beehive of activity back in the early 1880s when the steamboats were in port.

No one could forget the hustle and bustle at the gangplank, with the stacks smoking overhead; stevedores running to and fro, loading and unloading cargo, the Purser of the steamer MARION checking passenger lists, tickets and manifests. Mail pouches were being exchanged, wood fuel being carried aboard and stacked beside the firebox; passengers coming and going and milling about waving farewells to friends. Captain Joe Smith, all decked out in his braided black and white, gold trimmed uniform, welcoming everyone aboard, the ringing of the bell, the moaning of the steam whistle and removing the gang plank and to be on the way downstream to Sanford and Jacksonville.

NOISY WEDDING PARTIES

In 1883, wedding parties seeing newly married couples off on honeymoon trips were causing so many problems for ticket agents that they posted the following notice in their ticket offices:

"The Hart and Smith Rockledge Line forbids the throwing of old shoes, rice and other wedding accessories in it's waiting rooms, ticket offices and on steamers."

A GHOST STORY

Just to lighten up the atmosphere, Captain Joe Smith liked to tell ghost stories to his passengers. One of his favorite stories went like this:

"We would hear sounds that would waken us in the middle of the night. The sounds were of horses running and the noise they made sounded like they had heavy shoes, and then there was the clanking of heavy chains. The WAUNITA would come to the shore and we would hear sounds like a regiment of Calvary soldiers. Captain Smith said they would rush off the steamer and not hear a sound, but when everything was quiet, would hear it again."

FROM ROCKLEDGE TO JACKSONVILLE

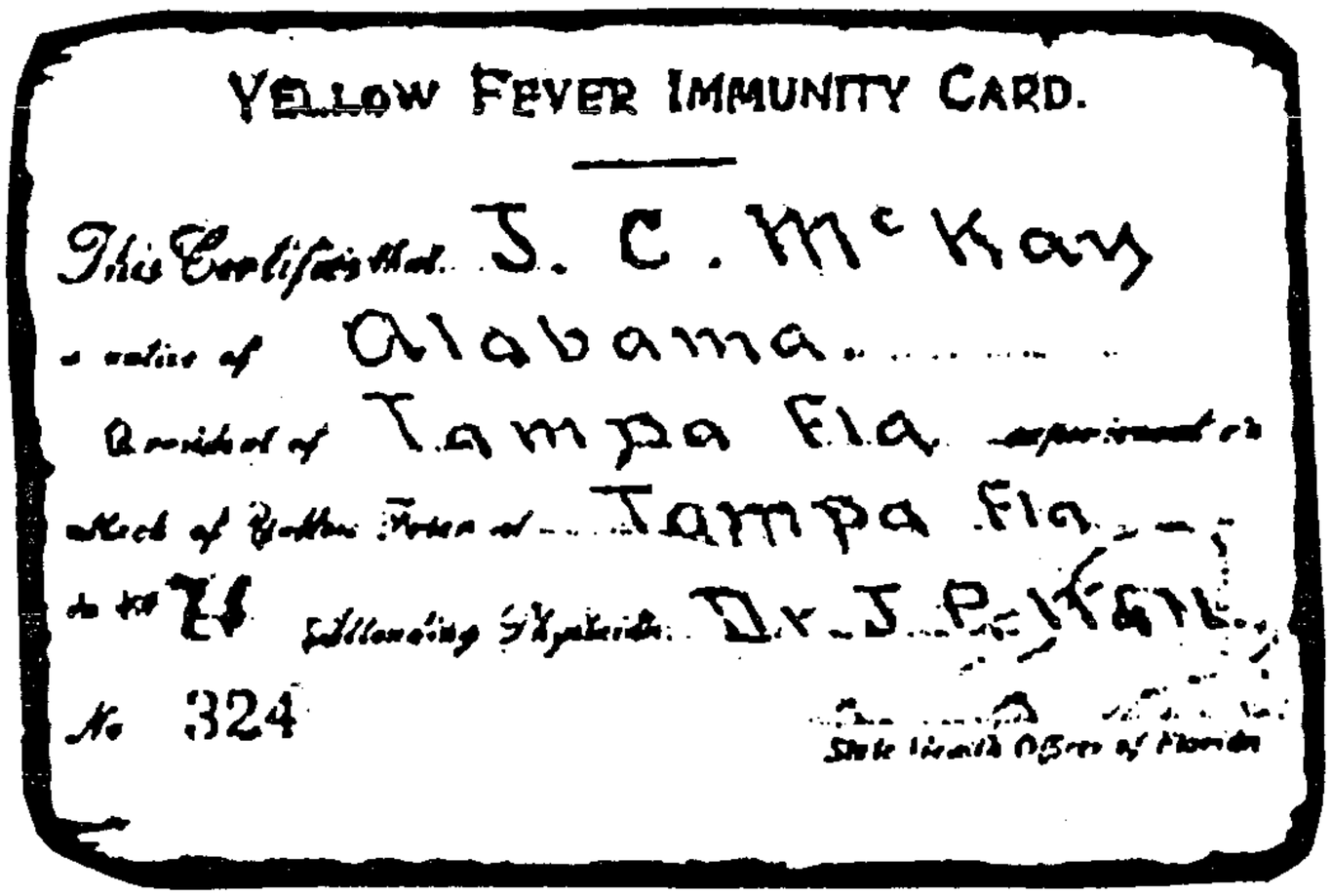
The following paragraphs were prepared by Emma Hardee, a daughter of Gardner Hardee, the first settler at Rockledge, Florida. She wrote these lines as a teenager over a hundred years ago:

"My first trip was when I was about seven or eight years old. My father took my sisters Florence, Minnie and myself to Jacksonville. We left Rockledge by mule team to Lake Poinsett Landing. From there we took a small paddle steamer, the ASTATULA to Sanford, which was then just a village on Lake Monroe. There we boarded a larger steamer which looked very gorgeous to me as I had never seen anything like it before. There were plush cushions brass stair rails and brass spitoons which were polished until you could see yourselves in them. There were Negro waiters in their white coats and the Captain in his blue uniform with brass buttons.

"After several days, we reached Jacksonville and took a hack to the old Tremont Hotel. Jacksonville wasn't much of a city then with cedar blocks for pavements and everything on the same order. It was there that I saw my first electric lights. It was in the fall of the year 1882 and my father had an orange exhibit at the State Fair.

"In 1888 I made the same trip, but we now had rail service from Titusville. I was returning to Rockledge from school in North Carolina and had to pass through Jacksonville which was under siege with the terrible yellow fever.

"As I stepped off the train in Titusville, I was met by the high sheriff of Brevard County, who examined my health certificate and passed me on as OK."


YELLOW FEVER IMMUNITY CARD.

This Certifies that J. C. McKay
a native of Alabama
Resident of Tampa Fla
Health of Yellow Fever at Tampa Fla
on the 7th following Symptoms Dr J. P. Kane
No 324
State Health Officer of Florida

THE BARGE FREDY Y

Captain Joe Smith talking to friends told them he once owned a barge, the FREDY Y, which he ran on the Upper St. Johns River until he became a partner in the Hart & Smith Steamboat Line. He sold some of his equipment including the FREDY Y, when he became associated with Hart.

Years later, when steamboating on the St. Johns River ran into competition with the railroads and steamboat companies went bankrupt, Smith went went to work for the Indian River Steamboat Company. He became master of the ST. SEBASTIAN and was taking a load of railroad iron to Fort Pierce one dark night, when his steamer ran into a partly submerged object.

When daylight arrived, Captain Smith, upon investigating the accident, noted that it was a sunken barge and after further scrutinizing, he made out the name of the barge. It was the same FREDY Y he had sold ten years earlier.

Smith was never able to figure out how his FREDY Y made it from the St. Johns River to Indian River, a distance of about 350 water miles!

PROFESSOR DE GRATH

Professor De Grath, a self-proclaimed medical man, was seen often on steamers of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line. He traveled to all communities in the Central Florida region giving lectures about the marvels of his new "Electric Oil."

Professor De Grath's lectures and brochures described his Electric Oil as "The marvel of this age for the following ailments:"

Cures Rheumatism often in a day.
Cures Neuralgia, Toothache, 2 minutes.
Cures Cramp in Stomach, 5 minutes.
Cures Burns, Bruises, Wounds, 1 to 3 days.
Cures Pains in Back, Breast, 1 day.
Cures Headaches, 15 minutes.
Cures Earaches, Stiff Neck, Ague, 1 night.
Cures Piles, Swelled Glands, in days.
Cures Felons, Broken Breast, Salt Rheum, 3, 4, 6 days.
Cures Quinsy, Palpitation, Pleurisy, 1 - 10 days.
Cures Asthma, Palsy, Gout, Erysipelas, 5 to 30 days.
Cures Hemorrhage, Scrofula, Abcess, 6 to 10 days.
Cures Frosted Feet and Chilblains, 1 to 8 days.

Professor was often seen on the large front verandas of the Rockledge Hotels touting his "Electric Oil."

Professor De Grath's brochures included some testimonials and letters of praise for his marvelous "Electric Oil."

DEAFNESS CURED: "Prof. De Grath---My brother has been deaf three years. After trying many things, he tried your Oil a few times, and it cured him entirely."

Afflicted 18 years and cured in one Week! "Prof. De Grath---I have been afflicted 18 years with Neuralgia and have been unable to walk any distance for many years past and I have been unable to sleep soundly. Last week I got a bottle of your 'Electric Oil.' The first night I slept soundly and well and today I am like a new man.

"Ask Mr. Welch, of Jacksonville, if it did not cure him of swelled glands in the throat in three minutes, when the Doctor said he would die in a short time.

"Ask Mr. Wilkins, of Rockledge, if Chas. De Grath's Electric Oil did but cure him of Rheumatism and strains received from a fall."

STEPHEN W. RYDER

To give the reader some idea of Brevard County's isolation and an insight into transportation problems, the following paragraphs published in an early edition of The Rockledge Press are submitted:

"I was born at Rockledge, Florida in 1880. My parents came to Palatka from New York in 1876. A year or so there was long enough for them---the malaria and mosquitoes drove them out. That was before the intricate relation between the anopheles mosquito and malaria was discovered. They heard that the Indian River country was free of malaria, so they set out.

"They boarded one of the new DeBary Line of steamers at Palatka and steamed up the St. Johns River. We can picture the clouds of black smoke that followed their winding course, due to the fat pine wood used to fire the boiler. The navigation was easy, for the water hyacinth was not introduced into Florida until 1884. At Enterprise, near Sanford, my parents remained overnight at the Brock House, where plain but adequate accommodations were had. The following morning they boarded the steamer VOLUSIA Captain Lund in charge and headed for Lake Poinsett (and Rockledge Landing).

"Arriving at a bulkhead at Rockledge Landing, they were helped onto a so-called stage pulled by a pair of robust mules. The road to Rockledge was the kind of road described by an early tourist, 'over palmetto roots that strained every button until tears stood in the passengers' eyes.'

"My father built a tourist hotel which he called The Tropical House, opened a general store, a restaurant, and remembering that stagecoach ride, he improved the sand road and started a drayage route to Rockledge Landing, where he picked up passengers and baggage and hauled them to his Tropical Hotel at Rockledge.

"Father was appointed as the third postmaster of Rockledge on April 17, 1882 by President Chester A. Arthur. He was reappointed February 25, 1886 by President Grover Cleveland. He served until June 19, 1889, when he resigned due to the press of other business. Most of the time mother took care of the postoffice while father ran the store and hotel.

"When the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line of Steamers went into business, father was appointed to be their ticket agent in Rockledge. Their main office was in Sanford.

"Even though father had very little time left, he was interested in local politics and was very instrumental in the proceedings to get Rockledge incorporated in 1887."

POSTMASTER STEPHEN RYDER

Postmaster Ryder, of Rockledge in the early 1880s, once appeared at the Rockledge Landing wharf to pick up some mailbags just as the WAUNITA arrived. Looking at his watch, he noted that the steamer was exactly on time. Since the WAUNITA was rarely on time, he thought perhaps a reward was forthcoming.

Ryder approached Captain Reed her master, congratulated him for being on time and handed him a cigar.

Capt. Reed thanked Ryder kindly and handed back the cigar, saying "I can't accept the cigar."

"Why not?" asked Ryder.

"Because this is yesterday's steamer," replied Capt. Reed.

During the perennial dry summer season when the steamboats couldn't reach the wharf at Rockledge Landing because of low water, small lighters were used. Lighters required but a few inches of water to maneuver. Catwalks were built from one end to the other and on both sides of the lighters. A man standing on the front end would stick a pole into the water and against the hard bottom. He would push against the pole while he walked or ran toward the back. This would send the lighter forward. It was slow, hard work, but it was the only way, and a large volume of goods and passengers were moved ashore in this manner.

In the early days of Rockledge history, steamboats burned pine logs for fuel, and a great volume of dense black smoke was thrown out of the stacks. Some idle person was generally on the lookout for the twice weekly steamer, and when the smoke of a steamboat was seen, he would cry, "Steamboat at the Landing," then the inhabitants of Rockledge would collect at the wharf to hear the latest news. The arrival of a steamboat a hundred years ago was an event of much importance.

The Sam Field family of Indianola on Merritt Island were on the first train that left Titusville for Sanford during the last week of December 1885. The Fields were escorting their niece Irene to Jacksonville. Irene who arrived by the steamer MARION a few weeks earlier, remarked: "I found the trip by rail to Sanford preferable to the one on the MARION."

THE COMMUNITY CALLED SAVAGE

While the steamboats of The Hart & Smith Steamboat Line did not schedule trips up the St. Johns River above Rockledge Landing, about once a month Captain Thomas Lund, aboard the small steamer FOX, made a trip up to Savages' old store, located on the west bank of Lake Winder.

The small community of Savage was headquarters for a large cattle raising industry and the Savage family operated a trading post there in conjunction with a post office.

Savage was a thriving place back in the steamboat era. Brevard County was four times larger than now. Savage was also the halfway point on the old county road which connected the Indian River with the Kissimmee River. Brevard County Commissioners often met at Savages' old store for meetings.

Fort Taylor, named for President Zachary Taylor, was located close by Savage and the U. S. Army often used light boats in bringing in troops and supplies to the fort.

While Fort Taylor was not located in the Seminole Indian War Zone, it played an important role in supplying troops with clothing, weapons, and ammunition. Fort Taylor was also used as a holding place for the wounded.

From a tourist point of view, the Upper St. Johns river basin looks like a large green mosiac, etched into the earth. Different green and blue patterns are neatly divided by invisible lines, forming a beautiful mixture of color and geometry. It lies within its forest valley, beckoning to all those who love the beauty of nature. Make haste and journey up the river so that you will be able to recall when it was beautiful.

There is no more pleasant way of spending a week than to take the trip by steamboat to the Upper St. Johns River. Birds of all kinds are in sight the whole way; flocks of ducks, coots, herons, cranes, limpkins, curlews, plume birds and water turkeys without end; also alligators, deer, occasional bears and plenty of snakes.

In the river's narrowness in the rampant growth of water plants along its low banks, in the unbroken flatness of the landscape, in the labyrinth of by-channels, and cut-offs and above all in the appealing, incredible bewildering crookedness of its serpentine body, it is indeed an extraordinary river. THE BEAUTIFUL UPPER ST. JOHNS.

EXCURSION TO SILVER SPRINGS

On occasions, during the winter tourist season, The Hart and Smith Rockledge Line sponsored excursions to tourist attractions along the St. Johns River. Excursions to Silver Springs were the most popular. Leaving Rockledge Landing, the WAUNITA picked up additional passengers at Titusville, Sanford and other places along the river. The excursion was an overnight trip. A tourist who made the trip up the Ocklawaha River to Silver Springs recalled:

"One of the strangest experiences in these mysterious regions was forced upon us one morning, when thrusting our head through the hole that gave air to our 'sleeping-shelf,' we saw a sight which caused us to run our eyes and gather up our senses to be certain we possibly were awake. Our rude craft was in a basin possibly a quarter of a mile in diameter, entirely surrounded by gigantic forest-trees, which repeated themselves with the most minute fidelity in the perfectly translucent water. For sixty feet downward we could look, and at this great depth see duplicated the scene of the upper world; the clearness of the water. This, we soon learned, was the wonderful Silver Spring of which we had heard so much, which every moment throws out its thousands of gallons of water without making a bubble on the surface."

The Upper St. Johns River is a stream suspended in nature, a long, lazy snake curling its dark way through time. At mid day the sun floats like a dimensionless disc in the Indian Summer sky. A sky perfectly reflected in all its blue and cotton while in the black mirror surface of the river, tall rushes bend gently along the banks, permitting only the slightest breeze to nudge the river into wakefullness. But the river and its inhabitants already have set about the business of a new day.

At times along the Upper St. Johns tree branches crowd above so tightly that hardly a ray of sunlight penetrates the muggy gloom. Sticky spider webs stretch across the branches of trees with thorns the length of a fingernail. If you want to reconstruct a scene from earth's primeval past, you couldn't find a better setting than the Upper St. Johns. It is a lovely river, scarcely tamed, yet peaceful; loaded with history, yet still unknown.

THE A. L. HATCH FAMILY

Much of the information about steamboats on the Upper St. Johns River came from family histories, memoirs and diaries of the early pioneer settlers, and I am grateful to Mr. A. L. Hatch of Rockledge for keeping up his family history. In the history he tells us of opening up Lake Poinsett to navigation on the Upper St. Johns and the arrival of the first steamer to Rockledge Landing.

"The fall of 1878 saw our present means of transportation entirely too slow and it became important to open up navigation of the Upper St. Johns. So several settlers and myself took a row boat in a cart and started back toward Lake Poinsett to try and find water that steamers could navigate. We were fortunate, and in less than an hour we had our row boat in Rockledge Creek which emptied into Lake Poinsett. This creek we followed out into the lake. After marking the channel as well as we could, we went to work and constructed a wharf where we could transfer passengers and freight. A warehouse soon made the scene and in a few days Rockledge Landing was ready for the first steamer.

"I went to Jacksonville, chartered one of Captain Lund's small steamboats, the FOX, loaded it with merchandise and pushed out for our new route.

"The landing on Rockledge Creek was only three miles from Rockledge.

"In 1881 I sold out my interest in the Rockledge property to Mr. Wilkinson, of Richmond, Virginia. My brother Frank having sold his interest to the same party some time previous. The property consisted then of a small hotel, not quite completed, a good mercantile building and a fairly good stock of goods. The store did well from the time it first opened and we were fast gaining the passenger and freight business of the Upper St. Johns River, the route being so much more convenient and much quicker.

"A bit later we had the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line of Steamboats operating on the Upper St. Johns River. Their steamers the ASTATULA and the MARION had all the business they wanted, especially during citrus picking time."

Research reveals that after selling his business interest in Rockledge the Hatch family moved a few miles north to City Point, where they opened another mercantile store.

Florida history remembers the Hatch family who were instrumental in forming Okeechobee County.

MORE ABOUT THE HATCH FAMILY

The Hatch family moved to Rockledge in 1874 via the Upper St. Johns River. The following paragraphs were extracted from the family history:

"In September of 1874 took passage to Jacksonville, Fla., and looked around there, thence to Palatka by steamboat, thence up the Ocklawaha River to Silver Springs on the way to Leesburg but the water was too low for the boat to get up, compelled to go by land. The country around Lake Harris and Lake Griffin is quite new and very attractive, land appears to be very rich. The greatest drawback with me was the sickly appearance of about every one I saw looked as if they were just up from a spell of sickness or as if they belonged in bed.

"I looked around there one day and for fear I might fall in love with the country, hired a buggy and a man to drive me to the St. Johns River where I took a boat for Mellonville, near where Sanford was built up afterwards. Only one house in Sanford at that time. From Mellonville I visited Orlando, a small village at that time and from there returned to the St. Johns River.

"A couple of days later a side-wheel paddleboat, the VOLUSIA, under command of Capt. Lund, showed up. She was headed for Indian River country. Capt. Lund at that time was making one trip a week from Jacksonville to Titusville Landing on Salt Lake. Upon arrival at Salt Lake we anchored out in the lake some quarter mile from shore and the wagons drove out there for the freight and passengers. It took the rest of the night to unload and get to Indian River, ending up at Sand Point (later called Titusville), where there was a store about a mile north at LaGrange.

"Took a private sailboat down the river and landed where Rockledge is now and spent several days in this neighborhood visiting Captain May, Mr. H. S. Williams, old Colonel Spratt, Major Magruder, Mr. & Mrs. Dixon which comprised about all of the settlers along the river at that time.

"I was greatly pleased with this section and bargained for a place being about an acre front from the south side of the May place, and about the same distance from the north side of the Williams place. Messrs May and Williams had settled there within eighteen months, both from Alabama.

"The remainder of the Hatch family joined me in February 1875. They came via the route I took on Captain Lund's steamboat VOLUSIA."

A. L. Hatch immediately made his mark in the history of Rockledge. He immediately became involved in the steamboat business and became the agent for all freight passing in and out of Rockledge Landing.

ROCKLEDGE, FLORIDA

An East Florida business directory from the 1880s lists the following information about Rockledge:

"Population 200. S. Ryder, postmaster. This place was first settled in 1868. It is situated on the west bank of Indian River, 20 miles south of Titusville, the county seat. And three miles east of Rockledge Landing on the Upper St. Johns River, the shipping point, with which it has daily stage communication, fare 50¢. Rockledge Landing offers daily steamboats connecting with the Jacksonville steamers at Sanford. Sanford is the nearest banking point. Rockledge has 3 general merchandise stores, several hotels, two sawmills, a public school, a Union Sunday School, and a weekly newspaper, The Indian River Sun. Mails received tri-weekly from Sanford by steamboats on the St. Johns River and on Tuesday and Saturday from Titusville by sailboats on Indian River. Citrus fruits and early winter vegetables are the principal shipments. The St. Johns River has been the main route of travel to this place in the past, but there is much talk of constructing a railway from Sanford to Titusville. When completed, this point can be reached in a much shorter time, as there are steamboat connections between Titusville and Rockledge daily. This section of Florida has a peculiar charm of scenery, and is noted for its production of a superior quality of semi-tropical and tropical fruits."

One afternoon while Captain Joe Smith was checking a stack of bills of lading in the Hart & Smith warehouse at Rockledge Landing, he looked up to find 2 Indians standing in the doorway.

By the Indian sign language, Joe got the message: "Firewater?" Joe who never became friends with the Indians explained in sign language that he had no firewater and attempted to shoo them out of his warehouse.

He watched them until they retreated out of sight then he thought, maybe they were hungry or were just looking for tobacco.

During the steamboat era, Brevard County counted many Seminole Indians within its boundaries. On occasions the Indians would "hitch a ride" on a passing steamer and sell souvenirs to passengers.

CAPTAIN SCHOONMAKER---RIVERMAN

Captain Schoonmaker was appointed postmaster of Cocoa, Florida before the turn of the century. He spent his idle hours telling steamboat yarns to the young men of Cocoa. He told of living close to the river and that every kid in his neighborhood could tell you the name of practically every steamboat that went up or down the river simply by listening to the whistle. Every steamboat whistle was a little different in melody and tone. Some boys as young as five knew the whistles well. The riverfront was the most exciting place for a small boy to be. Schoonmaker and his friends would sit high on a levee and look down at that long slope to the wharfboat and watch the hustle and bustle taking place on the wharf, with passengers coming and going, and laborers loading freight aboard. Schoonmaker and his friends knew all the steamboatmen. Schoonmaker wasn't making good grades in school, but he took pride in knowing what mattered. He could tell you the name of every steamboat on the river and could tell you the name of the captain, pilot and chief engineer and when sitting in school, could tell the name of the steamer by the whistles.

Schoonmaker always enjoyed telling how they used turkeys to get a boat off a sandbar. Schoonmaker was just a lad, learning the river trade on a Mississippi steamboat. The crew used every known method to get the steamer off the bar, but nothing worked, or even moved the boat a few inches. The lower deck was loaded with turkeys going to market, so the first mate freed them from their coops, stapled their feet to the deck floor, and ordered the roustabouts to stand by with towels, aprons, and rags. At his whistle, the rousters waved the cloths over their heads and yelled.

The turkeys flew up and lifted the boat over the sandbar into deep water, and she continued her journey up river!

As postmaster of Cocoa, Schoonmaker had the reputation of being the slowest mailman in Florida. Being a former steamboat captain, he was never in a hurry to hand out mail, always taking his time, and if hassled by his patrons, he would simple close down the postoffice, offering the excuse that he had to feed his goats.

Schoonmaker once told a group of patrons if things didn't get better, he was thinking of going on strike. A patron quickly asked: "Just how will we know when you are on strike?"

Charles J. Schoonmaker was appointed postmaster of Cocoa, Florida on June 9, 1897 and served honorably until February 1, 1916.

MORE ABOUT CAPTAIN SCHOONMAKER

Many steamboat men made thier mark on the Upper St. Johns River but none was more popular than Captain Charles J. Schoonmaker. During his years on the Rockledge Landing run, he was seen at the wheel of the WAUNITA or the MARION. He was employed by the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line of Steamers.

Schoonmaker was a bird fancier and often in the evenings, as the MARION traveled under or close to trees, he would reach up and capture exotic birds as they were preparing for darkness. He never physically harmed the birds. He placed them in an aviary behind his home in Cocoa.

When steamboating on the Upper St. Johns went into a decline in 1886, Schoonmaker became captain of a trade boat that plied the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee. He became friendly with the Seminole Indians that lived along his route. He often traded with them, exchanging tobacco, whisky, conductor hats, bandana handkerchiefs and ammunition for deer and alligator hides. He once brought back from Lake Okeechobee several hundred live, ten inch alligators which he sold to a Rockledge Souvenir Shop, who in turn sold them to northern tourists.

After twenty-five years on the river, Captain Schoonmaker opened a meat market in Cocoa and still later became Cocoa's postmaster.

The good captain enjoyed playing jokes on young lads who were employed by him. One night after dark, he sent young Danny Knight down to the Trafford Bakery in Cocoa, to borrow their oven scraper. The baker, a friend of Schoonmaker, pointed to a large piece of structural steel, which was quite heavy. The lad fixed a rope to the scraper and started pulling it along the street to the meat market. The joke was on Schoonmaker, however, when the Cocoa Town Marshall, who helped Danny bring the "oven scraper" to the meat market, demanded to know why he was making so much noise and waking up the residents!

While captain of the MARION, Schoonmaker's pride and joy was a loud, deep throated whistle which he enjoyed blasting into the face of a rival steamer.

Although Captain Schoonmaker was the master of several St. Johns River steamboats, he was better known as the mainstay of The Hart & Smith Rockledge Line of Steamboats, and while two dozen or more captains made the personnel lists of the Hart & Smith roster, Schoonmaker was the very first to be hired and was the last to leave.

CHARLES SCHOONMAKER---POSTMASTER

Captain Schoonmaker always enjoyed kidding and joking with his patrons. One afternoon a woman came into the postoffice and inquired:

"Are you the Postmaster?" She inquired.

"No mam!" Schoonmaker answered without the hint of a smile. "I'm the janitor."

Reports have it that the lady went back to Rockledge and told the rest of the guests at the Indian River Hotel that it was no wonder the Government was going broke.

"Goodness gracious!" She exclaimed for all to hear. "The whole Cocoa Postoffice isn't much larger than a double bed---and they have to have a janitor."

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Captain Joe Smith always enjoyed telling about the early days when he worked on the St. Johns River as a U. S. Government boiler inspector. He was sent to Palatka, Florida to investigate a boiler explosion on one of the DeBary steamers.

Upon arrival at the steamboat landing, Smith asked the pilot: "How did the explosion occur?" The pilot replied: "The engineer was full and the boiler was empty."

The reader shouldn't get the impression from reading these paragraphs that all was fine and dandy with the Hart & Smith Steamboat Line, because a day never passed without some of their steamers encountering problems.

Captain Joe Smith gained some noteriety when after the turn of the century he was hired as a guide to take Teddy Roosevelt on several hunting and fishing expeditions.

No steamboat of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line could be called beautiful, since the conditions under which they steamed condemned them to tall, unstately ugliness!

William Barton Smith, Cocoa's first postmaster, also editor of Cocoa's first newspaper The Indian River Sun, referred to the MARION as the SCOW.

THE HOUSTON FAMILY

Frank and Chris Houston of the Eau Gallie section of Melbourne, Florida worked on all the old landmark steamboats of East Florida. They started out early in life as rivermen, plying up and down the river in their father's sailboats, delivering freight and passengers to Merritt Island and up the Banana River to the communities of Artesia, Horti, Canaveral and Nathan.

Later as teenagers they began working on Upper St. Johns River steamboats as cabin boys, cooks, stevedores, firemen, engineers and worked their way up to pilot, engineer and captain.

While learning their trade, they often worked for as little as $10 a month. But the best captains made only $150 a month, and most of them made but $100.

Frank Houston once told a friend, "Even though I was a youngster, soon I was rousting barrels as good as the grownups," he recalled with pride. "I kept on until I was staying in the pilot house and could pilot steamboats."

When the Houston (pronounced House'ton) family worked on the river, business was brisk. Transportation lines kept a fleet of sternwheelers on the river. These riverboats made the run from Sanford to Titusville and on to Rockledge and back three times a week, according to weather and cargo. Enroute they stopped at landings, communities, groves and private docks, anywhere cargo or passengers could be taken aboard.

The Houstons, old and young alike spent their entire lives on the waters of Florida, working for themselves, for large steamboat companies and others.

George Houston, another member of the Houston Family of Eau Gallie, spent many years on the St. Johns River. His last assignment was aboard the landmark tugboat "Three Friends." George delighted in telling his passengers of the ghosts that appeared occasionally on the Upper St. Johns night runs. He loved telling them ghost stories. As far as we know, the ghosts are still as much alive today as they ever were. On dark, lonely nights, those aboard the steamboats could see a number of lights bobbing up and down along the shore. At first it was believed they were from campers or Seminole Indians. Later a beautiful woman accompanied the lights. The woman would appear in a silky, blue flowing gown, flitting about and would disappear into the swamps when the steamboat appeared.

When the Houston Bros. passed away in the 1940s and 50s the country lost more than 3 rivermen, three legends passed away.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

In the early 1870s, several pioneer orange growers set out hundreds of orange trees in the Rockledge area. When the trees began to bear fruit, getting it to markets in the north was the problem of the time. Early citrus fruit was sold for approximately fifteen cents a dozen and shipped out in crates made from rude boards sawed by hand. Some growers packed their oranges in flour barrels. It wasn't until the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line of Steamers went into business that the orange growers had an excellent way to ship their fruit to northern markets.

Pilots of the Hart and Smith Rockledge Steamboat Line were quite adept at handling their steamers. They knew the river route thoroughly, even alternate routes which were used when the river stage was low. They rated the Upper St. Johns as treacherous and the lower St. Johns peaceful. The upper river was the most difficult to navigate because it was so crooked. The pilots studied the river until they knew what was ahead. They had to be able to pilot their paddleboats through the crooked channel even at night when they could barely make out landmarks ahead, but they always knew exactly where they were at all times.

During the busy season, steamers of the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line often arrived at Rockledge Landing heavily loaded. At times they would open up the boat and use every bit of space. Even the engine room could be found with sacks of flour and grits stacked high.

Huge bouquets of water hyacinths, their clusters of lavender flowers open face to the sun, float slowly and purposefully northward, as if acting as camouflage for some unseen creatures in the chill waters beneath. Red winged blackbirds dart and streak along the shore, lighting to peck voraciously for food through the hyacinths' fat leaves, chattering and whistling in clamorous conversation to their dowdy brown mates. Dragonflies, sapphire flashes of irridescence whisk randomly over the surface, pausing for reasons unknown. These were regular scenes on the Upper St. Johns.

The above description appeared in an early issue of the St. Nicholas Magazine and was written by a tourist who came up the St. Johns River on the steamboat ASTATULA.

During the course of running a steamboat company, Captain Joe Smith often found himself in Jacksonville, tending to business. On one occasion Smith stopped by to confer with the banker who had financed his purchase of the WAUNITA. As Joe was about to depart, the banker asked him if he would deliver a package to the Lyman Bank in Sanford, noting that it was important the package be at the bank the following day. When the Sanford banker was opening the package to count the contents, Joe Smith was astonished when he saw a large pile of twenty dollar bills which amounted to $5,000.

Later his Jacksonville banker explained that he knew of no safer way of getting the money to The Lyman Bank. Joe then told the banker there was enough money in that package to purchase three steamboats!

Like other steamboat companies, the Hart & Smith Line sponsored a few excursions, for example, the Florida Star newspaper of March 16, 1885, announced that: "On March 21, the steamboat WAUNITA will leave Rockledge Landing for a trip to Tuskawilla Landing on Lake Harney and excursionists will be treated to a barbeque. The fare of $1 for adults and 50¢ for youngsters includes the round trip ride on the WAUNITA, and all the barbequed beef, bread and coffee that can be consumed. Captain Smith says he'll put every craft flying the Hart & Smith colors into service to carry the crowd."

Sign conspicuously located in the WAUNITA's saloon; calling attention to spittoons provided:

GENTLEMEN WILL NOT
SPIT ON THE FLOOR.
OTHERS MUST NOT.

It is ironic that Captain Joe H. Smith, who contributed to much to the early history of Brevard is not mentioned anywhere in the County's archives. However, there are some old timers living in the Cocoa-Rockledge region who can recall Smith's accuracy at squirting tobacco juice from a distance of 10-feet to the center of a spittoon and never failing to hit his target.

Likewise, Colonel Hubbard Hart is not mentioned in Brevard County history.

Both of these popular rivermen accomplished much which brought Brevard County to the forefront in fame, popularity and a nice place in which to live and raise families.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Captain Joe Smith was well acquainted with the Upper St. Johns River and was one of the few rivermen who could pilot a steamer in the Upper St. Johns region after dark.

During periods of high water, especially after a tropical storm or a hurricane dumped 14 inches of rain, it was difficult to stay in the channel. But Captain Smith used periods of high water to save time. He simply cut new channels, and saved many miles of travel.

Captain Joe Smith claimed the one task he hated to perform was while he was a relief captain aboard the steamer CHATTAHOOCHEE. At that time it was against the law for a female to wear men's clothing as it was considered to be impersonating a man.

As it turned out, a young lady pretending to be a man was found working in the CHATTAHOOCHEE's kitchen, and since the captain was bound to enforce the law, Smith had the young lady locked-up in a stateroom and turned her over to the Sheriff at Palatka, Florida.

Even though Colonel Hart and Joe Smith were equal partners in the Hart & Smith Rockledge Steamboat Line, Hart left the management of the line up to Smith. It is doubtful if Hart ever visited Rockledge. He made his headquarters in Palatka, where his Ocklawaha River steamboat line was quartered.

Colonel Hart's hobby was citrus culture and he spent much time in his grove at Palatka, which was considered to be one of Florida's finest. The worldwide popular Hart's Brand of grapefruit was developed by Colonel Hart and brought Colonel Hart as much noteriety as did his steamboat line.

On the Upper St. Johns River passengers found a land of incredible beauty. Giant oaks, hickory and magnolia formed a dense forest. Palmetto trees lined the river banks. In the forests roamed all sorts of game and very beautiful birds, from wild turkeys, mocking birds, colorful paraquets, egrets, ibis and redbirds. The wild orchids and air plants grew in great abundance. On the river were thousands of ducks, and in the river were myriads of fish. A few miles west of the river were forests of great pine trees and the St. Johns prairie on which grazed large herds of cattle.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Steamboats of the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line often took less than two hours to unload and reload their cargoes. Barrels of fish, crates of citrus and pineapples, kegs of syrup, alligator hides, otter and coon pelts, as well as winter vegetables comprised the cargoes shipped out of Rockledge Landing, and the steamer chefs always replenished their food supplies here also. Sweet potatoes, blackeyed peas, from the trading post at Rockledge, which most of the tourists had never eaten, soon became favorite foods on the dining-room menus of the MARION and the WAUNITA. Fresh venison could be purchased. It was the only fresh meat available at that time.

Cooks on board the Rockledge Line steamers served fresh fish at all meals, including breakfast. At various locations along the Upper St. Johns steamer cooks placed fish traps. When preparing a meal the pilot would slow the steamer which enabled the cook to reach into the trap and extract a four or five pound bass, which was prepared for the meal. Along the way the cabin boy would reach out with a long handled net and scoup up lazy turtles basking on logs. The turtles were usually converted to delicious turtle soup. Large turtles would be sliced into steaks.

Because the Upper St. Johns region became so popular with sportsmen and tourists, The Hart and Smith Rockledge Steamboat Line was one of the most prosperous lines on the river. Rockledge had become a tourist stop with some notoriety and the river run actually became a tourist attraction. Many was the time tourists had to be turned away because there was no place to sit on the steamer, and no empty rooms in the Rockledge hotels.

The Indian River Hotel built at Rockledge was constructed with a view to induce northern tourists to come to Rockledge by steamboat. When sportsmen heard of the abundance of wildlife and the excellent fishing in the region, Rockledge became a jumping-off place for hunting expeditions into Southeast Florida.

Indians occasionally rode the Rockledge Line steamers, tying their dugout canoes to the steamer. One of the most cherished things the Indians could do was to be able to sell something in order to get enough money to buy tobacco, ammunition, liquors, etc., and then to board a steamer. They could not be persuaded to leave the decks until one thing happened---when the whistle blew. At that they scampered off in a hurry.

One passenger noted: "I well remember the thrill of watching for the 'gators, especially at night when the light picked up reflections in their eyes; and the hustle and bustle about the landings, with the stevedores singing and rushing the freight aboard with much excitement.

"Personally the Upper St. Johns River has always ingrigued me, ever since my mother and father told of their experience up-stream in the 1870s. The little steamer FOX on which they took passage was primitive and kept getting stuck on sand bars. When that occurred, the crew piled off and they pulled and pushed the FOX back into the channel. The trip to Titusville or Rockledge Landing took all day and at times most of the night."

THE ROAD AHEAD

When steamboating on the Upper St. Johns River began to decline in 1886 Captains and Pilots of the various steamboat lines could clearly see into the future to a time when steamboating would be a thing of the past and gradually would disappear from the Upper St. Johns River.

Steamboat crews took on other river jobs. Some stayed on the payroll of Colonel Hart and worked on the Ocklawaha River - Silver Springs run. Others moved into south Florida waters, staying just ahead of the railroad which was taking over most of the Florida passenger and freight business.

Many old pioneer rivermen simply went to work for the railroad companies. One notable riverman, Captain William B. Watson, who was superintendent of the huge DeBary Merchants Line, which had about a dozen steamboats operating on the St. Johns River.

When it was announced that the Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railway which had just arrived in Sanford, would construct a spur line across the St. Johns River to Titusville, a distance of forty miles, Captain Watson applied for the superintendent's position and was immediately placed in charge of construction. When the road was completed, the railway inaugurated steamboat service from Titusville south, with Watson as the superintendent of the newly formed Indian River Steamboat Company.

CHRONOLOGY OF STEAMBOAT EVENTS

1 Jan 1875 Population of Brevard County 1,246.

1 Feb 1876 Use following address for freight destined for Titusville or Rockledge: Steamer VOLUSIA, Jacksonville waterfront.

6 Jan 1880 Brevard County celebrates its silver anniversary. Population in 1855---163; population in 1880---2,303.

6 May 1880 Brevard County's first newspaper goes to press. The Florida Star published volume 1, number 1, this date in Titusville. Many news items in this chronology were extracted from The Florida Star.

20 Oct 1880 Due to low water on the Upper St. Johns River, many persons are stranded in Rockledge.

16 Nov 1880 Population of Rockledge reaches 100. A post office was established here in 1876, with H. S. Williams, postmaster, previously this place was known as Rock Ledge Hammock.

11 Dec 1880 A railroad, the Lake Poinsett and Rockledge Railroad, three miles long will be built from Rockledge to the St. Johns River, making connections at Rockledge Landing with steamboats.

15 Dec 1880 We hear of semi-weekly steamboat service for Rockledge.

22 Dec 1880 The steamboat FOX, with much difficulty, reached Rockledge bringing in four passengers and departing with 200 boxes of oranges.

29 Jan 1881 Colonel Hart has just launched a new steamboat, named the ASTATULA, or Lake of Sunbeams," the Indian name for Lake Harris. Astatula is also the name of a small town located on Lake Harris.

16 Feb 1881 Tourists are arriving in goodly numbers on every steamboat up the St. Johns. This makes hotel owners pleased with themselves and everybody. Keep the ball rolling and the paddlewheels turning!

11 May 1881 Low water prevents Rockledge and Titusville steamers from going past Luffmond's Lake. Freight is hauled over a difficult trail to Titusville.

15 Jun 1881 Governor Bloxham made a visit to Titusville and Rockledge Landing on the Upper St. Johns.

10 Aug 1881 Colonel Henry T. Titus, died at his residence in Titusville on Sunday morning August 7, after a prolonged illness, age 66.

28 Sep 1881 Captain Joe Smith brought in the news that President Garfield passed away and that Chester A. Arthur was our new president.

14 Dec 1881 Steamer ARROW often seen at Rockledge Landing, rescued two Seminole Indians stranded in the channel of Lake Harney.

11 Jan 1882 The wharf at Rockledge Landing reported well filled with syrup, oranges, green beans, etc., for shipment north.

13 Jan 1882 Steamer ISIS was placed on the Jacksonville to Rockledge route, running alternately with the ARROW. The ISIS can run in shallow water and is the largest steamboat on the Rockledge route. (Illiterate deck hands referred to the ISIS as 1818).

1 Feb 1882 Steamer MARION running in connection with steamers bound for Jacksonville. 2 trips weekly. Leave Sanford for Rockledge Mondays and Thursdays. Leave Rockledge for Sanford Tuesdays and Fridays. In order to avoid disappointments, all freight must be at Wilkinson's Wharf at Rockledge Landing on Mondays and Fridays. Joe H. Smith, Captain; H. P. Wilkinson & Co., Agents.

22 Mar 1882 Due to a lack of paper, because of low water on the St. Johns, The Florida Star of Titusville is publishing only 2 pages.

17 May 1882 The water in the Upper St. Johns is getting lower and lower and steamboat communication is getting very precarious. Hauling the "Staff of Life" fifty miles may be a trifle to talk about, but it is anything but fun to accept. The acceptance will be our destiny if we don't get plenty of rain directly or unless the railroads be pushed toward Titusville to help us out. (It's hard to imagine that in the 1880s, the Upper St. Johns River meant so much to the residents of Brevard County. It was the only route of transportation into Southeast Florida. The very existence of the pioneer settlers depended on the Upper St. Johns River).

24 May 1882 Steamboat MARION, due to low water at Rockledge Landing is using the Lake Harney wharf. On account of a scarcity of teams between Titusville and Lake Harney, it is hard to get freight delivered promptly.

14 Dec 1882 What are we going to do about a steamer running regularly to Titusville and Rockledge. What are we going to do to get provisions, groceries and passengers here?

4 Jan 1883 The steamboat OSCEOLA, Captain Joe Smith in command, makes 2 trips weekly between Sanford and Rockledge, via Titusville, arriving Titusville and Rockledge Tuesdays and Fridays, and returns to Sanford Wednesdays and Saturday.

11 Jan 1883 Due to the large number of railroads being built in Central Florida, a scarcity of wood is being felt by St. Johns River steamboats.

18 Jan 1883 Colonel Hart and Captain Joe Smith have made a tour of Indian River and made arrangements with Captain Herman Fischer of the steamer INDIAN RIVER to carry passengers arriving at Rockledge, down the east coast.

8 Feb 1883 Steamer MARION will leave Rockledge Landing every Wednesday and Saturday at 10 A.M., connecting at Sanford and Enterprise with steamboats for Jacksonville. Deck Fare $2.00. Meals and stateroom $5.00.

22 Feb 1883 The Hart and Smith steamer ASTATULA will begin running from Sanford to Rockledge Landing each Tuesday and Friday at 9 A.M., Captain H. L. Cable, Master.

19 Apr 1883 Captain Joe H. Smith of the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line was in town and said the water is so low on the Upper St. Johns River that a lighter will be required to deliver freights to that region.

24 May 1883 Captain Charles Schoonmaker now in charge of the Hart & Smith steamboat ASTATULA.

26 Jul 1883 New wharf and waiting room for Rockledge Landing

3 Sep 1884 Wharfage is now being charged at Rockledge Landing.

6 Nov 1884 Captain J. F. Reed, skipper of the MARION, brought a large load of commodities to Rockledge Landing on the 2nd.

9 Nov 1884 100 head of cattle stranded at Rockledge Landing, 3 steamboats refused to carry them north.

27 Nov 1884 A new post office has been established and is in operation at Willard's Trading Post north of Rockledge and is called Cocoa, with Mr. Wm. Barton Smith, editor of the Indian River Sun newspaper, as postmaster. We make the above announcement as there are quite a number that are not aware of its being established.

12 Mar 1885 There are 15 teams constantly engaged in the transfer of passengers and freight between Rockledge Landing and the Indian River.

16 Apr 1885 The Hart & Smith WAUNITA now picking up freight and passengers at Titusville Landing on return trip to Sanford.

23 Apr 1885 Ryder's Hack Line for passengers and freight; the best hack line for Rockledge will carry you from Rockledge Landing to the Tropical or other Rockledge Hotels, or any point on Indian River.

23 Apr 1885 Hart & Smith's steamer WAUNITA leaves Sanford every Monday and Thursday. Arrives at Rockledge Landing for Rockledge every Tuesday and Friday. The WAUNITA has been recently overhauled and tables will be supplied with the best the market affords. Hart & Smith's ASTATULA makes this trip on Wednesday and Saturday.

14 May 1885 Dr. J. A. Brown of Sebastian died last Friday while being conveyed from Rockledge to the St. Johns River. He was on his way to board Hart & Smith's steamer ARROW.

4 Jun 1885 A party of 16 ladies from Sanford arrived at Rockledge Landing yesterday on the OSCEOLA and started down the Indian River on a pleasure trip on C. R. Carlin's sloop the ORIENT.

23 Jul 1885 Until further notice the steamer WAUNITA will stop at Salt Lake for Titusville on her trip up to Rockledge Landing. Parties desiring their freight to come through direct should make arrangements accordingly.

3 Sep 1885 The steamer WAUNITA, on her trip up from Rockledge Landing last Friday, landed 5 lady passengers at Salt Lake at 3 A. M. The hacks not expecting the steamer, did not reach Titusville Landing until noon. Needless to say the ladies thought they had reached the "Verge of Civilization," and had bad thoughts while swatting mosquitoes all morning long.

10 Sep 1885 Our merchants were considerably disappointed in not receiving their freight by the WAUNITA which was expected on Saturday and again on Monday.

21 Oct 1885 There is still another means of communication with the outside world at Ashbee, on Salt Lake, 6 miles west of Titusville. This route is to be had by water to the St. Johns River through Puzzle and Mullet Lakes. Hart & Smith run their boats to Titusville Landing by this route whenever needed.

28 Oct 1885 Not very long ago an Editor having frequent occasion to visit Indian River Country, used to leave Jacksonville Saturday at 3 P. M., and arrive at Rockledge Landing about midnight on Tuesday and reach Rockledge early Wednesday morning. "I look forward to the time when I can eat breakfast in Rockledge, board a train at Titusville and have supper awaiting me in Jacksonville the same day.

20 Dec 1885 Hart & Smith's Rockledge Steamboat Line for Rockledge Landing, schedule of steamboat OSCEOLA: Leaves Sanford Monday and Thursday at 9 A. M. Leaves Rockledge Landing Tuesday and Friday at 9 A. M.

27 Dec 1885 Half a dozen railroads have been trying to reach Titusville since 1881: Sanford, Lake Jessup & Indian River Railway; The Midland Route; Tavares, Orlando & Atlantic Railroad; Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railroad; Palatka & Indian River Railway; The Sanford & Indian River Railroad; The Jacksonville, St. Augustine & Indian River Railroad; Enterprise & Titusville Railroad. One finally arrived in Titusville last evening. The Atlantic Coast, St. Johns & Indian River Railroad. She will be leased to The Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Line for $100,000 which is more than the cost of the road.

1 Apr 1886 Hart & Smith Steamboat Line discontinues passenger service.

LOW WATER ON THE ST. JOHNS

An item in the papers, 1893 reads: "The steamer JENNIE went up the St. Johns a few days ago heavily laden with freight for Titusville. She got aground on the north bar at Lake Harney. The late experience of the SUSIE MAY and the JENNIE shows how low the water is in the Upper St. Johns.

"This reminds us of the time not so long ago when all the freight for Indian River territory came via Lake Harney during very low water seasons, when the St. Johns was not navigable any further up than this lake. For several months, sometimes in the early summer, it became necessary to haul the produce and wares for Indian River 25 miles overland.

"Contrast that of 15 years ago with the splendid transportation of today, with upwards of a dozen trains a day, when we had but the little steamer once a week, and you can grasp some idea of the development of the Indian River country and yet there is plenty of room for all who want to come and make this their home."

STEAMBOATING AND SPORTSMEN

Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe once wrote a plea for the wildlife of Florida which appeared in "The Semi-Tropical" magazine in January 1877:

"Thousands of idle loungers," she asserted, "pour down here every year. People without a home or landed interest in the state, and whose only object seems to be to amuse themselves. The decks of steamboats are crowded with men, whose only feeling amid our magnificent forests seems to be a wild desire to shoot something, and who fire at everything on the shore, careless of maiming, wounding, or killing the living creatures."

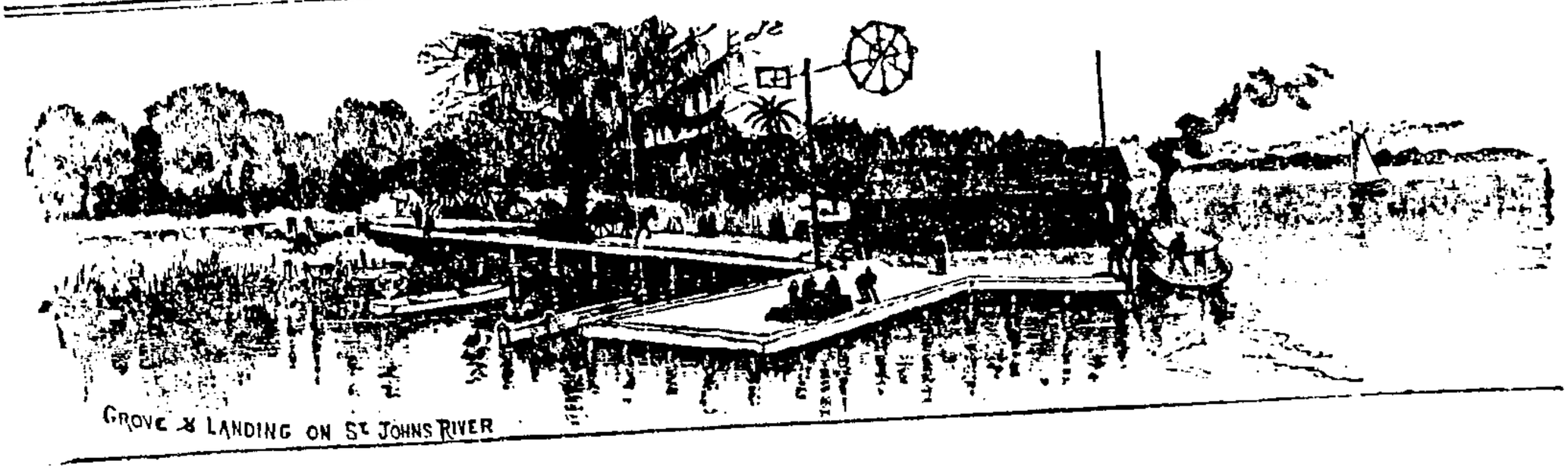
GOOD HUNTING

On special occasions, the steamboats of The Hart and Smith Rockledge Line would make unscheduled stops, dropping off sportsmen at Deep Creek, Lake Jessup or Puzzle Lake. When the hunters ran out of ammunition or provisions, they simply hailed and boarded the next steamer passing by.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

A trip to the Upper St. Johns region was something to remember. An early Florida tourist guide advised an adventurous remedy for tourists who were of strong constitution and able to withstand hardships. That was a journey by the steamer MARION of the Hart and Smith Rockledge Line. The trip began at Sanford on Lake Monroe to Rockledge Landing on beautiful Lake Poinsett, plus a three mile overland trip to Rockledge and the Indian River in a mule drawn wagon.

FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER. [Apr. 21, 1888.



GROVE & LANDING ON ST JOHNS RIVER

FROM KISSIMMEE TO ROCKLEDGE BY STEAMER

When it appeared that steamboating on the Upper St. Johns River was a thing of the past, an item appeared in The Cocoa Tribune on June 18, 1925. It sounded like such a gigantic operation that it is worth reading again:

"Kissimmee On The Way To Canaveral" read the headline.

"A survey which is to be made by the well known Florida firm of The George B. Hills, Co., of Jacksonville, embraces the present waterway from Kissimmee and routes into Lake Kissimmee and route both from Lake Tohopekaliga at St. Cloud, thence to the Orange County line, as well as an eastern route to connect East Lake Tohopekaliga with Lake Poinsett in the St. Johns River at Rockledge. Tentative plans call for an eight foot channel, sixty feet wide.

"The Orange and Osceola county navigation district commissioners, in developing these waterways, plan on building necessary canals and locks to join the Canaveral Harbor projects on the East Coast. Part of the route to be traversed was covered in an exhaustive survey made in 1911."

The proposed canal would enter Indian River near Rockledge, Florida on the Indian River.

Research reveals that during this period a railroad which would tap the huge phosphate, citrus and cattle industries in Central Florida was given up for lack of funds. The railroad was to connect the center of the State with Canaveral Harbor and the ensuing savings in freight costs would make the project worth while.

Thinking that the Federal Government would pick up much of the costs in building a steamer canal from Kissimmee to Canaveral, they began preparations for the gigantic project, and for a while it appeared that the steamboats would once again become the principal mode of transportation.

Although everyone thought highly of the proposed canal, it was never started and not a shovel of dirt was turned. The Congress failed to provide the necessary funds to develop Canaveral Harbor.

On another note, in the 1970s a corporation was formed to dredge a canal from the St. Johns River to the Indian River near Titusville, which would bring Sanford, Florida into the forefront as a major port of entry on the Florida East Coast. The canal would connect with Port Canaveral allowing coastal ships to make Sanford their destination. Fortunately environmental groups stepped in and put a stop to this foolish proposal.

ARRIVAL OF THE RAILROAD

The steamboat companies operating on the Upper St. Johns River began feeling competition from the new Sanford to Titusville railroad in January 1886. The first train entered Brevard County at Titusville on December 27, 1885.

Since the Lund Steamboat Line made Titusville their home port on the Upper St. Johns, and made runs to Rockledge Landing several times a month, this company ended regular service to the Upper St. Johns shortly after the arrival of the railroad. Their steamboat FOX made her last trip to Titusville on January 6, 1886. This was the bitter end for The Lund Pioneer Steamboat Line. When Captain Lund quit the Upper St. Johns, Messrs., Hart and Smith had all the business they could handle.

The coming of the railroad to Titusville hardly affected steamboats on the Rockledge Landing run. Passengers and freight continued to steam in and out of Rockledge. In fact, for a time, it increased.

In 1886 the WAUNITA and the ASTATULA were making five trips to Rockledge Landing every week, and when the railroad reached Titusville, The Hart and Smith Steamboat Line put their steamers ARROW and MARION on the Rockledge run. With the addition the Rockledge line scheduled four steamers.

About this same the huge 300 room Indian River Hotel opened in Rockledge with much fanfare and large numbers of passengers lined up to take advantage of the comfortable scenic Upper St. Johns River route. They insisted on arriving by steamboat.

Other parts of the upper St. Johns River were also feeling competition from the Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railroad. The FREDERICK DEBARY, ANITA, and PASTIME steamboats of the DeBary Line were withdrawn from the Jacksonville to Sanford run, the reason being a lack of business. But DeBary still kept five steamers on the run.

The steamer ALICE HOWARD was withdrawn from the ferry line between Sanford and Enterprise as she had not made money since the coming of the railroad. They attempted to put her on the Indian River, but her draft of four feet was too much for the treacherous Indian River shallow channel.

But it was only a matter of time until Hart & Smith felt the competition brought on by the trains running daily from Sanford to Titusville. Although the lazy boat trips to Rockledge Landing were quaint, relaxing and the scenery awesome, most passengers preferred the short, 2-hour train trip. Near summer of 1886, the Hart & Smith Steamboat Company was no more.

STEAMBOATING COMES TO AN END

It was on December 27, 1885, that the first train rolled into Titusville. Needless to say the pioneer settlers were very excited about this new way to get out of town, but at the same time it spelled the end of the tiny riverboats that brought hundreds of pioneers into Brevard County.

The railroad meant better and faster facilities for the transportation and it meant an easier and more comfortable mode of transportation in and out of the area. It meant the opportunity to order and receive goods and supplies to make pioneer living more comfortable and luxurious. In fact it meant the end of pioneer living.

On September 1, 1886, the local newspaper noted that the steamboats don't come up the St. Johns River to Titusville or Rockledge Landing anymore. Thus ending one of the most colorful eras in Brevard County history and the end of the county's first transportation system.

The only route into our region for years was via the Upper St. Johns riverboats. Everything and everybody was moved in and out in this manner.

The trip from Jacksonville to Rockledge was slow, taking on the average of three or more days to make the trip, but the river was scenic and romantic, and nearly everyone making the trip never forgot the experience.

Sidney Ianier made several trips to the upper St. Johns region and wrote over a century ago:

"Like the sternwheelers on the Mississippi, beloved by Mark Twain, like the canalboats and the Hudson River steamers, like a thousand other rivercraft that once combined leisurely travel with esthetic enjoyment, the steamboats have long since vanished. Their hulks rot in the mud; their pine-knot flares will never be relit. Yet we can do no better than simply look back on those early days with sad nostalgia."

Transportation on the Upper St. Johns River is something of the past. It is a waste of time to theorize as to what might have been or the cause for failure of the various steamboat lines such as the Hart & Smith Rockledge Line of Steamboats, which ran the Upper St. Johns River. The very thing happoned all along the St. Johns when that stream was crossed by the Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railroad in the 1880s.

Reading early accounts of the scenic beauty of the Hart & Smith Sanford to Rockledge trip, one realizes how much we have lost in leisurely travel by turning our backs on our rivers.

BY RAIL TO INDIAN RIVER

The demise of the quaint and romantic steamboats of The Hart & Smith Steamboat Line along the upper St. Johns River can best be explained by newspaper announcements by the Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railroad Company:

"BY RAIL TO INDIAN RIVER: The long-famous inaccessible land reached by rail at last --- the river's great fame and the causes of it --- Indian River Oranges --- an English opinion --- fish, game and oysters --- the characteristics of the country and its attractions and salubrity.

"The famous Indian River of Florida, so long the desire and despair of the winter tourist, will soon be connected with the outer world by steel rails and parlor coaches. The Indian River Division of The Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railway will be completed during the month of December, 1885, and by January 1, 1886, trains will accomplish the journey from Jacksonville to Titusville in six hours, which formerly, by river St. Johns and Wagon, required three and even four days.

"It needs no special gift of prophesy to foretell the tide of travel that will flow during the coming winter into this hitherto inaccessible land. Even the hotel men have been able to read the signs alright, and mammoth new hotels overlooking the Indian River at Rockledge will be completed in time for winter travel.

"The Indian River has never enjoyed a 'Boom.' No land agent has sung its praises; no transportation company has had occasion, heretofore, to advertise its attractions. Yet it enjoys, in its remote seclusion, a fame almost as great as the reputation of the State within whose hills and forests it lies hidden."

Even though the first train to reach Titusville spelled doom for The Hart & Smith Rockledge Steamboat Line, it provided another line of communication with the outside world, and from that day on, a prosperity, heretofore unknown along Indian River, came into being. The new railroad company began circulating information about the region it had penetrated:

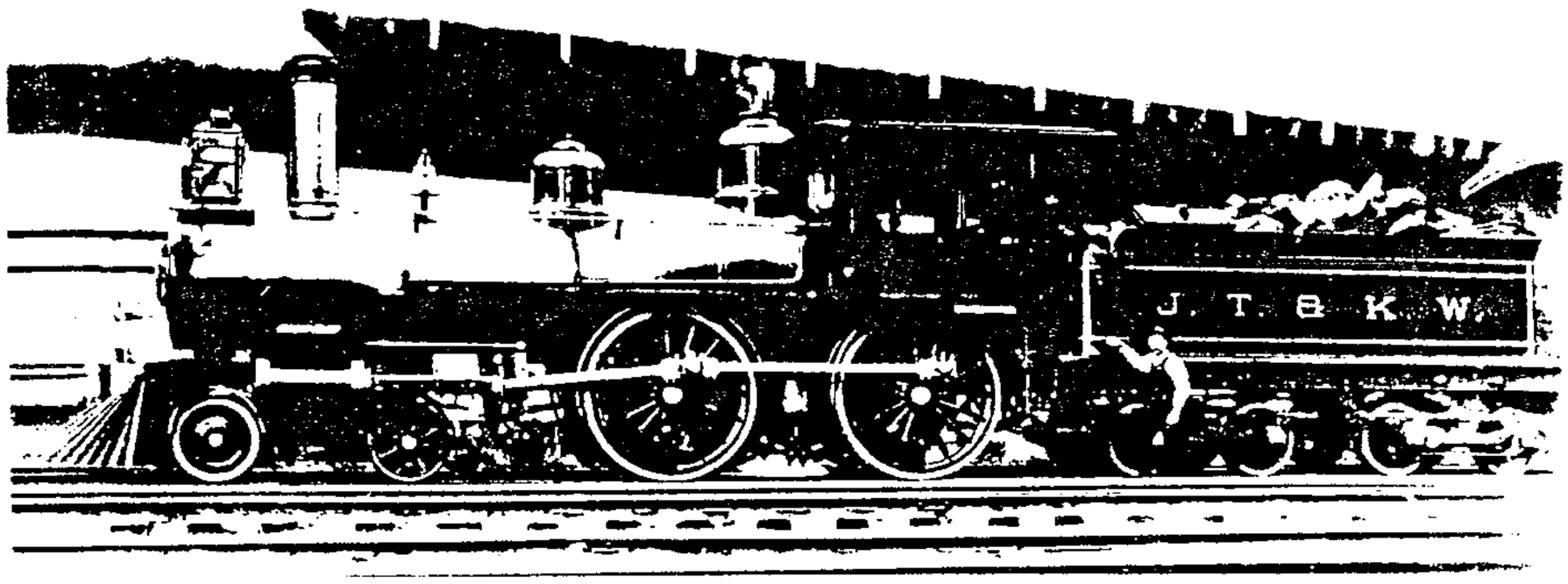
"Sanford to Titusville on the Indian River, forty miles, opening up to direct through rail transportation the famous Indian River country, so long inaccessible to travelers. This road forms the southern extension of The Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West system, and is the same gauge as the rest of the line. Through trains will accomplish the journey from Jacksonville to Titusville in a few hours, giving tourists an extra three days vacation time."

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

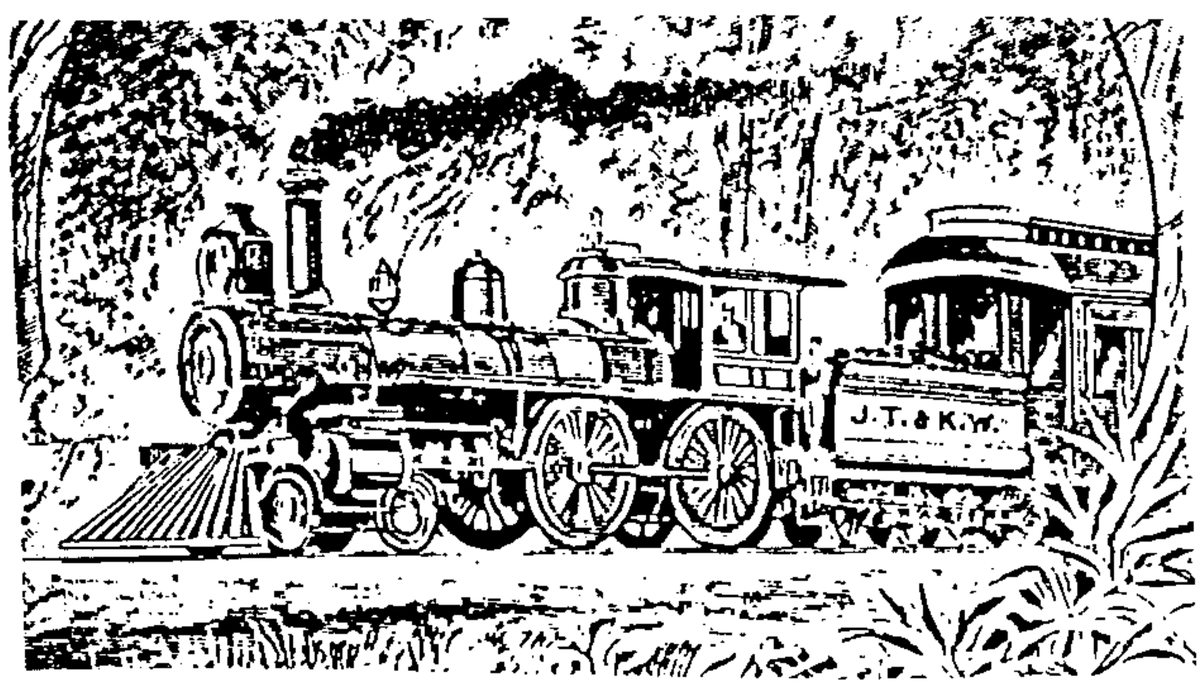
The opening of the lower coasts of Florida by railroads, together with the building of resort hotels, resulted in Rockledge losing its position as the State's tourist capital.

The railroads rolled through Rockledge carrying train loads of tourists to Palm Beach and Miami, while only a few winter residents returned each year to their Rockledge homes. In the meantime the St. Johns River had lost much of its appeal to tourists and sightseers. Most of the abundant wildlife that had made river trips so exciting had been decimated by sportsmen who once used the countless birds and alligators for target practice.

Rockledge remained as a small tourist center for many years, but in the meantime the population of the lower east coastline was growing very rapidly and attracting the money-spending tourists.



Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Ry No. 6 4-4-0



Early Titusville Trains

THE LAST STEAMBOAT

Dark water still flows through the bend at Rockledge Landing, and ospreys still nest in the cypress swamps nearby, but Rockledge Landing is fading into history books and the memories of older residents.

During the period 1875 - 1885, Rockledge Landing and Titusville Landing were major ports of entry into Brevard County. Steamboats made regular stops there, putting ashore mail, settlers, sportsmen, tourists and cargo.

But today, standing on the river bank, looking at the fish camps, airboats, Interstate 95, motels and restaurants, it takes imagination to create images of this area before the turn of the century when the Upper St. Johns River was the only route in and out of our region. The forts, trading posts, pioneer homes, steamboat landings and all the many facets of what the county once was, have disappeared. None of those aspects remain, all are gone.

Little exists today at Titusville, or Rockledge Landing to suggest their importance in our local history, and that which does not exist has to be searched for.

From the standpoint of prosperity, the Upper St. Johns River steamboats had their heyday in the period from 1875 to 1885. This period of rise and fall of the steamboating business saw Brevard County and the State of Florida advance to a high position in the tourist trade and although the steamboats eventually were replaced by railroads, the purpose they served in establishing the county and state as a resort area was well worth the trouble the pioneers encountered.

Ironically, about the same time the last steamboat left the Upper St. Johns River, the U. S. Government decided to make the river safe for navigation by installing beacon lights, marking boards and buoys. Later the channel was maintained at a specific depth by routine dredging. The Government went so far as to construct a lighthouse on Lake George.

The steamboats are gone, but the memory of the men that operated them will be kept in focus by a few of the old timers. The Lund Family should be remembered. They had the foresight to know that Brevard County was on its way to becoming a place of note.

Colonel Hubbard I. Hart and Captain Joseph H. Smith helped build Rockledge into a fine tourist colony. Other rivermen include Captains Watson, Schoonmaker and Reed.

These rivermen never received recognition for putting Rockledge on the map.

THE LAST WORD

With the arrival of the railroad in December 1885, steamboating on the Upper St. Johns River quickly came to a close. And the railway company got in the final word, which they placed in their advertisements and brochures:

"Tourists who have not visited Florida in several years would readily admit that there was something new under the sun, were they to make a tour of the State now.

"Back then, one of the so-called attractions was a trip to the Upper St. Johns River, with illimitable swamp on either side, and reptiles, falling limbs and gallinippers to render the experience one never to be forgotten.

"Now, the Upper St. Johns, with its played out, cramped up steamers and 6 X 6 staterooms are little heard of and seldom patronized except by the very venturesome or very verdant.

"Not only have many beautiful localities been brought within the reach of the tourist by the constant building of railroads, but steamboat navigation as well has been increased, and one of the most beautiful steamboat voyages in the world is down the Indian River.

"The Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railroad Company have established a steamboat connecting with their trains at Titusville that rivals in luxuriance of furnishing cuisine and comfort the famed floating palaces of the Hudson.

"The Indian River is an arm of the ocean, varying in width from one to seven miles, and while the Atlantic can not always be seen from the decks, it can always be heard.

"Groves and winter villas, coquina cliffs, palm trees and white beaches line the banks, while the steamers and sail boats float on their blue waters.

"One trip to the Upper St. Johns River, through the swamps is too much for most people, and they seldom make the round trip, but they can sail up and down the Indian River forever and never grow tired.

"The Upper St. Johns is appropriately called 'The river through an untamed swamp.'"

When ever the occasion arose, the railroad company took advantage of the situation to extoll the virtues of reaching Titusville and Rockledge via their comfortable cars and steamboats, often referring to the previous three day journey to reach Titusville.

T H E E N D

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Melbourne Library
Florida State Library
Cocoa Library
St. Johns River Water
Management District

Melbourne Times
Melbourne Sentinel
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Indian River Sun
Indian River News
East Coast Advocate
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NEWSPAPER REFERENCES

The early newspapers of Brevard County are excellent sources for transportation information on the Upper St. Johns River. However, the older issues are extremely difficult to locate. Good background material about the Titusville-Rockledge region is contained in them, including steamboat schedules, rates, layovers, crew mambers, delays, accommodations, bill-of-fare, mail information, steamboat mishaps, passenger lists and other information pertaining to the operation of a steamboat line. The early Brevard newspapers were all weeklies and much space was given to the arrivals and departures of the Upper St. Johns steamboats. These papers listed the important people of that period who entered and departed our region.

Several weekly newspapers were published in Titusville and Rockledge during the heyday of the steamboats, they include: The Florida Star, published at Titusville from 1880 to 1912. This paper furnished some of the background for this book. The Indian River News, founded in Titusville in 1882, and later moved to Rockledge. The Indian River Sun, the Indian River Mirror and The Public Spirit, three early Cocoa-Rockledge weeklies were helpful (when they could be located). The Indian River Advocate and the East Coast Advocate published in Titusville in the early 1890s provided much information about the Upper St. Johns River activity. The Indian River News, published in Melbourne from 1887 to 1891, gave insight into the steamboat days and the various steamers using our waterways.

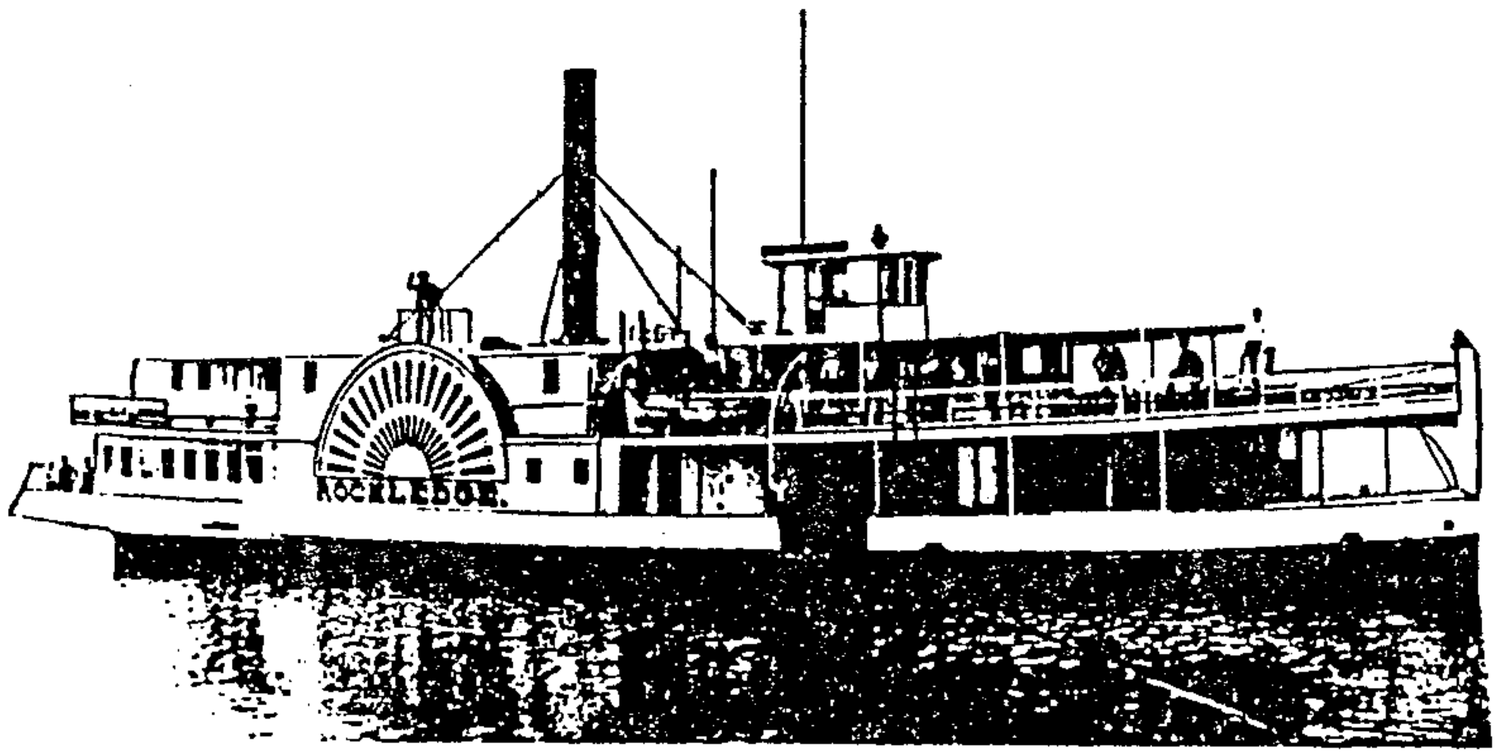
During the period covered by this book (1880-1886), the Jacksonville-Times-Union, a daily newspaper, provided much information for this book, because many of the steamboats tying up at Rockledge or Titusville Landing originated their trips in Jacksonville.

My thanks go to the early pioneer settlers of Brevard County for taking time and trouble to keep diaries and write their memories of their arrival, how they traveled, and how they worked and lived. Without these early histories, diaries and reminiscences of early life in our region during the 1870s and 1880s, this book could not have been written.

The Brevard County archives contain absolutely no information or history of the Upper St. Johns River or the many steamboats which ran on that river for two decades. This created a problem for the author who was forced to visit and accomplish research at distant places, to research historical files belonging to historical societies, universities and State libraries.

Such is the life of a history buff.

THE ROCKLEDGE, FLORIDA STEAMBOAT LINE



A short history of the steamboat ROCKLEDGE

The steamer ROCKLEDGE was one of three steamboats to serve on both the St. Johns River and the Indian River. The other two being the WAUNITA and the PICOLATA.

THE STEAMBOAT ROCKLEDGE ARRIVES

The very first notice about the coming of the steamboat ROCKLEDGE came on the 21st of April 1886, when the Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railroad Company announced that they had purchased the steamer GOVERNOR WORTH, which formerly had plied the St. Johns River between Jacksonville and Sanford, to run on Indian River as an extension of their Tropical Trunk Line. The notice stated that the steamboat would be thoroughly overhauled and repainted and her cabin lowered five feet before she is brought around to her new route.

The railroad company announced on May 26, 1886 that when the steamer GOVERNOR WORTH assumes her new route on Indian River, she will be known as the ROCKLEDGE.

The arrival of the ROCKLEDGE from Jacksonville was described in the Florida Star issue of July 28, 1886:

"The steamer ROCKLEDGE arrived here Monday morning at about 10 a. m., having had good luck in running the St. Johns Bar to Indian River Inlet, but encountered some foul weather which caused her to put in at St. Augustine and Mosquito Inlet. Captain Cassady says he had very little trouble coming up the Indian River Narrows. He followed the east channel, although the steamer could have come through the west channel, but he wanted to be sure.

"Captain Tuttle and Captain Dorf Sheldon, of New Smyrna accompanied as coastal pilots.

"The ROCKLEDGE is an iron hull steamer, 136 feet long, and was formerly known on the St. Johns river as GOVERNOR WORTH. The amount of work recently put on the ROCKLEDGE improved her appearance so that one will not recognize her as formerly. New guards were built and installed, and the upper works have been all overhauled for running on Indian River. She is intended as a day boat to make the run from Titusville to Melbourne and Malabar, and therefore is not provided with staterooms. Captain Paddison, who owns an interest in the ROCKLEDGE informs us that she will probably commence running sometime next week.

"The ROCKLEDGE at present makes about 8 MPH, but after a little working of the buckets, cleaning the boiler, etc., will increase her speed somewhat.

"We wish the captain with his new boat every success. She is the longest boat that has ever been north of Indian River Inlet on our river."

EMILY BELL & THE ROCKLEDGE

When the pioneer settlers of South Brevard learned of the coming of the steamboats in the mid 1880s, the first trip of the steamboat ROCKLEDGE was remembered by many for it was such an important event in the lives of these isolated residents.

Every morning for a week, a small boy named Fletcher Russell went out to keep watch all day long on a ridge overlooking the Indian River in front of his grandfather's house. His post of watch was marked on all governments maps as the community called Ankeny, and he didn't want to miss seeing the ROCKLEDGE coming up the river.

The steamer entered the river through Indian River Inlet at Fort Pierce.

Meanwhile, up the coast in the House of Refuge at Bethel Creek attended by the Bell family, there was excitement about the expected arrival of the ROCKLEDGE.

Emily Bell had kept watch at the window all day, and suddenly there was a commotion in the rafters overhead and a rat dropped onto the floor at her feet. Emily screamed and jumped up onto the bed. Her husband rushed into the bedroom to answer her screams, and killed the rat that fell out of the rafters.

Emily had fallen into a mosquito net on the bed, and by the time her husband got rid of the rat and Emily untangled and out of the net, the ROCKLEDGE had passed and Emily missed the historic sight.

IMPROVEMENTS ABOARD THE ROCKLEDGE

Captain R. P. Paddison brought the steamboat ROCKLEDGE to Indian River in 1886. He soon called a meeting of his staff to see what could be done to improve passenger life aboard his steamer.

The meeting was held in the large, spacious dining room.

The Purser noting that the dining room was dark and dingy, spoke up saying: "We need to install a chandelier in this room."

The Steward objected, immediately stating: "No one aboard the ROCKLEDGE had ever seen one, and no one aboard could spell it or even play it, and besides, this room needs some lights."

ARRIVAL OF THE ROCKLEDGE

In August 1886, a good sized steamer appeared at Melbourne. It had come from the St. Johns River, where it had been known as the GOVERNOR WORTH. But on the Indian River she became the ROCKLEDGE. It was commanded by Captain R. P. Paddison, who had brought her through the inlet at Fort Pierce, and up the river to Melbourne. She was a sidewheel steamboat with engines that kept it going at the rate of 8 miles an hour, no matter whether the wind was with it or against it. One day in August, Captain Paddison invited the people of Rockledge to take a trip on the ROCKLEDGE. Most of them accepted the invitation, but they did not crowd the steamer. It was a red letter day in Rockledge. The trip was down to the Sebastian River, and was a very unusual and enjoyable experience for the Indian River people. After looking this situation over, Captain Paddison concluded to put the ROCKLEDGE on a daily trip between Melbourne and the end of the railroad at Titusville. That gave all towns a daily mail and made it possible to leave early in the morning and reach Jacksonville before midnight, rain or shine, wind or a dead calm. It brought Melbourne into the world and in touch with the rest of Florida.

A freight house was built at the end of Melbourne's 1,500 foot pier. An iron track was laid the length of the pier, and a push car placed upon it. Freight and passengers were transported on that car. The power usually consisted of volunteers pushing behind. Silas F. Gibbs was the first steamboat agent, and he was responsible for the propulsion of the car. Sometimes when there was a still breeze from the east, something was raised for a sail, perhaps two or three coat-tails, and they came flying over the long pier. On the arrival of the steamboat, about 9:30 p.m., the passengers had the use of the car for the first trip, with the mail. All they could see was the dark water on each side.

How much of a Melbourne was it when the ROCKLEDGE made her appearance? There were on the north side of the creek nine houses, including a small hotel and Mr. Hector's store. 24 people lived north of the creek. On the South side and scattered within a mile along the creek, were ten houses, occupied by 26 white people, and two houses occupied by nine colored residents. Six of the houses were occupied by families consisting of one person. There were only 2 stores between Melbourne and Miami; one owned by Sylvanus Kitching at Sebastian and the other was the Canning Company at Fort Pierce. With such activity, one wonders why a steamer was needed at Melbourne.