

IN THE SHADOW OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

*A Folk History
of
Mayport, Florida*



Compiled
by

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Helen Cooper Floyd, author, with marshes of Mayport in the background, 1941.

Natives of Mayport, she and her husband, Hilton, have collected lore of this maritime community since they sat on porches listening to old folks reminisce when they were children.

Two books, Mayport Remembered - People and Places and Mayport Remembered - Along the Waterfront, contain some of their favorite stories.

A work in progress, folklore of trawlermen, covers a wide spectrum of tales from the little-known world of this special, larger-than-life, group of men of the sea.



Viola Singleton King Boley

1889-1986

Her life spanned the eras
covered in this book.

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LIGHTHOUSE**

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of
Mayport, Florida*

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This book is dedicated to those who remember our sandhills and sand spurs, the horned toads, and the joe jumpers, violets and chinaberries, and the "recording angel" in the Catholic church.

Contents

Preface

Introduction

1	The Village: The Turn of the Century and Later	1
2	The Addie Fatio Chapel	5
3	New Beginnings	8
4	A Church is Chartered	12
5	The Good Times of the Decade	16
6	The Down-easters	20
7	The Roaring Twenties	24
8	Ribault: The Man, the Monument, and the Bay	27
9	The Pre-war Years: Poverty, Prohibition and Progress	30
10	The Mayport Recreation Center	37
11	The Years of World War II	39
12	The Fifties	47
13	Looking Back	57
14	The Navy Base	68
15	The Quaint Little Village of Mayport	70
16	The Jazz Festival	75
	Epilogue	77
	Appendices	78
	The Old Order Passeth	79
	Cemeteries	85
	Bibliography	94
	Credits	96
	Photographs (1890-1970)	98
	Maps	133

Preface

There was standing room only in the little white Presbyterian church on February 11, 1962. A call for a special homecoming to commemorate the congregation's fifty years as a chartered membership brought many from afar, reuniting friends of more than half century and introducing to a new generation half-forgotten memories of those who were boys and girls in Mayport when the century was young.

Viola Singleton King, whose many years of active membership gave her seniority in this group, brought the past to life as she pointed to old friends in the congregation and recalled with them earlier days of the church and of the village.

Bare statistics painstakingly written by dedicated men and women from the past were here aplenty. But the recollections of old timers aroused during the nostalgic celebration made clear the fact that a way of life that once existed here was gone and almost forgotten.

True, the villagers cherished their folk memories, for porch-sitting and tale-spinning were favorite pastimes well into the 20th century. But changing ways within this fishing village and emigrations of many to faraway places left few to sit on porches.

"Miss Viola's" references to a long ago lifestyle where young people played on the lighthouse green, picnicked in the lighthouse hammock, or walked to the south jetty along a wide-open beach that bordered lands that later became Stark's "Wonderwood" raised many questions: "Where was the lighthouse green?" "What was the lighthouse hammock?" "What has become of this 'Wonderwood' and its owners, the Starks?"

A record of these and many other things seemed needed, so a number of people . . . far too many to mention here . . . have been interviewed, have lent journals and other written memorabilia, and have gathered photographs to be copied so that some of these questions may be answered.

Although the history of the Mayport Presbyterian Church is used as a point of departure, the stories in this book go far beyond the life of this congregation.

In recent history many of diverse backgrounds have come together in the Mayport area: the Catholic Minorcans with their vanishing customs who have been here longest; the Anglo-Protestants; the wave of immigrants, many Norwegian, who settled here as the nineteenth century faded away; the African Americans; the Portuguese; the fishermen *per se* and the river pilots within whose ranks the other groups have melded.

Because I am of the Anglo-Protestant group, was reared in the Mayport Presbyterian Church and have access to primary and secondary records of two generations before me, this is the group I am most qualified to write about.

I have been blessed with the help of Mildred King Ogram, also a Mayport native, with whom I share maternal grandparents and legions of relatives reared in Anglo-Protestant traditions.

Both of us have strong ties with 20th century history in this village, for here we enjoyed early childhood and school days, and we have lived through the changes which have reduced "Old Mayport" to vanishing memories.

Having a peer to verify "this is the way it happened" when writing of something not recorded before has made this work a challenge.

Her own deep interest in the past of Mayport people, her tenacity in ferreting out obscure facts and her patience in dealing with the dullest of statistics when I have needed help have kept this project moving when I have tired of it

Her moral support and her personal recollections have been invaluable.

One other person must be mentioned here. Beth Floyd Gammill, my computer person, has exhibited both patience and forbearance far beyond a degree I might have expected from a daughter of mine.

She has put into her computer draft after draft of this manuscript as countless revisions have been made . . . all without complaint.

For the contributions of all who have helped me I am most grateful.

Here, finally, is an informal folk history recording changing customs and passing events as remembered by many who lived in Mayport during the past hundred years.

Helen Cooper Floyd

September 21, 1994

Introduction

It was a sandy spit of land outlining hills and hollows that hid great marshes that lay eastward. High tides from an unjetted ocean swept inland, molding and remolding the shoreline and building sandbars at the inlet that one day would be called the mouth of the St. Johns River.

Mound builders hunted and fished in this area and left kitchen middens and burial grounds nearby to mark their tenure in the territory now dominated by the Mayport Naval Station.

Timucuan Indians were here in 1562 when its written history began . . . when Jean Ribault and fellow Frenchmen sought to build a settlement for their Huguenot countrymen.

Warfare between the Frenchmen and Spaniards, who earlier had claimed the whole peninsula they called *La Florida*, left Spaniards in control of this strategic location by 1565. Conquistadors and Catholic priests were followed by settlers from Spain and the Indians retreated.

Englishmen from the north, James Oglethorpe and his soldiers from Georgia, landed cannon here and dragged them toward St. Augustine in an effort to unseat the Spaniards. Their ill-fated forays ended with Florida's Spaniards victorious.

Descendants of the conquistadors remained undaunted by invaders for 200 years until wars and politics an ocean away led to their exodus after the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1763.

Englishmen then ruled the land a brief twenty years before Spain regained possession, but never its former power. The Lion of Spain gave way to the Stars and Stripes and in 1822 the U.S. Territory of Florida was established.

And what of life on the little spit of land at the mouth of the river now called the St. Johns?

Oddly enough, Jean Ribault in his log and Jacques LeMoyne in his writings and sketches before 1565 tell more about the Timucuan Indians than the laymen today can find compiled in English about any group of settlers and sojourners on this land since those Indians disappeared.

There are records of forts and other barricades which may one day be matched with remains of masonry that old-timers of the twentieth century called "Spanish brick." A formidable task for future archeologists.

Other tangible clues suggesting that this strategic, waterlapped land was a military outpost have been covered by a navy airfield. But early in this century children played within boundaries of earthworks much like those surrounding Fort Frederica on St. Simons Island, Georgia.

Census records and some personal papers indicate that the Civil War interrupted growth of a thriving settlement here. Comprising many who

worked in a sawmill, pilots, fishermen and other mariners, it supported merchants and professionals who served the community in various ways.

But the forts no longer existed when the war began and the villagers were defenseless. Invading soldiers from the north found houses and workplaces deserted. Departing Yankees burned the sawmill, livelihood of many before the war.

A postwar village grew from the ashes. Visitors on passing ships noted two lighthouses towering among the trees. They saw the ever-changing shoreline of a village whose most remarkable scenery was its great sand hills. Among those hills and in the woods beyond the marsh lived ancestors of some who live and work in the fishing village today.

From some of those ancestors came stories of the land stretching westward from the ocean to Pablo Creek, northward from the woodlands south of the present day Mayport Cemetery to the river. There is scant information about settlements called Hazzard and Pablo; Burnside Beach and Coquina; Wonderwood and East Mayport and oceanside playgrounds called Seminole and Manhattan; and on the sand hills and by the river shore, Mayport Mills, which after the Civil War became simply Mayport.

Sites of most of these vanished communities are within the boundaries of the Mayport Naval Station while others lie inside the fences of Kathryn Abby Hanna Park. Headstones in the Pablo Cemetery, now called the Mayport Cemetery, bear names that were prominent in Pablo, the plantation also called *Naranjal*, which is buried under the Oak Harbor residential area.

Lines of docks and fish houses hide the sandy spit that is left. Most of the sand hills are gone. But 100 years of folklore is scattered in stories still told, in letters and news clips found in old attics, and in cherished photograph albums. Few buildings stand as relics of a century in this settlement. Of the fishermen's dwellings and stately homes of pilots once noted by passing ships, only a remodeled portion of the old King house overlooks the waterfront.

Away from the mainstream of traffic on Highway A1A, in the shadow of the St. Johns lighthouse, another building recalls village life one hundred years ago. The Mayport Presbyterian Church, built in the 1890s, has in its records names of Mayport people and bits of local history unrecorded elsewhere. Against the backdrop of this church much of Mayport's recent history has been played.

With the story of this church a century of folk history begins.

Chapter One

The Village: The Turn of the Century and Later

When the desolate days of Civil War were past, the little town of Mayport Mills was no more. Amander Parsons' industry, burned by departing Yankees, was never rebuilt, and sawmill hands returning to what was left of the settlement found this source of income gone forever. Mayport Mills became simply "Mayport."

Piloting and fishing, always mainstays of the village economy, afforded a living for this maritime community, but the 1880s, when stirrings throughout the South brought new blood to the war-scarred area, changed the economy of the times. Florida, already a mecca for new settlers, suddenly was a popular destination for tourists and invalids. Mayport, with its beaches, became a well-known vacation spot.

In Webb's *Florida: Historical, Industrial, Biographical*, published in 1885, one finds:

MAYPORT: This village of six hundred people looms up in the distance like huge banks of white clouds or hills of snow against the horizon. The high, bare, white sand hills produce this effect as the wind blows the sand into drifts. It is situated on the south bank of the St. Johns, at its mouth and one and a half miles from the Bar, twenty-five miles from Jacksonville by the picturesque windings of the river, and fifteen miles in a straight line. Two daily lines of steamers connect with the city. Fare, seventy-five cents; excursion, one dollar.

Mayport was established in 1830 by the pilots and fishermen of the St. Johns, where many still reside. General Linsley Lomax, United States Inspector of the jetties in progress at the Bar, and a native of Virginia resides here, and General William Ledwith has his summer villa. Messrs. Haworth, Keeler, Smith and Manville own two thousand, two hundred acres of good farming land, bordering on Mayport. Oysters and fish are plenty at the river bank. Hunting excellent. The place is fortunate in the possession of George B. McClellan, teacher of the public school, one of the best educators in the State. The name of the postmaster and one of its representative citizens is John R. Hogans. The beach leading from Mayport to the ocean is lined with cottages, the summer homes of many of the people of Jacksonville and other towns in Florida.

The land at the mouth of the St. Johns River beckoned those who came by sail or steamer. Alexander Wallace, beginning in 1887, laid rails that also brought travelers from Jacksonville through little communities between, to the resort sometimes called Mayport Beach. Accommodations

were soon made available. Hotels and taverns and boarding houses, the bed and breakfast institutions that abounded until motels appeared more than half a century later, were enhanced by the natural setting.

Because wild ocean waves invading the river also eroded the land, work on jetties to control the waves was begun in the 1880s. This labor, lasting more than thirty years, provided work for men who came to call Mayport home.

To the south the Scull family had erected a tent city that would eventually become a lasting beach resort, now known as Jacksonville Beach. Burnside Beach, a short-lived community near the mouth of the river, and a similar subdivision called East Mayport, begun by Alexander Wallace and R. M. Haworth and Company, increased the population.

Before the turn of the century, Mr. Wallace's railroad went into bankruptcy. Many of his lands became property of the state, but he left behind a legacy that was useful to those who came later, and an enduring part of Mayport folklore deals with his Jacksonville, Mayport and Pablo Railroad (JMP).

This earliest railway into Mayport, departing from Arlington, stopped at a number of settlements including Burnside Beach and East Mayport, then from that wooded area followed a man-made embankment that crossed a wide expanse of marsh. It entered Mayport between the lighthouse and land that would one day be the site of the Presbyterian church. From there, it cut a diagonal westerly line through the sand hills toward the river shore and was served by a depot near the site of the King house on Ocean Street.

When the train no longer made its runs, the railroad ties were stacked at intervals and one pile of these remained between Ferris Street and what is now known as Roxie Street (formerly Julia) for more than a quarter century. Other ties were utilized by Mr. and Mrs. Jacob P. Stark, who bought some of the Wallace property from the state. Some were used in landscaping their Wonderwood Estates; others, many years later, were stacked and burned to warm the crowds who braved chilly mornings to attend Easter sunrise services at the Ribault Monument.

The original shell road into Mayport was laid on the JMP railway bed. Later called the "rock road" after it was covered with gravel, this was the only paved road into Mayport until after 1940. After a road alongside the embryonic navy base was built, this old thoroughfare was buried under many feet of sand dredged from the river bottom and covered by the navy airfield.

A folk tale about the Jacksonville, Mayport and Pablo Railroad is now told many ways and, in the way of folk stories, has even been transferred to another railway. According to the late Judge James L. Gavagan, the JMP train's first departure from Mayport changed the meaning of these initials to Jump, Man, and Push. A stiff breeze during the night had covered the tracks with Mayport's famous shifting sands, which had to be removed by passengers before the train could be on its way. Other problems, financial

and otherwise, also plagued Mr. Wallace's project. Now the train has been gone for over a century, but its story lingers on.

Henry Flagler's railway, the Florida East Coast (FEC) which later crossed the marshes and creeks south of Mayport, followed a different path. This best-remembered railroad, which served the village about thirty years, avoided the perils of Mayport's sands and went straight through marshes to its docks on the river shore. A typical turn of the century Florida East Coast depot near the shore south of the village was a focal point for travelers morning and evening. This train station is now located in Jacksonville Beach at the Pablo Historical Park. Mr. Flagler's train, which brought more dependable and longer lasting transportation between Jacksonville and the village, left East Mayport, backed across the marsh between the old railroad bed and Pablo Creek, which is part of the Intracoastal Waterway, to wharves where coal from schooners provided its fuel. The advent of this second railroad stirred excitement in the village, nowhere better stated than in a letter which follows. The letter was written by Joseph Roland King, the thirteen-year-old son of Captain William Joseph and Clara Arnau King, to his grandmother in Delaware. It is dated April 19, 1900.

Dear Grandmother,

It has been a long time since I have written to you and I hope that you are enjoying good health. We are all well. The weather is very pleasant. We had a very heavy rain last Wednesday and I hope you are having good weather too. A schooner, loaded with coal, got wrecked on the jetties and is a total wreck. Papa expects to go to see you this summer and I expect to go with him.

Mr. Flagler is building a railroad here. Two pile drivers have been at work for four months and he has built a trestle work about two and a half miles long. He is going to build a large hotel between Mayport and Pablo beach (sic). He is also driving an artesian well here; it will be good for Mayport because we depend on rain water all the time; we will soon have a wharf five hundred feet long and fifty feet wide. It will be a good place to fish from. When we come back, I hope you can come with us and take a look at our city.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

I remain, your loving grandson,
Roland King

According to old maps, the St. Johns Catholic Church, which replaced one that was standing during Civil War days, appears to have been built on the railroad right-of-way. This, which was razed during World War II as its

site was needed for an air strip, was called "The New Church" by people born in the 1870s and 1880s. Conflicting dates in secular writings regarding the building of this church, which stood about halfway between Mayport proper and lands later called Wonderwood, challenge research into this part of our past.

Mr. Wallace, in advertisements proclaiming his early ventures, offered land for churches and stated that some of these were planned. Mr. Wallace's railroad, gone by the mid-1880s, left a bed for the shell road that for many years joined Mayport with East Mayport. Beside this road, before the shell was laid, another church arose, one of the few structures in Mayport surviving a century of change. Perhaps those who donated the land for the Addie Fatio Chapel originally obtained it from Wallace.

Chapter Two

The Addie Fatio Chapel

The Mayport Presbyterian Church has an enigmatic past, but it is known that Reverend and Mrs. William H. Dodge of the Newnan Street Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville began work with Protestants among the seasonal residents who were locally known as the summer people. The interested villagers were invited to their services.

First Sunday School services were held in the old school house, part of which is owned by Frankie and Diane Harrell on Palmer Street at this writing. According to tradition accepted by the First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville and also by the local Presbyterians, 1887 marked the first of these meetings.

Possibly special services were held before then, for in the lore of the King family, Captain Joe King, who was a St. Johns Bar pilot by 1885, came into this harbor as a young seaman on a Christmas Eve. Presbyterians, not simply Protestants, it is said, invited him to a Christmas tree celebration, and he was given an apple.

The more affluent of Protestants among the villagers and members of Reverend Dodge's Jacksonville congregation became interested in providing a permanent place of worship. According to tradition, work was being done on a building for their use by 1892.

This was first called the Addie Fatio Community Chapel (sometimes church is found in old accounts), a tribute to a loyal member who was a guiding force in its earliest congregation.

Little is known of her life, but a lasting memorial to "Miss Addie" is inscribed on the bell still used by present members: "Presented to the Mayport Presbyterian Mission Chapel in Memory of Miss Addie Fatio. Reverend William Henry Dodge, Pastor, Mayport, May 21, 1895." Also inscribed, a reminder that this is a house of worship: "Come hither and hear the words of the Lord your God." McShane Bell Foundry, 1895, Baltimore, Md.

The only documented reference to this church in Suwanee Presbytery annual records before 1900 indicates that fifty dollars was donated in 1896 by the presbytery for use by Mayport Presbyterians.

Episcopalians in our Past

Just across the river, Fort George Island was the site of regular Protestant mission work years before Presbyterians began lasting work in Mayport. Seasonal services on the island were available to the people of Mayport from their beginning. The present St. George Protestant Episcopal

Chapel was built in the 1880s. In 1886, Reverend Luther Pardee, a visiting priest on Ft. George, officiated once for a marriage and once for a funeral in Mayport.

As early as 1891-92, according to an account by Lee Eugene Bigelow, written in 1937 for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), some services of the Episcopal Church were held in Mayport, often in the home of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Davis.

In 1914, Mr. and Mrs. John L. Gavagan, parents of Judge James L. Gavagan who served as justice of the peace for more than thirty years, donated a lot on which an old Episcopal chapel was later placed. Used earlier in Fulton, its furnishings and materials were floated down-river on a barge, and sometime after 1910 the church was rebuilt on a site on Broad Street near the present Marine Science Building on land now owned by John Drew.

By this time the Davis family was well established in the Presbyterian congregation; many others trained in the Episcopal faith also had become Presbyterians.

In the log of lighthouse keeper Amos Buford, it is noted that on April 4, 1918, a half-hour tornado blew the Episcopal church off its blocks.

The Mayport work of the persevering Episcopal priests seemed doomed when all personal and church records of Reverend William Brayshaw were lost in 1923 at the time the Wonderwood cottage in which he resided was struck by lightning and burned. By the mid 1920s, Episcopal services were no longer held in Mayport. Boards from the venerable building became firewood for village stoves during the Great Depression of the next decade. Its floor, outlasting walls and windows, made a skating rink for energetic children; the more intrepid of these could climb the rickety ladder to ring the bell which hung in the decaying, perhaps dangerous, but still standing belfry.

This account of Episcopal activities is not irrelevant. The "small but very earnest hardworking" congregation about which Bigelow wrote served its time and place, maintaining a preaching mission in Mayport as far back as the 1870s. Thus, it served a minority Protestant community before the Presbyterian group established a more permanent foothold here. Several members and descendants from the congregation it served became staunch supporters of the Mayport Presbyterian Church after it was chartered in 1912.

During the years just preceding and following 1900, when most of the earlier Presbyterian leaders no longer lived in the village, those who felt the need for Protestant rites depended upon Episcopal ministers to perform marriage rites, baptize their babies and conduct funeral services. These priests had access to the non-sectarian Addie Fatio Chapel. Even after the chapel became the Mayport Presbyterian Church in 1912, Mr. Edward Edwards, Sr., Sunday School Superintendent, noted in Sunday School

minutes that an afternoon worship service would be led by an Episcopal priest.

Unfortunately, just at the turn of the century, the happy co-existence of Episcopalians and Presbyterians did not keep the chapel doors open. According to ambiguous statements from early members, use of the building by other groups, "fanatics," who tried to force their beliefs on others, caused the church doors to be closed to all. The denomination of those causing problems has not survived in local memory, but its members were so strict that they would snatch a sinful cigarette from the lips of anyone they saw smoking in public.

Chapter Three

New Beginnings

When she was in her nineties, the sprightly little lady who had been Viola Rachael Singleton delighted in telling how teen-age girls brought the church as a Presbyterian organization back to life and she left this story. When she was about fifteen years old, 1903 or 1904, a family by the name of Bennett moved to Mayport. Four daughters, Essie, Annie, Glennie and Ella Mae, and one adopted son, Willie, made up the family of George and Mary Bennett.

They couldn't understand why the church closed after the people, for different reasons, mainly because of the hurricane (which had destroyed a large number of waterfront homes) . . . had left, one by one, family by family . . . went back to Jacksonville. They (the Bennetts) couldn't understand why the church was vacant. After they (summer people and also others) moved away there was no one to run the church, No one to carry on. So they came in. Annie was a little older than I . . . sixteen. And she said, "Why don't we have some kind of services in the church?" So we decided to get permission from the Jacksonville First Presbyterian Church to open the (building) and we were well laughed at. "Children trying to open a church! How do you think so many grown people have tried and never succeeded?"

Well, we did. We opened it, and we had song services and Sunday School. And we went from door to door to collect a little (money) to buy material for our work.

From Mrs. James W. Davis, then still a member of the Episcopal Church, came a most memorable donation of twenty-five cents. Unheard of riches! The girls were not allowed to solicit funds from the tavern owners. Unlike the storied evangelist who collected money from those dealing in worldly pleasures, the straight-laced Victorians guiding these children were not willing to "take the devil's money and see what God could do with it." Soon, the Davises became interested and active in the reopened church. Light tender James W. "Jim" Davis with his wife, Jessie; daughters Mildred, Lucy, and Ruth; and son Claude, began a working association with this group which lasted more than forty years.

Baptists also became prominent workers. Harrison C. Steele and his wife, Cynthia, brought their two little girls, Carol and Margrecia, to church. They sometimes walked from their home in East Mayport, but on occasion rode the morning train, having a meal at the home of the lighthouse keeper,

Amos Buford, and his wife, Viola, and walking home at night after evening services.

In a world where cars were a novelty and not many buggies traveled the island, walking, for villagers, was not only a necessity but was considered an enjoyable pastime. The path to East Mayport, the deserted bed of the JMP railroad, left the rutted sands of Mayport near the lighthouse to pass the Catholic church with its few neighboring houses, to thread through yet more marsh before entering the woods of East Mayport. On a summer day a parasol might help preserve the complexion of a lady wearing long-skirted and long-sleeved filmy fabrics, but wintry winds demanded warmth of woolens for a walk to and from the church.

It should be noted here that the Steeles were people of means. Mr. Steele, who foresaw a bright future for Florida real estate, invested heavily in lands along the beaches, beside the marshes and in the woodlands. He owned the coquina pits, now within the boundaries of Hanna Park. This source of building materials was so important to Duval County industry that at one time a post office using the postmark "Coquina" served people who lived nearby.

The Steeles walked by choice, but for this couple to have traveled this sandy path with little children speaks of their faithfulness in serving the church. A gift from the Steele family was the church's first piano, one that replaced an ancient pump organ of unknown origin.

Villagers

High above the village Amos Buford, keeping his light, watched over the community, recording in his log daily weather, passing vessels of note and the deaths and disasters occurring in the little town and nearby waters. "Not a church-going man," his son Conway recalled, but his wife and their offspring, Ernest, Conway and Dorothy, attended the reviving church.

Three outstanding women in the history of this church were named Viola. The wife of the lighthouse keeper was called Miss Buford; Viola Singleton King Boley was known as Miss Viola all her life; Viola Greenlaw Singleton was always called Miss Vi in the village.

Viola Pendarvis Buford was the keeper of the keys to the chapel. An annual rite was her reluctant surrender of those keys to boys who rang the bell at midnight on New Year's Eve. The Thompson boys and the Singleton boys, her own son Conway, with Fabian "Fabe" Sallas, remembered all their lives their midnight reveling and the ringing in of the new year. Mrs. Buford was also unofficial custodian. Helped by ladies and girls of the congregation, she saw that their meeting house was a model of cleanliness.

Her son Conway, interviewed in the late 1970s, said his mother was especially strict when church attendance was concerned.

Catholic mass was not held at the same time Presbyterians met, so a closely-knit group of boys of both faiths found their Sunday playtime together between the services. If Conway tarried when the Presbyterian bell sounded, his friends would say, "Hurry, Conway! You're going to really get it if you're late." And "get it" he would. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was a foremost rule for rearing children of that day.

Stories of early days of the church came from Viola Singleton King (later Boley), Conway Buford, Dorothy Buford Lee Ovind, Carol Steele Bradford (youngest among these informants), and from Frank Floyd of the fifth generation of the Catholic Floyd family in Mayport.

An unusual landmark, the only stone house in Mayport stood next to the Presbyterian church for many decades. Built by his father, Civil War veteran Frank Floyd, for William Martin Floyd, more than one generation of Catholic occupants sat on its porch on Sunday evenings enjoying hymns or resounding sermons from the pulpit next door. William Floyd's son, Frank, was among these.

A son of this later Frank Floyd, Hilton, interviewed in 1972, recalled that when they were very young their father sang some of those songs to his children to quiet them at bedtime. "In the Garden" was a family favorite.

Tapes of memories of those above verify the many stories told by Miss Viola who lived to be the person longest associated with the Addie Fatio Community Chapel, later to become the Mayport Presbyterian Church, during its first century.

Miss Viola, one of the girls who helped reopen the doors of the chapel early in the century, was the oldest of thirteen children of Captain Samuel and Helen Mae "Nellie" Tillotson Singleton.

In her more than seven decades of service to the church she held the positions of organist, pianist, choir leader, Sunday School teacher, treasurer, chairman of many offices in the women's organizations, and no doubt would have been an elder had she lived in a later era.

Outstanding among her memories were pageants and socials directed by Mrs. Steele during the first decade of the century. Miss Viola played the lead in "Rebecca at the Well" and in "Wise and Foolish Virgins." In the more secular "Fate of a Dairy Maid," she learned to milk a cow to give authenticity to the play.

When interviewed in the 1970s, Mrs. Dorothy Buford Lee Ovind, recalling outdoor plays which captured the fancy of villagers before 1920, had to laugh when she added that her brother Ernest and his best friend, Sam Singleton, filched a churn of homemade ice cream meant for appropriate refreshments at the end of the dairy maid play.

Held on the lighthouse green, a wide expanse of grass between the tall light tower and the nearest sand hill, bazaars, box suppers, and plays entertained both Protestants and Catholics. Frank Floyd lent his horse, Ben,

for a money-making project more than once as the Presbyterians and other groups livened a summer's evening in this way. All the village enjoyed wholesome recreation as funds were raised to support a reviving Presbyterian congregation.

Chapter Four

A Church is Chartered

In the Sunday leaflet of the First Presbyterian Church of Jacksonville, dated June 11, 1911, church extension work was cited:

Mr. Rice has been preaching at Hilliard and Mayport. The Prospects for a self-supporting church are good . . . The Mayport work is especially necessary as the (white) community has no protestant church. A Union Sunday School is being conducted with an average attendance of between thirty and thirty-five. Rev. Mr. Way will take charge of both fields (Hilliard and Mayport) July 1.

Reverend Edgar W. Way, who had worked diligently in Mayport over several years, held a series of meetings resulting in the organization of a Presbyterian church in Mayport on February 8, 1912. He was moderator of the group which signed the charter in the Addie Fatio Community Chapel. It thus became the Mayport Presbyterian Church.

The charter members are recorded in the church's earliest minutes.

At the top of the list was Mrs. Jessie E. Davis, followed by Harrison C. Steele. Next came his wife, Mrs. Cynthia V. Steele, then F. E. Clark and Miss Anna Aiken.

One physician was in the group, Dr. Neil Alford, with his wife, Irene. This well-loved country doctor delivered countless children far from a hospital before moving his practice to Jacksonville.

C. F. Call, George A. Bennett, Addison Haworth, Mrs. Angelina C. Singleton, R. E. Franklin, and J. H. Franklin were also charter members.

John Tillotson with his wife Fannie, and their daughter, Maria E. Larry (later Mrs. Alban Hawley), is listed, as are three of his sisters. John Tillotson, Jessie V. Thompson, Helen Mae "Nellie" Singleton and Anna E. Brazeale were children of Susannah and Ephraim Tillotson, an Ohio couple who had brought their family to Duval County just over thirty years before the church was chartered.

The lighthouse keeper's wife, Mrs. Viola L. Buford, already cited as keeper of the church key, became an outstanding member, and J. E. Clark and Mrs. Sylvia S. Hunt completed the group.

At the charter meeting, elders were appointed. These were J. H. Franklin and H. C. Steele. Dr. Neil Alford, John Tillotson, and C. F. Call were elected deacons. These men were ordained at an evening meeting on the date of their appointments. The first sacrament of infant baptism brought

the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Steele, Margrecia Vohries and Carol Louella, into the group at this same meeting.

Then, according to the record left by Reverend Way, "After praise and prayer and meditation the congregation was dismissed and the Mayport Presbyterian Church (community) was ushered upon its way with prayer for guidance and blessing of the Great Head of the Church."

Annual statistics for the year 1912 show that at year's end there were twenty-five active members and a Sunday School enrollment of fifty but within a decade membership more than doubled as personal tragedies and the stress of World War I turned people toward God. In 1917, when the United States sent military personnel overseas, eighty-one active church members were listed, along with a Sunday School enrollment of ninety-three.

A complete listing of World War I service men from Mayport has not survived in church records, but personal recollections indicate that many village men, Catholic and Protestant, served as soldiers, sailors and in the merchant marine.

Ellen and Alphonso Haworth sent three sons, Linden, Fred, and Addison, into service on the same day. Addison was one of the charter members of Mayport Presbyterian Church.

Pilot boat captain Samuel Singleton and his wife, Nellie, saw three sons, Chauncey, Robert and Hollie, leave home to serve in the army. Two of these served on the front lines in France.

Amos Buford and His Peers

Soldiers also came to Mayport for training, and, while camp was being set up, some of these bivouacked in the Mayport Presbyterian Church. Amos Buford, whose daily log entries reveal large and small incidents in Mayport during his more than a quarter century of service, recorded on December 15, 1917: U. S. soldiers arrived from Fort Scriven and camp on lighthouse reservation two p.m. On the sixteenth they encamped on the reservation, set up tents and cleared the grounds. On the 17th, he noted that one Private Smith (during these operations) accidentally shot himself through the left hand and was sent to St. Luke's Hospital in Jacksonville. By the 19th the soldiers had mounted guns six hundred yards due northwest of the lighthouse on sand dredged out of the river.

Mayport was ready for action.

In January, the campers were aided by convicts who hauled sand and filled in low places around camp. A wise course of action. Mayport, with spectacular, high sand dunes, also had very low spots which filled with water during heavy rains or very high tides. The lighthouse keeper's residence was occasionally surrounded by water, and villagers sometimes saw marsh hens wading in their back yards.

Mr. Buford later recorded times when "big gun target practice" shook the village.

The sands of Mayport made less than ideal parade grounds for marching soldiers, but in the recollections of Viola Boley was a vision of little boys in Mayport shouldering sticks for guns and marching behind practicing army men. Among these, she recalled, were her brother Leo Singleton and her son Howard King.

Just when the last of the soldiers in training left Mayport is not known, but on December 7, 1918, not a month after the armistice was declared, the light keeper's log reveals the tearing down of Coast Guard barracks on the lighthouse reservation. On December 12 he wrote, perhaps with some relief: "U. S. Coast Artillery Corps detachment entrained 6:30 a.m. for Ft. Scriven, Georgia."

Some of the personal tragedies that affected the village during this decade are also recorded in Mr. Buford's log. These notes indicate that the family of Edwin Thompson, the Norwegian captain of the river boat *Hessie*, was especially marked. His wife, Jessie Viola, a charter member of the newly-formed Presbyterian congregation, died on September 18, 1913. The next month, on October 12, 1913, he lost their daughter Jessie Thompson Williams. All too soon thereafter, Mr. Buford recorded the funeral of another Thompson daughter, Laura, May 10, 1914.

The death of loved ones during this time in Mayport was followed by a custom which disappeared as land transportation improved. A skipjack bearing the casket would leave Mayport docks and, leading boats loaded with mourners, would thread through nearby creeks to family cemetery plots on Big Talbot Island, to the Pablo cemetery (now called the Mayport cemetery), to New Berlin and Dames Point, or to the Tillotson cemetery in Mount Pleasant.

Members of the Thompson family were laid to rest in Mt. Pleasant, the area through which Girvin Road now meanders. During one such sad occasion, mourners saw vultures circling a house on an island en route to this burial ground. Investigating, they found the body of a man, a dark discovery for an already dismal day.

The wartime epidemic of Spanish flu affected Mayport's population. When Mildred Harris, wife of Willoughby Cason, became a victim, leaving behind five motherless children, boatmen who watched her water-borne funeral procession slowly moving toward New Berlin said, decades later, this was the saddest sight they had ever witnessed.

Mr. Cason was able to care for his children at home. Vivian "Bubba," Doris, Elmo "Mose," Stanley "Rex" and Mildred all attended the Mayport Presbyterian Church. Doris, the older daughter, was especially active in young people's work and served as a pianist and organist while she was young.

The collective eyes of this congregation were forcibly focused on Thornwell Orphanage during this decade. Angelina Solana Singleton, charter member, passed away, leaving several children who found a haven in the Clinton, South Carolina, home for children.

Ida Tillotson, also a charter member, was unable to care for her brood after the death of her husband, Fred. These, too, moved to Thornwell. Well cared for as children there, the Tillotsons and Singletons were educated at the orphanage and became productive citizens when they returned to Duval County as adults.

Remembering stories about the good done by Thornwell, today Mayport Presbyterians sometimes contribute memorial funds to the orphanage on the death of congregation members; and each November a Thanksgiving offering, consisting of pennies, dimes, and dollars dropped into a little bank by children and adults alike on the Sunday following their birthdays, commemorates this part of the church's history.

This was indeed a decade fraught with tragedies.

On May 14, 1917, Mr. Buford filled more than the one line a day usually allotted in his log:

Fire destroyed Fannie Gavagan's store and residence and one cottage. A. J. Floyd's hotel barroom and residence, Alford's (Dr. Neil Alford's) office and drug store, J. D. McCormick's store and P.O. and bldg used as a restaurant. A total of fourteen buildings. Fire was 1st discovered about 2:30 a.m. in A. J. Floyd's barroom.

In T. Frederick Davis's *History of Jacksonville, Florida, and Vicinity*, two hotels, owners not named, are listed among buildings burned.

William M. Floyd, who lost more than one building in these flames, for the rest of his life walked around his house and his poolroom each night with a bucket of water looking for sparks.

Chapter Five

The Good Times of the Decade

Perhaps the fearful times before 1920 fostered a sense of community and appreciation for the good things young people could enjoy in Mayport. These latter things are those which surfaced most often when members of an elderly generation were asked to conjure up their special recollections more than a half a century later.

Those interviewed primarily for information about the church wanted memories of village life in general also preserved, and so they are:

Mayport was still an island when these informants were young. Two bridges crossed creeks that meandered through marshes separating the fishing village from East Mayport.

In East Mayport were fertile fields, and farmers took produce to the riverside community by horse and wagon or sometimes by boat on an outgoing tide in Pablo Creek.

Except in the lighthouse hammock there were few trees in Mayport and grass did not grow on the high shifting sands. When the wind blew, the sand would move from one place to another. Children would look in gullies after a blow and sometimes find fragments of old pottery or pieces of brilliant glass.

The hills were great for rolling down, with or without a barrel. They made a bumpy track for a child being pulled on a wide palm frond by another who looked for the roughest spots. Sometimes children would dig holes for forts in the sides of hills and it was long recalled by his peers that George Estell and his dog dug a hole and it caved in on him. He was found, still alive, with his barking dog trying to dig him out.

Simple pleasures satisfied these children: a hickory nut and a stick shaped like a golf club were ample equipment for improvised games. Sometimes a tin can turned on its side tested eye-hand coordination as nuts were knocked into this goal. This was less expensive than the marble games which were standard pastimes for boys and girls at recess or after school.

There was intergenerational rapport that has kept alive names of special people who shared their time and their homes with children growing up during this era. Captain and Mrs. Joseph King with their wide-verandahed home overlooking the river are among these.

Edith Singleton Cooper recalled:

When Mr. King (a Bar pilot) would take a ship out in the evening, Mrs. King would ask me to spend the night with them. Clara (the King's only

daughter) thought their house was haunted and would hear noises. I didn't think the noises were caused by ghosts.

Mrs. King had a large room in her house. (There) Uncle Johnny Arnau (Mrs. King's brother) would play the fiddle and we would dance. Sometimes Hans Thompson would clown or carry on some foolishness which he was good at.

(Sometimes) the young folks would gather at our house (the home of Captain Sam and Nellie Singleton). Jeanette and I would play the piano and the others would sing. (Treasured keepsakes from this period were used by the informant as long as she could play the piano: Sheet music featuring World War I tunes like "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" and "How You Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm after They've Seen Patee?")

We would dress up and meet the train to see who came in on it. The mail would come in on the train so we would all go the post office from there and wait for the post office to open, and get our mail.

When Daddy would be going fishing from the Pilot Boat META, the day before he would (send) us children to the river shore or beach here in Mayport. We would take a tub to put fiddlers in. There were always lots of them (and) we would run around them until they would get in a pile. We would scoop them up in our hands and put them in the tub until we had as many as we wanted.

We would take Carlo, our dog, and he would dig sand crabs.

The beach was from Louis Thomas' dock to the clubhouse dock, which was near the jetties, mouth of the river. (The manmade promontory which later separated still waters of Ribault Bay from the treacherous waters of the St. Johns River did not then exist.)

Mrs. King would take me along when they would go to the (ocean) beach in their buggy (for) swimming. One day we were out jumping breakers. I looked back at the beach and saw a big shark fin between me and the beach. I got around it somehow, and never went swimming in the ocean again.

School Days

Dorothy Buford Lee Ovind knew all about the old schoolhouse during the first quarter of the twentieth century. She entered as a student "about 1907 or '08," and, having taught there as a young woman, kept vivid memories of the big wooden building and those who passed through its doors:

Let's see . . . there was a Miss Lipscomb, then Annie Verelst, Pauline Sommers, a Miss Pannell and John Roberts, all principals and/or teachers.

There was a bell that was rung every morning and children lined up to go to their classes. Each child kissed his teacher on the way in every day.

We used a slate and a rag to write...a rag, not a sponge. I'm afraid we weren't very sanitary. We spit on the slate and cleaned it that way.

The little buildings out back, one for girls and one for boys, suffered at Halloween time. (An annual prank was played by village boys who moved the lightweight privies from their usual places . . . as far away as possible from the schoolhouse.)

When she finished the eighth grade here, a few weeks of special studies in Tallahassee prepared her to return as a teacher.

"Miss Dorothy's" stories echoed anecdotes about her own mother's dedication to the church and she also recalled that Mrs. Buford was responsible for ordering and dispensing religious literature.

We had a conglomeration of religions in the church, without the Catholics, so the nondenominational David C. Cook Publishing Company was a primary source of materials.

One of our first ministers was a dear old gentleman with a long flowing beard, Reverend Paul Brown. He was the first I can remember. You know that's been more than seventy years.

There was a Mr. Samples, Reverend Boyle and then Mr. Way.

At Christmas time affairs we were (said to be) "speaking our pieces." We had a community tree. I don't know how they operated on nickels and dimes like they did, but every child got a gift, a bag of candy and an apple or orange.

The tree was up front in the church and it was lighted with candles. Mr. (Harrison) Steele was so particular; because of fire, he lit those candles himself.

Viola (Singleton) and (other) young ladies who worked with the church...decorated it with popcorn, (would) string it on thread and loop it. They had little holders for the candles. It was a beautiful sight.

We went upon a . . . I guess it's still there . . . podium. Maybe we would have a group of five or six, speaking one after another. Little recitations.

After the church was begun by the Reverend Dodge (years before Dorothy Buford was born) the First Church in Jacksonville used to do some wonderful things. They came down, you know, and would encourage us so

much. (The ladies from that Jacksonville church, first the wife of Reverend Dodge and later Mrs. C. D. Towers and Mrs. Norwood Phelps and many others worked with this local women's group through half of the twentieth century.)

Playtime during Miss Dorothy's childhood was uncomplicated. On church grounds while their parents attended services, in the school yard, or in neighborhood groups on long twilight evenings tots would play ring-around-the-rosy, farmer in the dell, London Bridge, or drop-the-handkerchief and other games for which aging informants could remember only snatches of song.

Older boys and girls played a version of shinny with giant hickory nuts and sticks having curved ends. Two lines of children facing each other would knock a nut back and forth and shout "shinny on your own side" in versions of the games she remembered. Someone always had a rope to jump.

Cold weather brought a special form of recreation, the oyster roast. The outdoor play around the fire and scant refreshments were tame indeed, but Dorothy Buford's eyes lit up as she recalled:

Oh, the fun! Some of the boys would go out and get oysters and they'd bring them in old-fashioned croaker (crocus) sacks, take them out in the lighthouse hammock in a clear place and gather those fans from the palmettos and roast them. Put the bags on them and keep them wetted down and roast them and we would just have a feast. And the fellow who had a nickel would buy a box of what we called Uneeda Biscuits and we would count heads and share them.

For Dorothy Buford's generation, the simplest of fare shared among friends enhanced "the best days of our lives."

Chapter Six

The Down-easters

Simonsen Greenlaw sailed into Mayport the year the church was chartered. A George's Banks fisherman, he was searching for new areas in which to drop his nets and found these where the St. Johns River converges with the Atlantic Ocean.

Returning to his New England home after a year of successful fishing, he made arrangements for his family to leave their big frame house, extensive land holdings, their church and all their friends. For him, Mayport seemed a desirable new home.

According to his daughter, Viola, then seventeen years old, he had good reason to resettle:

This move was made because of my father's poor health. He was a fisherman and to make a living in those days it meant long hours and (work) in all sorts of weather. Fishing through ice in the winter for smelts, then packing them in ice in boxes and shipping them to Boston and New York. He made the boxes from thin lumber from the town mill. It took up most of his time with his business both summer and winter as he had to dip the smelts from the pounds in the ice on special tides, so many times it meant for him to go during the night.

I remember him coming home from the pounds with long icicles hanging from his mustache. He would sit at the end of our big kitchen stove, over the hot water tank and warm his legs and hips to ease the pain of rheumatism.

He finally got so crippled with it, the doctor told him he would need to stay in bed a year and rest or go to a warm climate.

After a family consultation it was decided that he would go to Florida.

Simonsen Greenlaw's brother-in-law was master of a three-mast schooner, the *Flora A. Kimball*, which carried cargo between ports on the St. Johns River and New York. Greenlaw left Millbridge, Maine, in his small, deep-sea fishing vessel, the *Annie*, and when the *Flora A. Kimball* weighed anchor, southward bound from New York, the little boat was on deck. Its owner had signed aboard as a crewman.

The *Annie* and Greenlaw left the schooner at Mayport and had a profitable winter of fishing there.

John Tillotson, deacon in the new Presbyterian church, had been among the first fishermen to befriend Captain Greenlaw, and John's daughter, Mary, wrote letters to Greenlaw's daughter while her father was

away. Because of this, Viola moved to Florida with her father and family feeling that she know the people of Mayport and they were her friends.

How right she was. Her journal of the voyage from Maine ends:

In the morning before daylight we looked on the light at the mouth of the St. Johns River in Mayport with glad hearts. There was only a light breeze so we just drifted in with the tide. We were all anxious as we were going into the harbor of our new home. One of the Bar pilots came out in the boat to meet us and welcomed us in.

People had been watching for us for days. There were many happy faces here to greet us, among them my dear friend Mary Tillotson with whom I had corresponded all summer. We are all very thankful to the Great Father above for bringing us safely to our journey's end from Maine to Florida. December 28, 1913.

Although reared in the Methodist faith, Viola Greenlaw Singleton always credited a Presbyterian doctrine for the real reason her family left the rockbound coast of Maine to settle on Florida sands. "It was predestination," she said.

In her memoirs one finds:

We arrived in Mayport December 28th, 1913, but my father had to go to Jacksonville in the schooner first. We passed the Pilot Boat META on her way back to Mayport and they (sic) saluted us. There I saw Sam (Singleton) for the first time, but did not dream I would soon be married to him. It was all planned between him and his cousin Mary Tillotson.

It seemed to be timed perfectly. I met and liked him and his family and his mother was very pleased that we were keeping company. She came there from Sandusky, Ohio, when a girl, and always wanted her Sam to marry a northern girl. Our marriage was a secret for two weeks. Sam made all the arrangements. Our schooner was tied up at Judge Greenberg's dock. Sam sent by him to Jacksonville and got my wedding ring and the license.

They were holding a revival in the Presbyterian Church. Rev. William Boyle was the pastor in charge from Hilliard, Florida, and staying at the home of Dr. Neil Alford. Sam went there to see him and they made arrangements for us to meet at the home of his (Sam's) sister, Mrs. Viola King, on the night of March 12, 1914. We were married and Viola and her husband, Roland, witnessed for us. Then Rev. Boyle went to the church for the revival. He was a few minutes late, and told them he had just made a young couple happy and they were all trying to think who it could be.

In the yellowed pages of the first Book of Sessions of the Mayport Presbyterian Church, one finds this notation:

Feb. 1916, Mr. Samuel Thomas Singleton, baptized in infancy, and Mrs. Viola Greenlaw Singleton of the Methodist Church of Millbridge, Maine, by restatement of faith, joined church.

A happy sequel in these records:

Apr. 7, 1916, Baptism of Aline Esther, infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Thomas Singleton, born Sept. 13, 1915, Baptized Feb. 3, 1916.

Perhaps her non-native status and the contrast with her northern home enhanced the memories of the little girl from Maine:

I felt so at home in the little town. Everyone was so friendly, just as my father had told us he found them to be on his arrival there the winter before
...

This vivacious daughter of the New England fisherman enjoyed life and recorded her first impressions in the southern fishing village; with her pen and a little camera she treasured, she captured a unique story of her early life in Mayport and the villagers who befriended her.

Most of her diary has been published elsewhere, but her family agreed that these stories and her pictures belong among annals of Mayport history.

In her later reminiscing she spoke of the customary Sunday visiting in the village when almost everyone, in go-to-meeting clothes, came together. Some walked through the sand or over the red brick road while others waited in the shade of their porches to welcome friends.

Captain and Mrs. Fred Torrible, she recalled, played the latest records on their gramophone for entertainment; Mrs. Amos Buford served cold milk before a visit began; and Aunt Babe Floyd in the big red house near the church told young folk their fortunes with tea leaves or cards.

Active in young people's work in the community and in the Presbyterian church from her earliest days in Florida, Vi Singleton continued this work as a leader as she matured. It was she who held meetings in her home for the Busy Bee Club, teaching sewing to young girls when Bible lessons were finished. She led Sunday evening song services when no minister could be present, and was a leader of the cottage prayer meetings asking mercy for service men during World War I.

Among those she influenced were Ethel Drew, Yaetive Surret, Nora Higgenbotham, Georgia Belle Trombley, Ada Singleton, Ingrid Thompson, Irene and Blanche Drew, and Alethia and Martha May Johnson.

The ailing Simonsen Greenlaw found the milder climate he needed in Florida and he brought to his new home a sense of adventure along with his fishing expertise. He is credited with expanding snapper fishing exploration

which helped the commercial and sports fishing industries which were and are the life blood of his adopted village.

While most of his children, including Vi Singleton, returned to the north after his death, one son, Alonzo, became a well-known member of the fishing fleet; two grandsons, Clarence and W. C., followed their father's trade; and descendants carrying the Greenlaw name still live in the village.

Chapter Seven

The Roaring Twenties

The Roaring Twenties came fast behind the end of World War I, but brought little noise to Mayport. Here life was decidedly quiet. Visitors and newsmen called it a quaint little hamlet.

Amos Buford kept the lighthouse as usual until his death in 1926. Fred Sisson became the last lighthouse keeper here, serving until 1928 when the St. Johns lightship anchored offshore, taking over the work of the tower. Thus an era ended.

Scheduled trains served villagers, unless they preferred to "go to town" by boat . . . to ride the *Hessie* to Jacksonville for shopping or recreation.

The Florida East Coast Railroad still provided work for men who lived in Mayport and East Mayport; the coal docks, where ships unloaded fuel for Mr. Flagler's trains, employed many. A menhaden (pogy) processing plant also provided jobs.

Dredging of the river and the Intracoastal Waterway to keep them navigable kept the *Mallory*, the *Congaree*, the *Welatka* and like vessels at work. It was not uncommon for Mayport youths, already skilled in the use of small boats, to broaden their experiences on dredges near home before traveling afar in the navy or merchant marine.

Annie Daniels' hotel afforded rooms for visitors near the waterfront. Wife of St. Johns Bar Pilot Captain John Daniels, "Miss Annie," is said to have had the first telephone in Mayport. It was she who booked parties of fishermen from Jacksonville who found great catches when they were taken to fishing grounds by Mayport men who knew the waters well. With her megaphone she would shout from her porch on the south end of Mayport a message to party boat Captains Charlie Drew or James W. Davis, to Charlie Daniels, or to one of the Sallas men. Whoever heard her call would relay a message to the men whose small vessels would be party fishing next day. Quaint Indeed!

Several boarding houses were in business, and among the best remembered was the home of Captain Fred Torrible. His wife and daughters were fabulous cooks. "Ladies in confinement" sometimes gave birth to their babies in the Torrible home, for "Miss Clara" was a midwife, and her daughter Josie (Mrs. Joe Hurlbert) also practiced this ancient art.

The home of Genevieve Ponce Floyd, widow of Civil War veteran Frank Floyd, was also a memorable boarding house. "Aunt Babe's," it was called, for Mrs. Floyd was known by this name to villagers, visitors and sojourners alike. During the more than three decades that building of the jetties was in progress, many employed in this work lived at Aunt Babe's and

other boarding houses. Trainmen at the end of a day's run would stay overnight and return to Jacksonville early next morning, meeting the FEC schedule. Also among guests in the big red house over which Aunt Babe presided were school teachers who made their home in Mayport during the winter months.

Ladies and men occupied traditional roles, and keeping a boarding house was one of the few ways in which a woman might venture into the world of business. When, following the death of her husband, Jim, "Miss Katy" McCormick became Mayport's second postmistress, this still was a decided departure from old-time mores.

The playground of young people of Mayport during the '20s and '30s was expansive. Bordered on the north by the river, it stretched south and eastward through game-filled marshes, winding roads through East Mayport and along the beaches north and south of Seminole Beach. There, behind the sand dunes of the Steele property, nestled under moss-hung oaks and fragrant with the scent of bay and cedar, was Smoky Hollow, a perfect place for summertime picnics and wintertime wiener roasts.

A sunrise breakfast trip, when sleepy-eyed youngsters sometimes juggled bacon and eggs, bread and an old iron frying pan all the way to the jetties, was a memorable event. The walk in early morning's dim light, through a silence accented by calls of waking birds, reached its climax with the sight of a brilliant sunrise over ocean waves. Sandy and sunburned hikers might return home exhausted, but the venture would be repeated again and again.

There is no exaggeration here. Docks on the riverside for fishing, diving and swimming were not off limits. Captain Otto Hahn, with teenagers of his own, was most tolerant of the noisy young people. Nobody cared if boys bogged for terrapins, hunted ducks or chased rabbits in the marshes. There were no barred gates in the Stark's Wonderwood. The broad and beautiful ocean beaches beckoned all.

Because of friendships and/or family ties that linked these villagers, children played at random in the unfenced yards and on porches of their peers if whimsy did not lead them away from the settlement.

A singular group of boys with slingshots and BB guns grew up running free here. With the ambiguous title of The R.A.N., this included Albert Mote, John Drew, Hilton Floyd, Martin Cooper, Nathan "Buck" Jones, Lawrence "Pard" Andreu, T. K. "Bo Diddly" Wylie, and Billy and Chauncey Singleton.

In the still semi-isolated town which was populated by many who had known each other's families for generations, these boys were allowed a degree of freedom seldom enjoyed by young people anywhere. "I'm going to tell your mother" was a most marvelous deterrent to evil doing.

A long-lasting club of older boys, including Paul Hahn, Edward Williams, Johnny Mann, Joe King, James and Buddy Rochester, Harry

Moore and John Gavagan, in their free time roamed on the high, tree-covered hills and the wide hollow behind them that abutted the ancient, oak-shaded cemetery now overgrown and hidden behind navy fences. Because of his near-perfect imitation of Johnny Weismuller's Tarzan call, Paul Hahn was leader of the pack.

When Joe King died of meningitis in 1936, the latter group disbanded. Villagers were warned by doctors to keep out of crowds. Fear of contagion kept the young people from their usual play in the river and woods and along Ribault Bay, and the annual Sunday School picnic and Bible School were not held that year.

While they were in their teens the surviving boys were scattered all around the globe by World War II. Most of these saw action in the armed forces; many returned home battle-scarred and with medals to prove their valor. A younger friend, Byron Mann, lost his life overseas, and, considering casualties of battles in which they fought, other young men from Mayport were indeed fortunate.

Some of these had received their first military training on the new Mayport Naval Section Base which even then was changing the face of the land. They all returned home from war to find their playground dominated by the U.S. Navy, most of it behind fences.

Chapter Eight

Ribault: The Man, the Monument, and the Bay

In 1924, an outstanding event occurred in Mayport. Memorials to Jean Ribault and his fellow Frenchmen were being erected in appropriate places along the Atlantic seaboard and one of these sites was between Mayport and East Mayport. After historians determined that Ribault, in 1562, had set up a monument on land which was now owned by Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Stark, that couple donated a mound on their property as a site for a similar shaft. Florida Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) sponsored a successful fund-raising campaign for this project and a monument copied from sketches of Ribault's original, drawn by Jacques LeMoyne during the period of French colonization, was unveiled here with much fanfare.

Viola Greenlaw Singleton, with her strong sense of history, photographed the veiled monument; just minutes later she recorded for posterity the first unveiled view of the DAR's tribute to the intrepid Frenchman.

Elizabeth Stark, a world traveler and lover of the arts, had a special interest in history. The story of the explorer who sought a refuge in the new world for persecuted Protestants inspired her to publish a free pamphlet proclaiming the adventures of Jean Ribault. Condensed from translations of his 1560s log books, her story is essentially of Ribault's discovery of the St. Johns River in 1562 which led to the establishment of an ill-fated colony of short duration. Confrontations between conquistadors, whose forerunners had claimed Florida for Spain, and the French Huguenots of Ribault's attempted colonizations ended with the Spanish Catholics victorious.

The French left little to mark their ventures or their short-lived colony. Because Mrs. Stark was among those who felt this story should be more widely known, it seemed providential that her travels had led her to settle in this area where Frenchmen had first come ashore.

For many years the monument erected by the DAR topped a little hill overlooking a sheltered bay which, at this writing, serves as a turning basin for warships berthed in Mayport naval base. During its early days, benches near the concrete shaft attracted hikers who left the main road between Mayport and East Mayport to rest, to enjoy the view, and, in good weather, to be cooled by the prevailing southeast breezes.

Established as a religious site, this was the scene of annual Easter sunrise services before the land was taken by the federal government in the name of national defense. Their ancient enmity set aside, Protestants and Catholics alike attended these impressive rites. Always enthusiastic, the Starks lent their adjoining lands for parking space. Sometimes with the help of Boy Scouts, Mr. Stark set great fires, using abandoned ties from the JMP

railroad, to help warm the thousands of people who came here to experience music and pageantry heralding the most holy of Christian holidays.

One of the few things within the navy boundaries deemed worth saving for civilians, the monument was removed from its original site and placed outside the fence near an early entrance to the base. Moved a second time, the monument now stands on a hill overlooking the St. Johns River on the grounds of Fort Caroline National Memorial Park.

By her own account, it was Mrs. Stark who named Ribault Bay for the early French leader. This tranquil body of water, now within the boundaries of Mayport Naval Station, attracted people from many places. It was enjoyed by tourists who visited the Stark's resort/estate with its beaches and dunes, summer cottages, moss-hung woodlands, bridle paths, fishing boats and long fishing pier. The Florida Yacht Club had a branch here, and a structure like a giant gazebo on tall pilings was called "The Club House" by local people long after it was deserted and rotting away. With its long runway, it became a fishing pier for village children who stepped carefully to keep from falling through decaying boards.

Another dock nearby was owned by Fabe Sallas, who permitted children to use it as a favorite recreation area. No lifeguards and few adults were around, but generations of Mayport children taught each other to swim and watched over younger ones in their group during lazy summer days of pre-World War II decades. These children saw nothing amiss when they ended a session of swimming and diving by rowing a bateau toward the middle of the bay to drop lines and catch small hammerhead, sometimes called shovelnose, sharks.

The bay was also used by fishermen whose flares of lighter'd knots signaled a night of flounder gigging. Sometimes the splash of cast nets and the rattle of oarlocks signaled that mullet aplenty were being caught.

During hard times when Presbyterians were pressed to raise money for their ministers, ladies of the church took pint and quart jars down to the shore of the bay. Together they harvested oysters, shucked them, and packed them into jars for sale: fifteen cents a pint, twenty-five cents a quart. Sometimes working in bitter winds, these oyster gatherers enjoyed a camaraderie, a time of long-remembered togetherness as they truly worked for the Lord. Viola King Boley, Frances Drew, and Nora Arnau were among those who spoke of this in their later years.

Ribault Bay's northern boundary was a long peninsula built through the years by the dumping of sand from dredges clearing the St. Johns channel during the twenties and thirties. Isolated enough to be a rookery for terns and sandpipers (locally called sandpeeps) in the spring, it was always a pleasant beach inviting lonely walkers to enjoy a unique panorama of sky and water and not-too-distant islands.

Jetty rocks shoring up the bay's north beach held flotsam and jetsam from foreign ships; a Japanese sandal; strange bottles. Sometimes sea turtles

and other carrion from the ocean could be found among reeds washed ashore on its south side. These attracted vultures, soaring lazily above, ever on watch.

In the 1930s the headquarters of the St. Johns Bar Pilot Association was near the tip of this sandy spit. Often bananas from bunches given to pilots from passing fruit ships would rebuild energy for little boys whose adventurous spirits had led them this far from home. Resting for their return trip, these boys could sometimes hear stories from the pilots and other men of the sea who worked there . . . tales which kindled the imaginations of a new generation of future seamen.

The placid waters of Ribault Bay and its picturesque shores explored by Frenchmen centuries ago held high adventure and quiet interludes for generations of Mayport children. Fenced and guarded by military men since the advent of World War II, the bay represents some of the best times of a long-gone way of life to those who can remember. For many present-day children of the village, Ribault is simply an obscure name in their history books.

The Ribault monument now is far from the village; Ribault Bay is barred to civilians; but in Mayport today one finds a tribute to the storied explorer. Over the entrance to the Marine Science Building on Palmer Street there remains evidence of Mrs. Stark's campaign to make Ribault a household word in the village. Etched in stone one may see "Ribault School #32," the original name of the building that was first used as an elementary school when its doors opened in 1928. This name, covered with another by those who first opened the science center in 1968, is once more visible and readily explained by Ron Sommers, specialist, who works there; he proudly proclaims Mayport history to those who inquire about it.

The Pre-war Years: Poverty, Prohibition and Progress

As over the rest of the land, the dark days of the Great Depression descended on all of Duval County.

The *Jacksonville Journal* reported that officials from many Florida counties met in Jacksonville to decide on a plan to stop as many as thousands of "shiftless, unemployed, out-of-state people" expected to come into Florida before winter. Sheriffs, police chiefs and other officials of cities along Florida's northern border were urged to use every effort to turn back at the state line vagrants and "persons of hobo class." The officials agreed to ask the governor to assist in organizing a border patrol, so great was this threat.

In February 1931, this newspaper reported low morale and ill health of people (in Jacksonville) suffering chaotic housing conditions during the widespread unemployment, and relayed a call for help by the Red Cross. As heads of families across the nation became migrants, leaving the soup kitchens of one city for the bread lines of another, more than one thousand men were fed in a five-day period at the Morocco Temple in Jacksonville.

In small communities bound by ties of blood and years of common interests, the bad times were less devastating. Mayport was such a place. Where beans and rice, savory shrimp pilau (per'lo) or fish and grits were long-time basic fare, the tightened belts of the time of nationwide famine were less noticeable. Residents of small communities along the St. Johns River could count their many blessings: rivers and creeks provided shrimp, fish and oysters, crabs and clams. Rabbits and squirrels from marshes and woodlands became red meat on the tables of this little village and 'possums and 'coons were part of the staple diet in some homes. Ducks, in season and out, even the migratory robins, simmered on the cast-iron stoves over which frugal housewives presided. More than one such cook would remark that the duck "sure looked and tasted funny" after a young hunter with an adventurous appetite brought home the well-cleaned carcass of a heron or crane, necks and legs removed for camouflage.

Sometimes villagers would say they had "poke and grits" for supper. That meant rations were scarce and in times like that you just "pokes out your lips and grits your teeth."

According to Hilton Floyd, Mr. Charlie Jones used a woodsman's skills to eke out a living when dredges were tied up and those who made their living aboard were out of work.

Hilton and Jones' son, Nathan, called "Buck," would sometimes go along when he collected buds, the new growth in low palmettos or in palm trees not too high for them to reach. They used long knives or machetes for

cutting and put the cut buds into "croaker" (gunny) sacks slung over their shoulders. At the end of a day's work the sacks of buds were sold to Buster Jones who resold them to Catholic churches to be used on Palm Sunday.

Those collecting buds worked in palmetto patches back of the beach hills or in the Sherry Drive area near the coquina pits and had to watch out for rattlesnakes which were all too plentiful there. Insects attacked them and briars tore at their legs and ankles.

This was backbreaking work and the trapping done by Jones and others during that time wasn't easy. Floyd said in an interview:

I went trapping with him. I went with him to run his traps. And then I've cut buds with him. Man, I nearly starved to death, went with him to run his traps one day. You know, he was trapping for a living. Trapping coons. And we left Mayport and we walked out where, you remember where Mr. Dick Mann's place was out there? And there we cut through the woods and walked to the marsh, looked at traps now and then along the edges of the marsh, and then we come to a place there was a little old rowboat tied up-- we got in that. We rowed through ten or fifteen miles of marsh, it seemed like, looking at traps. Every now and then he'd find a coon in a trap. And we started back. We got back home just about the edge of dark. All day long we hadn't had anything to eat. I was starved. I hadn't had any breakfast. I was eating acorns. I found some acorns under a tree and I was eating them along the way. Cracking open acorns and eating them.

That's about the time your Uncle Roland said a fellow villager ruined the hambone. He said they'd been loaning it to everybody in the neighborhood to put in beans. Somebody'd cook a pot of beans, they'd borrow that hambone, you know, and put it in the beans to season 'em, and first thing you know the wrong man borrowed it, he said, and damn if he didn't ruin it. He put it in a pot of black-eyed peas.

(This "borrowing the bone" tale is a bit of folklore found in many accounts of the depression. Roland King told this about his friend during that time and such joking about how hard times were made living a bit easier.)

There were some among the villagers who were transported to Jacksonville to collect "commodities," staple foods they could not afford to buy.

Also, according to one informant, there was a soup kitchen in Mayport. Aunt Sally's Place, an ice cream parlor at the corner of Ocean and Palmer, had been opened as a recreational spot for young and old as the economy became depressed and Aunt Sally Sallas' extended family needed extra income. Big enough to house a juke box and a couple of tables, it was especially popular with teenagers. It was here, Captain Claude Phillips recalled, that Aunt Sally Sallas served the "best soup in the world."

There was some expansion of existing seafood industries.

For more than a decade a menhaden fishery had flourished in northeast Florida waters. By 1937, the "pogy people" from the Carolinas brought five boats to Mayport along with captains and families of those who were masters in the fleet. The *Kingfisher*, *C. P. Dey*, *Charles Wallace*, *Southland* and *N. M. Webb* brought to dock record loads that meant employment to local men. For those employed in the fleet and ashore by Wallace Fisheries, the motto was "It may stink to you, but it smells like money to me."

The pogy factory, producer of oil and fertilizer, and a source of foul odors but seasonal jobs, paid ten cents an hour to men of Mayport who shoveled processed pogies ten hours a day. With bread priced at five cents a loaf, the few dollars earned each week bought staples to balance meals of seafood and game, home-grown vegetables and eggs from back-yard chickens.

A crab-processing plant was staffed with women who never before had worked outside their homes. This tedious chore of picking crab meat could add a few dollars a week to the hard-pressed family budget. Seated on hard benches in the not-too-comfortable factory building, the workers held contests to see who could pick out the most crab meat in a day. Many of them having grown up together, they reminisced, joked, or sang together as they worked.

Churches provided solace. Shared problems bound the community together, keeping morale higher than one would expect in such hard times.

Reverend Milford Monroe Reynolds led revivals in the Mayport Presbyterian Church during these soul-stirring times when the familiar words of favorite hymns became positive pleas for help.

Sometimes the superintendent of Home Missions, Andrew Painter Gregory, was the leader in a packed church. He lined the walls of the church with placards of Bible verses, encouraging young folk to memorize these. Praying fervently, he would rise on his toes and, in the spell of religious renewal, easily-stirred young teenagers would not have been surprised if, like Elijah, he had gone straight to Heaven.

Reverend E. W. Way, a favorite with church members since he had helped with the creating of this Presbyterian congregation in 1912, returned to lead it again for the years 1936-1939. Regularly visiting old acquaintances and acquiring new ones, he was a familiar sight and a welcome guest throughout the village. One Catholic family recalls that the old man knelt on their porch and prayed for the fishermen who could not ply their nets because of long-lasting gale force winds, ". . . and," a survivor of that family recalls, "the wind stopped blowing."

Each year a Bible School was held for the children in the community. These sessions were sometimes held by "outsiders" sent by the Home Missions Board, but more often by the minister or by Mrs. Jessie Davis, the acting Sunday School superintendent. New Testaments were awarded to

those who memorized all the Bible verses required in their respective classes, no small feat.

Mrs. Norwood Phelps, long a friend of this little sister of the First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, donated boxes of fabric from her store in Jacksonville for Bible School activity sessions. Paper crafts and finger painting were neglected during these years when Mrs. Louise Cameron lent her sewing expertise to more important arts. Among other things, that beautiful lady taught young girls intricate embroidery work on pillow cases they made by hand. Her students learned pride in jobs well done as they mastered a craft that served them well in years to come.

Monthly Ladies Auxiliary inspirational meetings were held by the First Presbyterian Church women who traveled from Jacksonville to assist local church ladies in visiting those who were sick and providing help for the needy.

In Sunday School, Nona (Mrs. A. C.) Davis, who taught in the local public school for over twenty years, stressed high morals and the work ethic. She was a positive role model who practiced what she preached.

For those who were children then, their memories of worried and overworked parents are perhaps at least partly eclipsed by recollections of pleasant times their parents and teachers provided.

During the "R" months, traditional evening oyster roasts were a source of family entertainment. A hole was dug on the shore of Ribault Bay, filled with firewood and then, when the wood had turned to coals, palm fronds, wire mesh or corrugated tin might be used to make a platform for oysters. Roasted and served on salty crackers, these were considered by some a delicacy. Playing on the beach under starry skies made happy memories for everyone lucky enough to have shared in this unique family or community fun.

The pungent fragrance of new-mown clover to this day reminds those children of traditional Easter egg hunts in the lighthouse hammock or on the lighthouse keeper's grounds. Easter eggs were never in short supply, for foraging flocks of chickens roamed the village daily, going home to roost. These, penned for the pre-Easter season, provided the extra eggs.

There were beach parties, scavenger hunts, tacky parties where the most outlandish costume won a prize, and always an annual Sunday School picnic where friends of all faiths came together. Mr. Steele sometimes donated use of his beachfront hills and hammocks for the all-day affair; at other times the picturesque woods of Ft. George Island echoed with laughter of frolicking young folk who had crossed the river by row boat or skipjack, always well chaperoned.

Sunday afternoons were enlivened with baseball. Mayport men and boys played other teams from towns near Jacksonville. Just to make games livelier the Ribault Fishermen took along a mascot, Tommy, an alligator which was supposed to bring them good luck. Among the players getting

publicity in 1932 were Tony Mier and Teedie Floyd, Jr., Yankee Williams, Ed Doss, Ernest Stratton, and Tom Andreu. Stanley Cason was an outstanding pitcher. Skipper King also played.

Games held in Mayport were always attended by Louis Thomas, "French Louey," whose sons Arnold and Paul were on the team. If a call was not to his liking, he would yell "Keel the umpire!" and heap unsavory insults on the long-suffering officials.

Dancing was no sin. If the 1930s brought to the nation the swing music of big bands, this era brought to Mayport a reluctant end to square dancing. Two violins and a steel guitar, one seasoned caller and corn meal spread on the floor of the Woodman Hall set the scene for many a Saturday night of revelry.

There was also a serious side to young people of that decade.

A Christian Endeavor Society flourished in the Presbyterian Church. A list of earnest members, some whose work pre-dated the Depression years, included Ethel and Irene Drew, Doris and Mildred Cason, "Skipper" and Elizabeth King, Louise Edwards, Roland Thompson, Allen Haygood, Earl Singleton, Paul Hahn, Betty Sisson, Alethia and Martha May Johnson, Woodrow Wilson, and Frank Drew. Mrs. Louise Cameron was their leader. Later among them were Louise and Betty Singleton, Helen Mae Cooper, Dorothy Davis, Hugh Reynolds, Betty McDonald, Madeline Drew, Beulah Daniels, J. W. Phillips, Mildred King, and Clara Johnson. They regularly assisted in the maintenance of the church, cleaning, gathering wood for the cast iron stove in winter and teaching younger children in Sunday School.

Several of them played the piano for church services or Sunday School and Christian Endeavor meetings. Dorothy Davis is remembered for her swinging rendition of "Beulah Land" more than half a century ago. Elizabeth King provided music for the sanctuary at intervals over several decades and was substitute pianist as late as the 1970s.

A resurgence of interest in this church resulted in a new Sunday School room. Donated moneys bought lumber and Captain Charles F. "Charlie" Drew provided labor for this extension of the church which was dedicated in 1933.

The Great Depression brought hard times to the country but did not break the spirit of the citizens of Mayport.

The Prohibition Era in Mayport

The 1930s, a time of great violence and much national publicity for Public Enemies Number One through Ten, was not a time of violence in Mayport. Justice of the Peace James L. Gavagan with a constable and his deputies completed the not-too-long arm of the law here.

Perhaps winked at by those in authority, unlawful activities persisted. Accelerated by Prohibition, a thriving business in illegal whisky was a

source of income. Domestic drinks were distilled deep in secret woods or on isolated islands dotting the marshes, but the imported stuff, Palm Valley Dew, was proclaimed to be better. Both provided fringe benefits for little boys who were trying to help their parents during hard times. Rising early was a regular practice for those who knew where to find bottles discarded by those who had imbibed too freely the night before. Half-pint and pint flasks were considered great finds. These were collected, sold, and resold to dealers who filled them from five-gallon jugs. No Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) swung axes on the operation. Everybody had to make a living.

In the Presbyterian Church the traditional annual temperance lesson and many sermons during the course of a year emphasized the evils of alcohol. "Wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging," Proverbs 20, verse 1, was a Bible verse learned by all. However, it was not evil to "use a little wine for the sake of your stomachs." I Timothy 5, verse 23.

In five-gallon jugs made of crockery, many householders traditionally processed the fine grapes produced on Mayport's sand hills or picked in their wild state in woodlands near the beaches. Fruit cakes for Christmas feasting were sprinkled with homemade wine and no one was the worse for it.

There could have been little bathtub gin, most famous of the innovative products emerging from days of Prohibition, for bathtubs were a rarity in the village. Indoor plumbing was almost nonexistent and a faucet over a sink on every villager's back porch provided water for all but the most affluent households. A small tin basin held water for a morning's face washing; a towel, sometimes made of feed sacks, that hung nearby in winter dried icy water from a school child's face and hands. The zinc tubs housewives used for washing laundry by day became bathtubs when brought indoors at night.

According to his son, Leslie, Captain John Daniels provided the well and pumps for the first running water system in Mayport. For decades his daughter Aline Daniels Hirth was in charge of collecting the one dollar per month water rent paid by householders. She, or sometimes her hired help, walked from door to door, combining business and a visit with friends.

Communal wells preceded the Daniels' enterprise and the oldest homes still standing in Mayport in 1940 were equipped with cisterns to collect rain water. Even after most households used the Daniels' running water, barrels were placed under eaves to catch water for washing hair and rinsing clothes because a high mineral content made water from the ground system "hard." It had the odor of rotten eggs, according to visitors but natives, reared drinking sulfur water, noticed no bad odor.

One of the best-remembered cisterns, now buried under land within the navy base, served a house across the road from the lighthouse. Sometimes called the Arnau house, this small building at times was occupied by Andreus, Johnsons, Joneses and other families. After running water was

piped into the house, children used the old cistern for play, for they could slide down its inner wall in dry weather or watch tadpoles develop into frogs there after a spell of rain.

By the time bathtubs became common, there was no need for bathtub gin. Prohibition was over and legal whisky readily available.

The greatest of innovations came to Mayport in 1937.

The Ocean Beach Reporter, June 12, 1936, proclaimed "Mayport children will soon read by electric light. Mayport wives will have electric ranges to fry fish and Mayport men will have electric power to operate motors and tools." The Commissioner of Utilities kindly stated, "It has always been one of my hobbies to give electric facilities to rural people, and it is with real pleasure I announce this new service." Which leads one to wonder what he considered his job.

Electricity was not an unmixed blessing, for ancient oaks that lined the road and met overhead in East Mayport were removed or mutilated to give way to poles and wires. Beautiful and beloved, the trees were mourned by those who lived with and appreciated nature many decades before ecology and conservation became household words.

Although the old zinc tubs with accompanying washboards were not generally replaced by washing machines until after World War II, rural people could indeed enjoy an easier way of life with electricity. No one appreciated it more than the young people who helped with custodial duties at the Presbyterian Church. For more than a quarter century the oil lamps hanging in chandeliers above the center aisle of the sanctuary had to be cleaned by hand and refilled with kerosene each Saturday morning. Young men or girls would climb on a sturdy chair to remove them from their receptacles, then, with crumpled newspapers, dust and soot would be carefully wiped away until the glass lamps gleamed. Weekly chores were halved when the old fixtures were converted to electric lights.

Chapter Ten

The Mayport Recreation Center

At a time when it was most needed, Mr. Samuel Kipnis of Jacksonville bought, especially for the use of Mayport people, that section of the old Mayport schoolhouse now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Frankie Harrell. Called simply the Rec, it became a very important part of village life during the 1940s as it was used for a health clinic, recreation center and all-purpose gathering place. Here Carmen Griffith and Roberta Johnson presided over a cafeteria for school children who were now being taught across the street in the new school.

Housing an ancient piano and a library donated by Elizabeth Stark, it was headquarters for a short-lived Mayport Youth Club. Red Cross first aid classes were held here and, during World War II, the building was a center for air raid drills.

The Rec, owned by a member of the Hebrew faith, was proof of Freedom of Religion in the USA. The embryonic Baptist Church came to life here as the faithful few made plans for a little white chapel in East Mayport. For several summers Presbyterians used the Rec to catch the overflow of Bible School students from the church a block away. Catholics, having lost their own beloved church as it was razed to make way for an air field, attended mass there for many Sundays.

Benefits were staged here for everything from the community cemetery association to a short-lived veterans association . . . spaghetti suppers, costume parties, rummage sales *ad infinitum*.

And here the young people danced. Oh, *how* they danced! During the hectic war years when other communities were decrying juvenile delinquency, Mayport teenagers were letting off steam as the Andrews Sisters sang "Beer Barrel Polka" and "The Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy From Company B."

During the time the building was a mecca for all the white community, the rasping sound of overplayed records on its juke box was a Lorelei song, luring unwary sailors or other service men. Some met their fate here, several taking local girls home as their brides after the war; others marrying Mayport girls were to call Duval County home the rest of their lives.

Bridal showers, wedding receptions, and, inevitably, stork showers here enhanced village social life.

Mrs. Robert M. (Mattie) Tucker, with two teenagers of her own, Marie and Bobby, was a willing chaperone for dances and other activities. Saying little, she could skewer with an eye the ill-advised culprit who would cause a commotion in the usually well-behaved crowds she watched over.

She opened Rec doors every Saturday night for many years, but closed them promptly for young folk to be home at a decent hour.

The Baptist Church

When the First Baptist Church of Atlantic Beach has a dinner on the grounds, there may be some present who recall the congregation's beginnings in the Mayport Recreation Center where its first revival was held in 1945. Val Singleton Norman, Stephanie "Zeffie" Leek, and Bernice Thomas were among those who inspired that first small group under the sponsorship of the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville Beach.

They may recall with joy and sadness the Wonderwood Baptist Chapel which they built on land now encompassed within navy boundaries. Special events in that early sanctuary included a renewal of marriage vows by Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Sheffield on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Impressed by the simple ceremony in the serene, flower-filled setting, Mrs. Sheffield's matronly peers were in absolute awe of the fact that she wore her wedding dress made a quarter of a century before.

Evelyn Guthrie and Clyde Ogilvie were married in what is believed to have been the first wedding performed there.

The formation of this church diminished membership in Mayport's Presbyterian congregation for, from its earliest days almost a century before, this church had served Protestants of many denominations and many Baptists were among them. Mrs. Otto (Mary) Hahn, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas R. Wylie, and others once active here chose to attend more familiar services when the East Mayport Baptist chapel was built. Younger members of their families and many others formerly unchurched joined them but the chartering of a Baptist congregation was viewed only with good will as former members had names removed from Presbyterian rolls.

Chapter Eleven

The Years of World War II

The end of the thirties recorded the end of an era for Mayport Presbyterians. Reverend Way, who had served this church in many ways since before the congregation was chartered, retired a second time. It was he who donated the communion service which was used by this church for over fifty years.

An outstanding seminarian, Massey Mott Heltzel, became pastor in June of 1939. Mr. Heltzel presided over mid-week prayer meetings, preached on Sunday nights, and held services for children one afternoon each week as he also served the Atlantic Beach Presbyterian Church on Sunday mornings. In a memorable first sermon in this church the young student pastor told of the mornings he had watched the sun come up over the back of a mule when he was a plowboy in Tennessee. His wish, he said, was to return to those fields if he could not serve the church to the glory of God. Tennessee lost a remarkable plowboy. Early in his career this young man grew to be the favorite minister of Dwight Eisenhower, and the president's favorite of Reverend Heltzel's sermons was published in the *Reader's Digest*.

Pearl Harbor had not yet been bombed. President Roosevelt had said that American men would never fight on foreign soil. Yet, ever aware of the war-torn world across the sea, everyone thought a global war inevitable.

Massey Mott Heltzel, the wise though unseasoned seminarian, presented the words of an unknown English minister to his congregation for serious thought:

We have been a pleasure-loving people, dishonoring God's day, picnicking and bathing, and now the seashores are barred.

We have preferred motor travel to church going, and now there is no fuel for our motors.

We have ignored the ringing of church bells, calling us to worship, and now the bells cannot ring except to warn us of invasion.

We have left our churches half empty on the Lord's Day, and now the buildings are in ruins.

We would not listen to the way of peace, and now we are forced to listen to the way of war.

The money we would not give to the Lord is now taken from us for taxes and higher prices.

The food for which we forgot to say thanks is now unattainable.

Nights we would not spend in prayer are now spent in anxious air raids.

The evils of modernism we would not fight and now we face in a death struggle the Germany which produced these teachings.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the infamy of December 7, 1941, had changed small town America forever and the impact on our way of life did indeed remind us of the words of the unknown preacher.

No cars. No gas or tires for vehicles used for anything but the war effort.

Beaches were barred to civilians, the best of them to be kept forever by the U. S. Navy.

Backyard plots became victory gardens, for the nation was feeding millions of service men.

Women carefully conserved items that became irreplaceable: silk stockings; bobby pins; girdles.

"Wear it out, make it over, make it do" was the motto they learned. And a sarcastic "Don't you know there's a war on?" might come from a weary saleswoman tired of saying, "Yes, we have no silk stockings."

To Mayport came the U.S. Marines, the first servicemen who manned the new navy base being built around Ribault Bay. That old swimming hole grew through the years to become a carrier basin harboring experienced men on giant ships.

But when World War II first became a reality on our shores, seasoned seamen here were few, and homesick boys in uniform were much in evidence. For some of these, the friendly people in the Mayport Presbyterian Church provided solace.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard K. Mann, whose home on the lighthouse grounds was taken by the U. S. Navy, had two sons in the Pacific. Their newly-built residence on Mayport Road became a home away from home for many young men stationed at the nearby base.

Mrs. Mann sponsored a teenage group at the church which provided youthful companionship for these sailors and from her and some who were in this group we have the following information:

Mayport was fortunate to have a navy base in the vicinity.

Little or no recreation was provided for the sailors in boot camp so some joined in the activities at the Mayport Church. Transportation was almost nil.

The Manns, whose chicken farm was necessary to the war effort and therefore earned transportation, put their ancient truck into service. At a time when cars could not be bought for any price, the truck served as a free taxi for the servicemen while it was not in use in the poultry business which was the family's livelihood. They had a garage apartment back of their main house. Some of the young service men slept there, without charge, on off-duty weekends.

They had breakfast with the Mann family on Sunday morning and attended church with them.

The Mayport Presbyterian Church had a very active youth program during the war years. The church choir was made of local girls, local boys too young to wear uniform, and service men.

Parties were often given at the Mann home for the youth group. They were often taken to out-of-town church meetings and conferences.

Several of the Mayport girls from this group married service men. These included Mary Lee Andreu, Eunice Claville, and Frances Jones.

One young serviceman, Paul Kapperman, became interested in church work. When he left the service he studied for the ministry and is now a Presbyterian minister.

Those attending this youth group included:

Barbara Mann	Paul Kapperman
Audrey Mann	Gene Ford
Marie Tucker	Harold Smithwick
Eunice Claville	Clarence Willis
Ann Aletha Moore	Bonner Willis
Frances Jones	Thomas Thompson
Betty Ann Jones	James Johnson
Joyce Johnson	Ruth Drew
Mary Lee Andreu	Nona Davis
George Leek	

Hundreds, maybe thousands, of chickens were sacrificed by the Manns so the young men in uniform could have home-cooked meals on the Sabbath. Surely these chickens went on to a poultry paradise.

Ironically, Agnes and Richard Mann were destined to join those giving the greatest sacrifice to the war effort. During the Christmas season of 1944 a courier arrived at their home with the dreaded two-star telegram which the War Department sent to so many. The Mann's younger son,

Charles Byron, was lost during the battle of Leyte in the South Pacific. The news, arriving in mid-December, darkened the saddest Christmas in the village history.

The Beaches Leader for its Christmas issue three decades later (1974) recorded memoirs of those who lived through these days. Among these was the following:

REMEMBER YULE OF THREE DECADES AGO?

This Yule season marks three decades since the last Christmas of World War II. Sometimes it seems very long ago, but many things today are reminiscent of that year. Like sugar shortages and curtailed travel. (In 1944 and in 1974 both sugar and oil were in short supply.)

The work scene is different, for there was no lack of jobs then (1944). The watchword regarding that was, "Go to work, go to war, or go to jail."

Norman Rockwell, now (in 1974) riding a wave of revived popularity, had his "Four Freedoms" issued by the OWI (that's Office of War Information, remember?) so his art was very much in evidence.

The winds of war, (to borrow a phrase from Mr. Wouk) blew bitterly that year. We who remember shiver at scenes in TV's 'World at War.' That was the year of the Normandy invasion. We had welcomed home our wounded, then watched some of them, healed, return to do battle.

From the Pacific theater of war came word that one of our youngest and dearest service men would never come home [Charles Bryon Mann].

In the strange ebb and flow of humanity that marked the war years, the tides of that time found most of our men away. Bette Davis croaked in a popular movie, "They're either too young or too old," lamenting a lack of eligible men.

Fletcher graduates traded purple and white jerseys for the olive drab of the Army; muscular youths from Duval County fishing communities left surf boats and tiny trawlers to man Navy dreadnaughts or the Liberty Ships of the merchant marine that convoyed men and supplies overseas.

With everyone eager for word from those abroad, post office workers that Christmas season were hard pressed to sort mail fast enough for those who waited for V-mail letters. And we who worked there saw disappointment mar the faces of too many who waited.

Ironically, outgoing mail was crammed with letters home from youthful strangers who patrolled our shores.

Every Christmas is a "White Christmas" in the dune country although December 25th has seen swimmers in the Atlantic surf there. 1944, one

remembers, had temperatures to match the weather in the song Bing Crosby sang: "The weather outside is frightful. . ."

Celebrations were quiet, but it seemed a time for caroling.

Mores from a Minorcan background made Mayport a village of songsters. Descendants of those who once strolled at Easter to sing *fromajadas* in Spanish adopted the English Christmas songs and had sung for generations. The custom was revived, most likely by some of the tradition-minded Drew - Arnau family, in the years shortly before the war.

So we (children and young people of the Mayport Presbyterian Church) gathered in the shadow of our sentinel lighthouse and sang first to the sailors who guarded the gates by the ancient structure. We gave them a basket of fruit. They listened silently, somewhat solemnly, and one shy young man said, "But, we have nothing for you."

"You are here," we replied, grateful for their barricade between us and the enemy subs that lurked off-shore.

Most of us could make a joyful noise, but good voices in our group were few. The Bothwell girls were exceptions. Happily, their high, sweet sopranos could cover a multitude of musical sins.

As we went from house to blackout-curtained house, families came outside in the cold to listen; some of the mothers cried. For those who wanted encores, Elizabeth Bothwell sang "Silent Night." Surely the angels listened as that ageless song touched the silence and the underlying sadness of that Christmas season . . .

The following list was found detached from but tucked inside the Presbyterian Book of Session recording the World War II years. It contains names of many of the Mayport servicemen who were members of or who had attended the Mayport church earlier in their lives:

Jessie Brazeale
Joseph Brazeale
Stanley Cason
Martin Cooper
A. C. Davis, Jr.
Claude Davis
Emerson Davis
Frank Drew
Fred Drew
John Drew
James Gavagan
John Gavagan

Paul Hahn
Charles Haworth
Charles Jones
Nathan Jones
Byron Mann
John Mann
Harry Meshaw
Harry Moore
Albert Mote
Claude Phillips
J. W. Phillips
Billy Seely

Chauncey Singleton, Jr.
Leo Singleton
Raymond Singleton
Carl Steen
Alec Williams
Alton Williams

Edward Williams
Francis Williams
Holland Williams, Jr.
George Wingate, Jr.
Thomas Kirven Wylie

This, unfortunately, is an incomplete list of Mayport men who served. Before the war was over more than seventy-five men closely associated with Mayport and East Mayport had joined the armed forces or were at sea on merchant marine vessels.

The first of these known to have died as a result of enemy action was Charlie Ruffin, grandson of Isaac Lewis. Another member of Mayport's African American community so lost was Freddie Williams.

Adeline Tuttle, daughter of LeRoy and "Miss Teacie" Tuttle, is the only Mayport woman known to have served overseas. Wearing the WAAC's uniform, she was among Americans on duty in England.

Each of those involved in the war would have a unique story to tell, but that which is told by Wally Parnell and William "Bud" Haworth is outstanding because of the number of men from this village involved in a single disaster.

Parnell, Haworth, Emerson Davis, Charles Jones and Percy Stevens were aboard the liberty ship *Henry B. Plant* when she was torpedoed in the North Sea by the U-245 *Schumann Hindenberg* on February 6, 1945. They were separated as they abandoned ship, Parnell, Jones, and Davis finding safety in a lifeboat. When they later found Stevens and Haworth on a raft, Stevens had died; whether as a result of the initial concussion or because of exposure was not determined.

For those who stayed at home the war seemed very close on the night of April 10, 1942. The tanker *Gulfamerica*, clearly silhouetted against the lights of the boardwalk in Jacksonville beach, was torpedoed by the famed German U-boat captain, Reinhard Hardegan.

Lost in the flaming sea were fifty men including seven navy gunners. Flames could be seen from the village and several days passed before the fires were all extinguished; debris from the disaster, including miles of blackened oil, lined the beaches for many months.

Following this tragedy a curfew was imposed on the coast. Blackout curtains, soon standard equipment for homes and all buildings used at night, were used until the war was over so no lights from shore would illuminate targets for a lurking enemy offshore.

In August 1945 the church bells rang . . . the bells in the African-Methodist-Episcopal Church and in the belfry of the Presbyterian Church. With the beloved Catholic church gone forever from the village, the Presbyterian church filled with Catholics and Protestants alike and they sat

silently, some weeping, in thanksgiving that the war was over. Then they sang "Praise God from whom all blessings flow. . . "

Many years later, Paul Kapperman, one of the best-remembered of the men stationed in Mayport, wrote his impressions of the church and its members. His contributions to the church, and its influence on the youthful sailor, cast a light on dark days in the village:

WORDS OF LOVE AND APPRECIATION EXPRESSED

While in the United States Navy during World War II and stationed at what was then called the U.S. Navy Auxiliary Air Station at Mayport, Florida, I became well acquainted with the Mayport Presbyterian Church. The Mayport Presbyterian Church served as my home away from home. The people of the church were my family while I was away from my family at the age eighteen years. They were my family in many real and loving ways. I would not try to name all the persons who shared their love and their homes with me for fear of leaving out some. The entire group, though small in numbers, was an inspiration to me.

As you know, Mrs. Ethel Thompson was the leader we all looked to during those days. Opportunities were given me to serve our Great God in many different ways through the Mayport Church. I was the regular teacher of the youth and adult Sunday School Class. This was one group, for what few adults, or an occasional visitor, who were not teaching or otherwise occupied in the leadership of the Sunday school, came to the Youth Class. This was my first attempt to teach God's Word and I learned more than anyone else, I'm sure. We had only Sunday evening worship services, sharing a minister with the Community Presbyterian Church of Atlantic Beach.

I also remember a Christmas Candle Light Service that we put on for the church and community. We made candelabras, candle holders, costumes, and the nativity scene out of whatever we could find. It was an inspiring success.

I volunteered to paint the outside of the church building on my day off each week. It needed scraping and painting real badly. So the church agreed to pay for the paint. Actually members went to the docks and asked for donations for the paint. Miss Ethel borrowed a car and went to town (Jacksonville), and got it. We went all over the town of Mayport and finally found an extension ladder we could borrow to do the job. I got my friend Earl Bryan, a sailor from the state of Pennsylvania, to help me and we scraped and painted the church! It was a bigger job than I'd anticipated, but we stayed with it one day each week and finally got it completed. As a result, Earl started attending Sunday School and youth activities at the church also. But mercy, I can still remember how proud we all were of the beautiful white church again!

Yes, the Mayport Presbyterian Church was a determining influence in my call to the ministry. The Lord had been leading me in this decision for some time. One Sunday evening as I was walking alone back to the base after the evening worship service, I found myself singing to myself and praying as I walked along. God was so close to me, and I felt He wanted me to say "yes" to His call that very night. I knelt in prayer right beside the road and surrendered my entire life to Him, and asked Him to lead me and be with me always. He has never failed me nor forsaken me from that night on until this very moment. During the forty years of rich and fruitful ministry I felt His power and leadership just as I did on the East Mayport road that night. He led me to start two new churches from the very beginning. The last church I organized I stayed with for twenty-four years, leading them through three major building programs and to a membership of over eight hundred. Now though I am officially retired the Lord has recently placed me in a half-time job of seeking and pinpointing areas for new churches and seeking and interviewing ministers to start new churches in these areas here in Florida.

I praise God from whom all blessings flow, and I thank God for the members and friends of the Mayport Presbyterian church, both past and present for the love and inspiration shared.

Paul O. Kapperman

Chapter Twelve

The Fifties

The aftermath of World War II was another time of upheaval. Too many new civilians throughout the country were faced with too few jobs. In Mayport this dilemma was not so great, for various kinds of fishing could be done. Party-fishing boats were in demand, beach fishing netted good catches for a ready market, and along the Mayport waterfront a booming shrimp industry beckoned ex-servicemen with prewar fishing experience and also newcomers to the growing trawler fleet.

The deep-sea trawling for shrimp, begun in northeast Florida by Portuguese fishermen more than thirty years before, attracted men of diverse backgrounds. Mathias Roland and Louis Perry had been among the first to use a special net, the otter trawl, in experimental fishing offshore of Fernandina. As the industry grew, both settled in Mayport, bringing their families from Portugal. Other Portuguese followed.

A roster of names of those involved by 1950 might sound like a United Nations roll call. Besides the Portuguese there were the Scandinavian Thompsons and Steens; English Singletons; descendants of French Louis Thomas; Minorcans from the eighteenth century colony in New Smyrna: Arnaus, Canovas and Andreus, and the Floyds who had changed their name from Joaneda; Scottish McDowells; and well-known African Americans Eddie Baker and Manny Gooden.

Mayport's dilapidated docks gave berth to an ever-growing fleet with both migrant trawlermen, here for a season, and natives, with permanent places along the shore and in the community, helping the economy.

Some Mayport men had gone to Louisiana earlier as shrimping opportunities opened there. By the late 1940s, as trawlers became ever larger, fleets became migratory, seasonally looking for shrimp off Cape Canaveral or near Ft. Pierce. These were times of feast or famine as the unpredictable shrimp moved around, but in 1949 there was a great deal more famine than feast. In December dozens of Mayport men took their trawlers to Texas where shrimp from the Gulf of Mexico supplied phenomenal catches.

As the fleet bound for Texas was making its move, an unadvertised source of plentiful shrimp was being trawled in the vicinity of Dry Tortugas. When news of this discovery was broadcast, trawlers from all around the Gulf states and the Atlantic coast joined a huge fleet seeking "pink gold," the newsmen's name for the species of shrimp being caught. Mayport's docks were deserted except for a skeleton fleet of small boats for much of the year. Families long associated with the village sold their holdings here and moved

to more southerly towns and cities when Gulf shrimping seemed a permanent source of good income.

During this exodus church membership declined only slightly. Many associated with the church for decades did not choose to end this association. They supported this congregation *in absentia*.

Despite a decrease in adult attendance, Sunday school membership experienced little change: fifty-six in 1950, sixty-four in 1960, with little fluctuation in between. The baby boomers were filling empty spaces.

The Reverend Ebenezer B. McGill gave these children his special attention; his wife, traveling from Jacksonville for mid-week practice, was a great help with an enthusiastic children's choir.

Mrs. James (Martha) Andreu, supplying the choir with voices of her own children, also served as pianist much of this decade and Mrs. A. V. (Mildred) Ogram sometimes assisted with the ministry of music.

Mrs. Roland E. (Ethel) Thompson, whose church activities began in her early childhood, was now the superintendent of the Sunday School. Following the tenure and the example of Miss Jessie Davis, she held this position for almost half a century. This daughter of Charles F. and Frances Arnau Drew, was most outstanding in this work but it must be noted that her mother, she and her nine siblings, her children and her grandchildren have been faithful members of this church since its early years as a chartered group.

Captain Charlie Drew, having come to Mayport while a very young man, was one of the outstanding villagers. He was among those building the jetties before 1900 and later became well known as a fisherman and a carpenter. While not listed as a communicant of this church, he often lent his carpentry skills to projects improving the building; most notably, he built the addition which gave Presbyterians their first Sunday School room.

Other daughters of Captain and Mrs. Drew, Helen (Mrs. Ray) Mote, Irene (Mrs. Seabron) Jones, Blanche (Mrs. Alton) Williams, Madeline (Mrs. William) Schmidt and Ruth (Mrs. Leighton) Capo served in many ways. From the weekly cleaning of the church buildings, here following their mother's example, they were led also to serve as Sunday School teachers and as leaders in other youth as well as adult groups.

Several members and ex-members who attended this church in the early and mid-twentieth century were asked to recall memories of Sunday School. Almost everyone remembered Ethel as leader of Sunday School, but several added, ". . . and I remember how hard Miss Blanche could pinch if you talked out of turn."

One might wonder how half-a-dozen classes of varying ages could have been taught simultaneously within the sanctuary of this church before any Sunday School room was added. Now the answer is simple. Children were quiet. They had respect for grown-ups, respect for the church itself,

and *exceedingly* great respect for Blanche Williams' firm and unrelenting thumb and forefinger.

Miss Blanche served as church treasurer for as many years as her sister served as superintendent. She is also recalled as a leader of young people and one who loved a joke. For Christian Endeavor groups, and later for younger people, she organized entertainment, especially wiener roasts and evening hikes, ending with time around a bonfire. When the fires burned low, Miss Blanche could be depended upon to say something appropriate: "Do you remember the story of Bloody Bones?" she would ask and immediately began to spin the old and grisly folk tale designed to frighten children and raise goose bumps on adults if the night was dark and spooky.

Sometimes she was left almost alone as she, chuckling, killed the dying embers of the fire. Her charges would run home, jump into bed and keep covers over their heads all night long.

During the 1950s some staunch members of the Ladies Auxiliary moved away, but loyal residents kept up organized women's work from the time the church was chartered until the early 1980s.

At weekly or monthly meetings they studied scripture and other inspirational writings. There they would quietly seek out ways to help the less fortunate among their community, regardless of race or creed.

Miss Ethel was always involved, often serving as president. It was she who volunteered most often to join in fellowship with members of other churches, serving her famous shrimp salad or crab casserole at covered dish luncheons.

With her soft soprano voice she was a regular choir member. During one period when no regular pianist was available, the choir, singing *a cappella*, sounded some sour notes. After the song ended and the choir sat down, Miss Ethel rose to the occasion. Standing again, she announced, "I'm sure glad we took up collection before we sang that song."

The *Donald Ray* Disaster

The darker side of Mayport history includes stories of men lost at sea. In March of 1957 this was starkly shown when the *Donald Ray* sank somewhere offshore of Ponte Vedra Beach. The news media picked up the story before the trawler and its crew were officially recognized as lost. Front page news in the *Florida Times-Union* for several days, it was listed as one of Florida's ten top stories of the year as this tragic event captured the sympathy of hundreds who read about it.

Rhodes Wylie, captain, and his crew, Melvin "Sweet Pea" Singleton and John Gavagan, had attended Sunday School in this church. Children of Wylie and Gavagan were now on Sunday School rolls. So a memorial service for these men was held, beginning in the Presbyterian sanctuary.

Later, reminiscent of water-borne funeral processions of long ago, nine trawlers put to sea with wreaths to be cast on the waters beyond the St. Johns Bar. As the little boats circled in a last farewell to the lost seamen, those on board were very much aware of their own mortality.

The response of strangers who learned of the sad situation will long be remembered by this waterfront community. Donations, many anonymous, came from fishermen, from school children, from wealthy businessmen, and from widows living on Social Security. Men aboard the aircraft carrier *Franklin D. Roosevelt* collected hundreds of dollars which were added to a growing fund designated for widows and children left by the lost seamen. City employees of the beaches communities set up road blocks, holding out firemen's boots which were quickly filled by motorists who recognized the name *Donald Ray*. Constable Frank Brunson delivered these gifts to Mayport in his official car with the back end low from the weight of coins. At the collection point set up in Parnell's Restaurant he asked, "What am I supposed to do with this?" Amy Parnell, chairperson of the Donald Ray Fund, laughed a while and cried a while and sat up all night with a roomful of helpers counting money.

The Lighter Side of the Decade

For those boys and girls whose families remained in Mayport, the fabulous fifties left marvelous memories. Ribault Bay, the lighthouse hammock, Elizabeth Stark's estate . . . all areas where their parents had played . . . were lost to the village before these children were born. However, the river shore, some small sand hills and the little jetties south of Mayport were areas of unrestricted recreation.

The new schoolhouse, Ribault School #32, had been expanded, its grounds taking in the Cooper property, including part of one of the highest dunes still standing then. A road, Broad Street, cut through this same sand hill, covered the edge of the ancient cemetery, and helped diminish this favorite play area from times past. Here Mayport's giant osage orange tree, along with its surrounding sands, was left intact and children played among leafy branches or built forts (always called dungeons by little Mayport boys) at its base to wage battles with chinaberries for ammunition.

Its site having been changed several times as the navy area was enlarged, the single road leading into Mayport was again relocated to accommodate a new highway, A1A; its ferries, the *Manadnock* and the *Reliance*, crossing the river to the shore once known as Pilot Town, were put into service in September 1950.

The new transportation route was a boon to motorists. For Mayport children it was an easy way to follow Ruth Drew Capo as she led them, singing and joking, on foot, to explore the wildlife sanctuary where Zephaniah Kingsley had once trained slaves. Not yet the site of a national

park, Fort George Island might be circled by these hikers who saw not one car as they looked for wildflowers (abundant) and arrow heads (scarce), and pondered the fate of the slaves who had tended fields where now great oaks were growing.

On the south side of the river, hunting for fossilized sharks' teeth and watching nesting sea birds were pastimes at the promontory protected by the little jetty. Here, too, whole families gathered in the fall to watch mullet fishermen circle schools of fish swimming toward the ocean. Sometimes a big pot over a fire on the beach would simmer with grits to accompany fish fried after a good catch, and then the spectator sport turned into an impromptu picnic. Captain Leon and Yaetive Canova sometimes served as cooks. Everybody present was invited to enjoy the simple fare. Northeast winds, sometimes cold, whetted appetites and stirred the blood of those enjoying a time-honored tradition.

Sabal palms, locally called cabbage trees, gave ambitious youths materials for play; huts were made of palm fronds nailed to a simple frame of scrap lumber or small tree limbs, recalling Florida's earlier history when Indians, Minorcans, and perhaps other settlers had used the fronds to build homes for themselves.

All along the St. Johns' shore, children could watch river traffic or, with the shrimp fleet far away, catch toadfish and catfish or an occasional croaker from deserted docks.

Horned toads (really lizards), progeny of an original five from Arizona set free by Marjory Messmore in the 1930s, hid near small patches of vegetation in areas of sand and shell. Their camouflaging colors were a challenge to small hunters who caught them for fun and usually released them unharmed. It has been said, but never proved, that Mayport boys enlivened boring Monday mornings by putting the fierce-looking little creatures into desk drawers of unsuspecting Fletcher High School teachers.

Near home, lightning bugs, fireflies which lived in small bushes, lured little ones out for twilight hunts. Caught and kept in mayonnaise jars overnight, their flickerings fascinated children who watched them as night settled in.

With the recreation building closed and Aunt Sally's Place a thing of the past, teenagers gravitated to Mayport's new drug store. With its soda fountain and traditional small tables this became an after-school meeting place. Adults stopped by for cokes and conversation with Country or Louisa Powell on daily visits to the new post office in this same building.

In retrospect, it seems that camaraderie among grownups, their role models, and close supervision by their parents and other elders in familiar places where two or more generations worked and played together, wove a security blanket for Mayport's children for more than half a century.

For many decades organized parents had worked with churches and school personnel to provide spiritual, educational, and recreational

enrichment in their children's lives. With the loss of the Rec they transferred their collective energies to the school with its own peculiar needs, and many activities took place in the school auditorium.

Foremost among these were Friday night dances with music from a juke box or, more memorably, live from Wally Parnell's band. Three generations of a family might attend and, coming from Mayport or nearby areas served by this school, almost everyone knew everyone else present. The square dances of the twenties were long gone; jitterbug and rock and roll dances were the vogue, but waltzes were played for grandparents among the crowd.

Ruth Capo and Company

The early fifties marked the birth of many baby boomers in Mayport with boys far outnumbering girls. Many of these boys, before the decade was over, chalked up some memorable lessons learned from a special Sunday School teacher, Ruth Drew (Mrs. Leighton) Capo. They always called her Miss Ruth. As she talked in class she translated the King James version of the Bible into Mayport vernacular, including some almost-forgotten Minorcan colloquialisms learned from her Aunt Hannah Atkins and from her mother, Frances Arnau Drew. They had taught that "God don't love ugly," a concept she earnestly tried to impart to the boys she greatly influenced.

Her stories of Biblical heroes were unforgettable; so were her practical lessons in Christian charity, one especially outstanding.

On the shore of the St. Johns, situated on and near Washington Street between Highway A1A and the river, a unique settlement had evolved. A small group of bachelors, widowers and nondescript drifters, in a strange assortment of shelters, quietly colonized here for various reasons. Minding their own business they bothered no one.

There was Marlowe, a South Carolina native who had found the fishing village at the end of his Depression wandering and stayed to call it home. Displaced by the navy from his long-time site on the sands near Ribault Bay, he had found the river shore near the little jetty the next best thing; but he was displaced again. Ruth Capo tells the story:

When the navy took Mullet Beach, they told the old man he had to leave. He went to Fernandina to live with son George Marlowe and was not happy. He walked from Fernandina . . . maybe caught a ride . . . and came to Mayport to ask the Navy could he have his hut if it could be moved. It was a rainy northeaster and late so he stopped in the woods and built a fire. The police took him to the station to spend the night and then took him to the base the next morning. They said he could have his hut but he would have to move it.

Mayport men, and I don't know all, but Bucky (Arnold) Thomas, Mr. Fabe Sallas, Seaton MacDowell, Leighton Capo and Brownie (Joe Brown) were to help Buster Jones move the hut. When I got down there they said it would fall apart if they moved it so I went to tell Buster, crying my eyes out. Buster told me to quit crying . . . they could move it.

When they got the old wobbly thing loaded I was happy. They put it down by Bentley's shack and jacked the old thing up and put blocks under it and Bernice Thomas and the kids and I took over. The kids got all of the cardboard boxes they could find and we ceiled it with cardboard. Seaton MacDowell gave us a new linoleum for the floor and the kids went home and to neighbors and got groceries. Bernice and I asked Willie Strickland could we borrow his pickup to go to Fernandina to get Marlowe. We loaded him up with his few clothes and belongings and the old man cried all of the way to Mayport. I had the care of him from there on till he died 'cause Dyle (Johnson) told me Marlowe was mine and Joe was his . . . 'Course I saw to Bentley some too, 'cause Bentley was jealous of Marlowe. When one got a birthday cake the other had to have one. Same with oil cloth for their tables

The beached fishing boat, *Penal Mission*, here was the home of a hermit called Holy Joe, the Joe in Miss Ruth's story. Really Captain Fred J. Smith, he had been a missionary to Mayan Indians on the Yucatan Peninsula. He cherished a collection of old travel books and also had collected a hoard of museum quality fossils he had found and identified while a quite solitary fisherman in Mayport.

Bentley, of unknown origin, was a retired fisherman.

The only Native American living in Mayport at that time, a Cree woman called Violet Ray, was sometimes laundress or cleaning woman for the men here, but, during emergencies, these elderly men were helped by other Mayport people.

Miss Ruth often enlisted the aid of her impressionable baby boomers and they enjoyed being good Samaritans. Exposed to the poverty in which some of these men lived, they willingly helped their teacher gather and deliver necessities throughout the year. And always on special holidays they found gifts to cheer the lonely old men.

The youngest daughter of Charlie and Francis Drew, Miss Ruth had become a Sunday School teacher before World War II. Marrying a Coast Guard man, she sometimes lived away from Mayport, but here her loyalties remained. Widowed young, she joined the staff of the School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine, but for many years commuted from the ancient city each weekend to work for the church. After retiring she returned to her home in Mayport.

After half a century of serving the church in every way possible, sometimes as yard person and often as janitor, she still teaches Sunday School. Her young charges learn, in the vernacular, "God don't love ugly!"

The Judge

It has been said and bears repeating that "other towns have citizens; Mayport has characters." Some of Mayport's memorable characters spent much of their time on Fanny Gavagan's store porch.

In the twenties and thirties, if you walked to the post office from the north end of the village and you didn't want to bog through sand dunes, you had to walk by Gavagan's porch.

If you began your walk from Aunt Mary Sallas' yard, you started on a sand hill. You walked through the school yard, passing Roland King's house with the trellised porch and Charlie Drew's cottage with its squeaky swing and all those potted plants Miss Frances collected. Then you crossed the brick road. You could take a short cut alongside Chauncey Singleton's . . . later Ralph Tillotson's . . . store, and then turn toward the river on Ferris Street.

You would see Sam and Nellie Singleton's square frame house with the octagon-shaped kitchen behind, and pass the cottages built by Captain Joe King before you reached the brick road again in front of Strickland's store.

On the river shore you saw French Louis Thomas' house, and the home of his son, Leon, on a sturdy dock, and Isaac Lewis' fish house.

You would pass a lot of history. The house that Captain Joe King built for his bride, Clara Arnau, would be on your left and the long-standing government warehouse on your right. Near the King house was a little building some said had been the JMP railway station. Then the fabled Stormes house, and the block of Gavagan buildings which included the Woodman Hall.

You'd hear Miss Jeanette Gavagan whistling and see her using that broom because she had a constant battle with sand that was tracked on her sidewalk and porches. In the summer you would walk under a canopy of her coral vines that ventured from the eaves of her porch and covered the palm trees on the other side of the sidewalk.

It seemed that someone from every family, one way or another, went to Miss Katy McCormick's post office five days out of a week. Women and children would stand around outside until the mail was put up and pass the time of day with friends.

Men didn't waste time that way; they went to the little barber shop and had their hair cut by Tom Highnote or, later, Mr. Drummand. The barber shop wasn't big. When Sam Floyd learned that a hair emporium was needed, he cut a little room off the porch of some rental property he owned and

delivered it to the waterfront. Set it down on the riverside of Ocean Street in the middle of some sand the town plat called Washington Street.

The Gavagan store porch afforded more room. A dozen men could sit on its edge and spit tobacco and watch the people go by. Here a lot of Mayport tales were kept alive.

James L. Gavagan, Sr., whose parents had built the store and the home he lived in, was both character and citizen of note. Of his father little is known, but his mother, "Miss Fanny," the daughter of Frances (Pancha) and Stephen (Estaban, called Stebba) Arnau, was from one of the oldest families in the village. She was the sister of Clara Arnau King and of Stephen, Louis, and Johnny Arnau, and her family tree reached back to the ill-fated New Smyrna colony of Andrew Turnbull and into Catholic archives in Minorca and Spain.

John and Fanny Gavagan operated a hotel when the twentieth century was young. With twelve rooms upstairs and a grocery and general merchandise store below, it served the community as well as visitors who came on excursions to the little fishing village while it was a tourist attraction.

James "Jim" Gavagan could recall the JMP Railway whose train pulled into town on Ocean Street. According to a *Jacksonville Journal* story by Beth Van Zile who interviewed him in 1953, he said, "The passengers (were) seated on wooden seats on flatcars, with little or no protection from the sparks of the wood burning engine. "Like as not . . . the crew would have to dig the sand off the track before the train could continue to the terminal, for there were only sand dunes between the hotel and the St. Johns River."

The Florida East Cost Railway came later with overnight visitors for the village hotels.

John and Fanny Gavagan's son, Jim, grew up to be a legend among lawmen in Duval County. He served ten years as deputy sheriff of Duval County, and was marshall of the town of Pablo (now Jacksonville Beach) according to the Van Zile story. Proud of his record and popular with the people he served, he assumed the title of judge during his middle years and was Florida's oldest justice of the peace, seventy-five years old, as he marked his thirty-seventh year in office.

Judge Gavagan fulfilled his official duties in a section of a general store rebuilt on the site of the hotel which burned in 1917. Going to court in the dusty old room with its pot-bellied stove was a learning experience and recreation for young boys who attended the rather informal sessions when Saturday night revelers (many) were fined and felons (few) were bound over to a higher court. Some remember that on one occasion a man accused of bootlegging had his case thrown out of court. The Gavagan maid had "drunk up all the evidence."

The judge lived to celebrate fifty years of marriage to Jeanette Gordon, daughter of a St. Johns Bar pilot. He had courted her in the late Victorian manner, attending dances where stately waltzes or spirited polkas heightened romance. There were boat trips and picnics and pilau suppers . . . all chaperoned, of course.

One summer while Jim was young and living on the Mayport side of the river, Miss Jeanette was visiting friends on the Pilot Town side, maybe the Broward family, for correspondence housed in archives of the P.K. Yonge Library shows that the Browards and Gordons were close friends. Miss Fanny's son found the separation more than he could bear; he fastened his clothes on his head with a belt, put on his bathing suit and swam across the river.

The old and retired men on the Gavagan porch passed this story to a younger generation half a century after the Gavagans were married.

Chapter Thirteen

Looking Back

What does a church remember when it has been chartered fifty years? In 1962 a crowd gathered at the Mayport Presbyterian Church for a time of remembering and a happy crowd it was.

The pastor, Clyde Rhodas Douglas, saw his little sanctuary truly overflowing.

There was the singing of old-time hymns and two more or less formal accounts of church history. Dyle Johnson recounted the growth of the congregation since 1912 and Helen Davis, historian of the Women of the Church, extolled the work of women from past to present.

But the informal reminiscings of Viola Singleton King let the congregation know that recorded history of the church, like that of the village, was far too scant.

She spoke of the Steeles, of Bufords, and of the Davis family and found that their children and grandchildren had come for the reunion. They, and others like them, wanted stories of the old timers.

She talked about Miss Addie Fatio, but she, the oldest member present, was the only one familiar with this name. No one else recalled Caius Norris who, according to tradition had secured land for the building.

As she told about a time when the church doors had been closed and there had been no communicants here, Ethel Thompson, long associated with the church, said, "I didn't know the doors had ever been closed."

And so curiosity was aroused. This was the decade before the U.S. Bicentennial when the whole nation was looking back so it was a good time for research.

Of Addie Fatio little could be found except that this name is inscribed on early twentieth century rolls of the First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville. The name of Adeline, daughter of a St. Johns Bar pilot, Lawrence Fatio, is found on Mayport census records for 1850 and 1860. But her name *is* on the century old bell summoning the faithful to church each Sunday.

Stories of William H. Dodge, whose name also is here, are easily found in First Church publications for he was a well-known minister, but no record of his work in Mayport can be found in primary sources.

Miss Viola had a wealth of anecdotes, not all associated with the church, and her grandson, Andrew Vaughn Ogram was an avid listener. He had the foresight to tape many of the stories recorded earlier here and has given permission for our use of the following:

The minister came from Jacksonville. He would come in on the train on Sunday, spend the night, and go back the next day. Every Sunday night we had a minister. One of the ministers was the one who married your grandfather and me, Reverend Paul Brown. The ministers were supplied by the First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville.

I remember one time my brother-in-law and my son lassoed an alligator and took him to Jacksonville and sold him to the zoo. Skipper (her son) said one time he and a friend of his were on Ft. George Island when three or four 'gators started after them. Skipper didn't think they could go very fast and he started walking away but the other one urged him to hurry. They climbed a tree and stayed there until the 'gators left. He said the 'gators went like the wind and if he hadn't started running for the tree, they would have grabbed him.

I've seen my father go down to the jetties . . . they put pilots on ships . . . they had no short-wave radios to tell you when the ships were coming in, and he would have to wait on the jetties and actually see the ship before he could go get the pilot to put him aboard. He would sit there and fish with a pole while waiting for a ship. Sometimes he would bring home "croker" bags full of sheepheads or other kinds of fish or stone crabs. It was just an everyday occurrence.

Later there was an observation tower in my father-in-law's back yard. He (Capt. Joe King) was one of the pilots, and had used a tall magnolia tree for observation. But later he had a tower built. My father (Sam Singleton) was cited for bravery for saving many people from ships in distress. When he died there was a full page with his picture and his heroic deeds. He did a lot of brave things. He saved a lot of people from the rocks. People didn't know the tide would come in and wash them off the jetties while they were fishing. They could easily have been washed off if he hadn't been there to warn them.

Sometimes my father would take us in a rowboat and go across the river. We would gather oysters and bring them home. Food was no problem, since we never tired of seafood. People would come in to the town from outlying small farms with horse-drawn carts loaded with vegetables. You could buy all you could put in a big dishpan of fresh tomatoes, greens, beans. For twenty-five cents you could get all you would need. There wasn't much money, but then everything was so cheap. You could buy bacon for a cent and a half a pound, sugar for two and a half cents a pound or grits for a cent and a half a pound. You could buy material for your clothes for five and ten cents a yard, where it would cost a dollar or a dollar and a half now. You could buy a soup-bone with lots of meat on it for ten cents. A big can of tomatoes for a nickel. They used to have butter in tubs. They would dip the butter out and put it in a tray and weigh it. They also sold jelly that way.

My grandfather (Ephraim Tillotson) used to bring his produce to Mayport to sell from his farm in Mount Pleasant. He had eggs he used to sell to Gavan's store for fifteen cents a dozen. Sometimes the price would go up

to twenty-five cents or down to ten cents, but he always got fifteen cents a dozen. Some of the farmers would come in by boat and would carry their produce in baskets to the homes.

Those were happy times. Children grew up free. We didn't have to have restrictions. Everybody was like everyone else. No class distinction. Just people. It was a pretty nice town to live in and I'm glad to look back on it and know that my children had the same kind of environment. But gradually we had more modern things . . . cars, electricity.

My oldest son had a car . . . everybody had to be in at nine o'clock. One night he was out in his car and eleven o'clock came and he hadn't come in. His daddy got another car and went after him. He got home four hours before his daddy did. His daddy got home at four o'clock in the morning. The roads were terrible.

When we first had cars, we had a road from Atlantic Boulevard to Mayport that was just like an old washboard. We called it the 'washboard' road. We all enjoyed the way of life . . . more or less carefree.

There was no ferry from Mayport to Ft. George Island until the early fifties. The children from Ft. George would have to come to Mayport by boat to go to school. Our Mayport school was two rooms, the little room and the big room. The little room had the first through the third grades, and the big room had the fourth through the eighth. There was a man teacher and some of the boys did something to make the teacher mad. The boys jumped out of the windows . . . the schoolhouse was high, between two sand hills. There was no grass and the sand drifted from place to place all the time. The school was built on stilts. In his hurry to get to the boys, the teacher jumped off the porch . . . he didn't slide down the banisters and the boys sometimes did . . . and broke his leg. I don't think he ever taught school again. We had that school until Joe, my fifth child, started school when he was six years old. He was born in 1922, so that would have been about 1928. A new, modern school was built then.

Elizabeth Stark and her husband, Jacob, came to Mayport in August, 1914, from New York, and became prominent members of the community. They owned the estate known as Wonderwood-by-the-Sea, near East Mayport. Mrs. Stark was a very wonderful person. I remember when she first came to Mayport. She was the organizer of the Girl Scouts in Mayport and she used to do wonderful things with them. During the First World War they patrolled the beach on horseback. Her husband was a wonderful man. He organized a baseball team and furnished the ground and coached the men. My husband was a good player . . . a good pitcher. He played baseball long after we were married. Mr. Stark was interested in the men and she was interested in the girls. They had horses, and Mrs. Stark would invite the girls to come on weekends and they would ride. Every year for many years she had a Christmas tree for all the Mayport children. Every child in Mayport received a gift. They had a large estate, with homes that she rented, and had a beautiful home of their own. She said she loved the natural beauty. She had an avenue with oleanders on each side and people

used to come from all over the United States to see that avenue. I don't know that they came especially for that purpose, but they were from all parts of the country. She had a beautiful place. She was very good to everybody. Her people were wealthy people from New York. Her brother was Major Phillips. He had two boys and they used to come to visit the Starks in the summer.

When Mr. Stark died, Mrs. Stark had his body shipped back to New York. But when Mrs. Stark died, her body was buried in the Mayport Cemetery, and didn't even have a marker until the Girl Scouts had one placed at her grave. People don't understand why she was just buried and no marker placed. It couldn't have been from a lack of money. The people of Mayport donated the money for her headstone and there was a ceremony in Mrs. Stark's memory at the time of the dedication.

Recollections of Blanche Drew Williams were also taped by Andrew Ogram. His narrative follows:

"Mrs. Williams, in her late sixties, was born in Mayport and has lived there all of her life. Her parents were Charles F. Drew and Frances Arnau Drew. Some of her memories covering the time between 1920 and 1930 are quoted below:"

One of the events of the day was to go to the depot to watch the mail train come in. My sister Helen could be sick all day . . . just couldn't do any work . . . but made a miraculous recovery when the time came for the mail to come in. A man was sent by the postmaster, Mrs. Katie McCormick, with a pushcart to pick up the mail at the depot and bring it back to the post office.

The fish caught at Mayport were packed in ice in barrels by the wholesale fish dealers in Mayport. In the early days there were two fish companies: Adams Fish Company, later owned by a Negro, Ike Lewis; and Fred Gordy, the other fish dealer. The fish were shipped by train to Jacksonville to be sold by retail dealers there.

Every time we would plan to go to town, that's what we called Jacksonville, "town," everybody would be so happy because they were going to go to town. And when the train would be coming across the trestle, backing in, one of us would be sure not to be able to find his shoes. Well, that one got left home, so everybody learned to look for their shoes the night before, to be sure they got to board the train the next morning. (Mrs. Williams was one of ten children.)

Roland King worked on the train; and Tom Atkins . . . on the Mayport run. It only cost a dime to buy a ticket to St. Nicholas, and since Uncle Tom was the conductor he would take up the ticket and we could ride all the way

home. St. Nicholas was a small community just east of South Jacksonville, on the way to Pablo (now Jacksonville Beach). If it hadn't been for those dime tickets, a lot of us wouldn't have been able to go to school . . . that was a lot of money when you didn't have much to begin with. To get through the gate you had to show your ticket, then when Uncle Tom would come through he would pick up our tickets to St. Nicholas. That way we didn't have to pay the fare all the way to Mayport.

There is a tale told of a man who had a mule over on Ft. George Island who would go down on the beach and hang lanterns on the mule's back so it would appear to the man steering the ships that they were beacon lights, then the ships would run aground and the cargo would be taken by the 'wreckers.' This is only a tale . . . I don't know if any of this ever really happened. But it is true that when any ship would run aground everyone would salvage what they could. My Pa got I don't know how many cases of liquor from these ships. The "Zeeburg", a German ship that broke up on the jetties in the early part of the century, was loaded with beautiful Bavarian china and toys. Some of this china is still in the possession of the families here. My father went to the wrecks to recover groceries more than anything else, barrels of flour, hams and things like that. Times were hard . . . raising a family of ten children was not easy.

My sister Helen and I would be so proud when we would get a new pair of shoes. We would throw the old ones over the fence. But my grandfather, who lived in a little house in our back yard, would retrieve the shoes and put new thick soles on them. Pa had a shoe last and a shoe-stretcher, and there was a big wheel in the yard for sharpening knives.

The short-cut to East Mayport was believed to be haunted. It was overhung with big oak trees and moss. Before you would enter the short-cut, everything would be quiet and calm . . . not a leaf stirring on the trees . . . but just as soon as you would enter you would start running because the wind would be blowing so hard the trees would lap over each other. Then when you would reach the other end, everything would be calm again.

Mrs. Annie Daniels, who had a big hotel near the depot on the west end of Mayport, had the only telephone in the community. She would use a megaphone to notify the residents of a telephone message and would also raise a flag from the tower behind the hotel to notify the people of a hurricane approaching. There weren't many precautions that could be taken in the early days except to secure the boats the best they could, and to get inside the house.

There was a tiny barber shop, with one barber chair, operated by Mr. Drummond. He cut hair for children, men, and women. He smoked strong cigars or cigarettes and attended the Presbyterian church, always singing a little behind the rest of the congregation.

The Clyde Line had passenger ships that came from New York to Jacksonville. Among them were the "Comanche," the "Mohawk," and the "Lenape." These were beautiful ships. Some of the young men from

Mayport got their start as deckhands on these ships. Some have earned their masters' papers and are now captains of ships; some are captains of ports; some have returned to become St. Johns River bar pilots; and Fred, my brother, became a commander in the Navy.

From his mother, Mildred King Ogram, Andy learned about a later era.

"Mrs. Ogram, my mother, was born in Mayport in 1919 and lived there through 1937," he wrote. "Her parents were Joseph Roland King and Viola Singleton King, and she is the fourth of six children. Her memories, as quoted here, cover the period between 1925 and 1937."

The people of Mayport were, for the most part, free and independent; there was a strong sense of pride . . . a free way of walking and talking that characterized most of the people, probably brought about by their lack of dependence on anything other than the weather, their physical strength, and their own will. There was also a sense of humility, however. Many had a strong belief in the will of God and willingly supported the churches in the community. It was difficult to get a higher education in such an isolated place, and few people traveled far from home except to find work in other places. Most depended on fishing and shrimping for a living. Somehow, there still seems to be a spirit of freedom there, even though the little village as it existed then is no longer there.

My early memories are of sand and space, the bay and the river, our neighbors, cousins, and the small frame house where we lived, much like the other small frame houses in the town. There was very little grass in the area nearest the river, and sand hills shifted from place to place. There was however, a beautiful little wooded spot near the lighthouse, called the 'lighthouse hammock,' where a child could climb trees, pick violets or slide down the sand hill that bordered the hammock.

The beautiful little Catholic Church was located on the way between Mayport and Wonderwood. Located high in the front wall of the church was a niche containing the statue of an angel writing on a scroll. It was held in awe by the children. We were very careful to think about "whatsoever things are lovely" when walking past the church . . . if not, we believed our names would be written on the scroll and it would be too bad for us when we tried to get into Heaven. It was many years later that I learned it was St. John, not a recording angel.

Between Mayport and East Mayport lay Wonderwood-by-the-Sea, the lovely estate owned by Elizabeth and Jacob Stark. They spent their time, money, and talent making Wonderwood not only a home for themselves but a place for all to enjoy. In addition to the house they lived in, they built a tearoom near the bay, a pier, a picnic area, a baseball diamond where the

young men of the area played, and provided a spot overlooking Ribault Bay . . . a wooded knoll . . . for the Daughters of the American Revolution to establish a monument to Jean Ribault, who had sailed up the river to Fort Caroline in May of 1562. Easter Sunrise Services were held there at the monument. It is said by those who remember that Mrs. Stark was a striking figure riding her horse down Bay Street in Jacksonville, with her long hair flowing from under her wide-brimmed, high-crowned black hat.

The story of the Starks has a sad ending. Wonderwood-by-the-Sea, bordered by the bay on the east and the marshes on the west, with its oleander and oak-lined road, the only road between Mayport and East Mayport, was chosen by the Navy as part of the land to be used as a base. It is now known as the Mayport Naval Air Station . . . and in their old age the Starks were forced to relocate two times as the base expanded. They built a small house not far from the navy gates, where they lived until Mr. Stark died, then Mrs. Stark. They remained interested in the people of the community up until the time of their deaths.

Childhood in Mayport was a happy time. Children had freedom unknown to most people now. They learned to swim at an early age, and Ribault Bay, with its clean water from the ocean was where many children spent most of their time in the summer. There was a dock there, owned by Fabian Sallas, where the children played, fished, and swam. The distance between the village and the bay, about one half mile, was covered with hot sand, crushed oyster shells, and sandspurs, so even though bare feet became accustomed to running the course, the eyes were constantly guiding them over and around the patches of sandspurs. It was no small skill to be able to run from Mayport to Ribault without having to stop to pick a sandspur out of your foot.

As the children grew older, into their teens, the ocean beckoned, and groups of young people walked to the beach at Seminole to swim, or to walk on the beach north to the jetties. There were sunrise breakfasts on the beach as well as picnics. The road to Seminole was through Mayport, past the Catholic Church with the angel, past Ribault monument, and then through the shady, grassy spots of Wonderwood and East Mayport, to the road that led past a marshy area, more woods, and the beach. At the runway to the beach there was a big, frame building known as the Seminole Club, which from time to time was used as a hotel and dance hall.

In the soft summer evenings families gathered on their porches to talk to each other and to the other residents as they passed. 'Smudges' were built to keep the mosquitoes and sandflies away. These were made of slowly-burning rags in a pot. The children played in their yards or in the school yard until dark, when the kerosene lamps were lit and the children put to bed. Singing could be heard coming from the porch swing at the Tuttle home, where there were eight girls in the family. And the light from the lighthouse was always there.

Since there was very little transportation, as few people had cars, most entertainment was in the homes of the young people. The church and the

school also provided a place for the people to gather . . . for P.T.A., Christmas pageants, end-of-school days, Easter egg hunts, Sunday School picnics, young people's church groups, the ladies' meetings at both churches, and church services. Although there was no drug store, there was an ice cream parlor where the young people met. The ice cream parlor was in a small building near the river on the main street, and was owned and operated by Mrs. Sally Sallas. Farther down the street was a poolroom where the men gathered. It was owned and operated by Bill Floyd. Going to the post office was also a way to see friends and chat and learn the latest news of the community.

Trips to Jacksonville for shopping were put off as long as possible, since it was really a day's trip. The roadbed was of crushed oyster shell and during dry spells, each car created clouds of white dust. Then when the bridge at Pablo Creek (now the Intracoastal Waterway) was reached, the narrow, bumpy brick road began. Since there was only the Acosta Bridge over the St. Johns River then, the ferry . . . either the Jackson or the Fletcher . . . was boarded on the south side and landed at the foot of Main Street in Jacksonville. The car was parked in the ferry garage on the east side of the ferry slip, and when the shopping was finished, everyone who had made the trip in the car that day met at the ferry garage for the trip back across the river and home.

Although life (during the Depression) was far less complicated than it is now, it was not easy. Fishing for a living is very hard work, sometime dangerous. The boats were small. And although a man willing to work long hours could maintain a family in a simple way, the returns were never more than adequate, and there were many periods when they were less than adequate due to rough weather and other factors. Then, too, the boats had to be maintained . . . pulled ashore for repairs and painting; the nets had to be kept mended. Many porches and yards were draped with nets drying and being mended.

It was a time of big families, and the job of keeping the family clean, healthy, dressed, and well-fed was not easy, either. Water for baths was heated on the wood stove in the kitchen in the winter . . . cold water in the summer; the clothes were boiled in an iron pot in the back yard, stirred and lifted out, steaming, with a strong stick, carried to the bench on the back porch for washing and rinsing before being hung on the clothesline to dry. The heavy, black flat-irons (which smoothed wrinkles from clothes of cotton) were heated on the wood stove in the winter, where there was often a pot of beans baking in the oven, or a pot of beans simmering. On washdays, though, it was always beans . . . cooked with a slab of white bacon and chopped onions. Cornbread completed the meal. A charcoal pot was sometimes used for heating the flatirons. One iron would be heating while the other was in use, and they always had to be wiped off on a piece of cloth before placing on the clothes to remove the soot acquired during the heating process. The charcoal pot was made of tin and lined with clay. It had a handle, and could be moved to the most convenient, or the coolest, room.

The girls' and ladies' dresses, as well as the boys' and sometimes the men's shirts were made at home or by someone who could sew in the community. But the Sears-Roebuck catalogue was an indispensable item in every home. When the new one arrived, the old one provided many happy hours for cutting out paper dolls for the little girls. The catalogue, or wish book, as it was known, reached its final destination on the seat in the little house out back.

There were some who did not depend on fishing for a living. Among these were the St. Johns River Bar pilots . . . Captains John Daniels, and later his son, Leslie; Joe King; Fred Terrible; and others to follow later. Others with steady incomes were those who worked as employees of the U. S. Corps of Engineers after the area office was established there for the purpose of supervising the construction of the jetties at the mouth of the St. Johns River and later for keeping the river and the intracoastal waterway at specified depths. Still others had their own small businesses, and there were the school teachers, and justice of the peace. A few of the homes were spacious, equipped with gas lights, bathrooms, and were beautifully furnished.

Some children seemed to be plagued with boils, and I was one of them. The ointment used to bring these boils to a head was made of slivers of Octagon soap mixed with sugar and formed into a poultice. This was applied to the boil, which was then bandaged with a clean cloth. A boil was sometimes known as a risin. I thought a risin' was something bigger and more painful than a boil. Then there was the time Dr. "Tut" (Bothwell) lanced a painful boil or abscess on the back of my neck . . . no anesthetic, of course . . . and I can almost feel it now.

Babies were born at home . . . the nearest hospital was twenty-five miles away. The ill, the elderly, the mentally retarded, were cared for in their own homes by their own relatives. During periods when there was no doctor in Mayport, the people were treated by doctors from Pablo (now Jacksonville Beach). (Note: many who had been patients of Dr. Neil Alford when he lived in Mayport traveled to Jacksonville for his services after he moved there.)

The time and hardship involved in getting a high-school education were too much for most young people from Mayport until about 1928, when Julia Landon High School in South Jacksonville was opened. Before that time the students traveled by train from Mayport to South Jacksonville, boarded the ferry, then walked from the ferry slip to Duval High School on Liberty Street. By the time I started high school transportation was provided by bus for the thirty-six-mile round trip to Landon. The bus ride was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Our bus from Mayport, which met the one from Jacksonville Beach at Atlantic Boulevard, was an old truck chassis with a wooden body built on it. It had a bench built on either side and we sat facing each other in the bus. It was a little embarrassing to be met by the sleek bus from the Beach for the ride to South Jacksonville. Our bus was first driven by Tony Mier, Sr., and later by Joe Andreu. The bus was replaced later by a more modern one. Then, in 1936, the year I graduated

from Landon, Duncan U. Fletcher, the new school at Jacksonville Beach opened in September. (Note: On cold mornings Joe Andreu would build a fire of debris beside the road so we could keep warm until the beach bus arrived.)

One of my most poignant memories is of a cold winter morning while waiting for the bus. There was a row of houses not far from the road, and a Negro woman was in her back yard singing while she was stirring the clothes boiling in her black iron wash pot. I don't think I've ever heard a more beautiful voice. The song was "My Lord Says He's Gwine to Rain Down Fire." I've wished many times that I could hear her sing that song again.

Life then was not entirely idyllic. Even though there was never a shortage of food because the river and ocean were so near and many people raised chickens in their back yards, and even though the children did not feel the pinch of poverty, the little town did not escape the Depression of the Thirties. There was hardship and deprivation, although not like that suffered by the people in the cities. The homes went without paint, the roofs continued to leak, clothes grew old and were patched. One point in favor of the villagers was that most owned their own homes and therefore had a roof, although leaky, over their heads.

The houses were built of wood, all were inadequately heated . . . North Florida winters are cold . . . and there was no insulation. There was usually a wood-burning stove in the living room and wood-stove in the kitchen for cooking, heating, and for dressing by on cold winter mornings. Most kitchens also had a kerosene stove for cooking during hot weather. Some of the larger homes were equipped with fireplaces, some had sinks in the kitchen with a cold-water faucet, but others had the only faucet on the back porch where there was a bench to hold the washtubs on Monday and to clean the fish almost any day of the week. Many days the weather was cold enough for icicles to form at the bench on the back porch. Studying was done by kerosene lamp at night, since there was no electricity there; and there was no indoor plumbing in most of the homes.

When a family member died, the body was brought back to the home from the undertaker's and remained there until it was taken to the church for the funeral services. Funerals were, and still are, attended by most of the people in the town, since most are either related by blood or marriage or are friends. There are two cemeteries . . . one located in what was at that time a lovely wooded area near Mayport; the other is the Tillotson family cemetery at Mount Pleasant. This cemetery was started by Ephraim Tillotson, my great-grandfather, who settled there shortly after the Civil War, and is reserved for his lineal descendants. More land for the cemetery was set aside by my grandmother, Helen Mae "Nellie" Singleton.

One of the most touching scenes in my memory is that of the funeral of a young man who was a favorite of the Mayport people, Hazel, called 'Dinky,' Johnson. The Johnson family lived in Pilot Town, near Ft. George Island, just across the river from Mayport. Hazel was killed in an

automobile accident and, as was the custom, his body was brought home before the funeral. The cemetery is on Talbot Island and since there was no bridge or ferry the casket was placed aboard a launch and, with friends and relatives following in other boats, the funeral procession moved through the creeks to the island where the graveside service was held.

Life had been slowly changing in Mayport before the Second World War, but now the little town is no longer recognizable. It was almost completely swallowed up by the United States Navy. Access to the beach and the jetties has been barred, Wonderwood was destroyed, the monument to Jean Ribault has been moved to Fort Caroline, Ribault Bay is now an aircraft carrier basin, and many homes and the Catholic Church were demolished. Houses and churches that remain huddle close to the river and are assaulted by the noise of jet planes. The shell of the lighthouse still stands, but is only a reminder of peacefulness of an earlier time.

Chapter Fourteen

The Navy Base

The story of the navy base in Mayport is written in vapor trails of vanished planes and accented by sounds of aircraft that have come and gone for half a century. It is told in the logs of famous ships and etched in the minds of sailors and airmen who have called this home for a while.

In the minds of the people of Mayport Village the very earliest days of the base live on, for these were trying times indeed.

Having had their sights on this strategic spot with a naval base in mind for two years before condemnation proceedings began, all the powers of the federal government seemed bent on total destruction here as lands were acquired.

First, Wonderwood-by-the-Sea was invaded by U.S. Marines, a traumatic time for Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Stark as they left their fabulous estate; a sorrowful time for their friends.

All buildings east of the Mayport Presbyterian Church in a tract reaching from the marshes of Sherman Creek and across to Ribault Bay and bordering Wonderwood were demolished. Even the venerable residence of St. Johns lighthouse keepers, last owned by R. K. Mann, was not spared. Perhaps it was public outcry that kept the lighthouse standing when its fate was being determined.

An ancient oak forest (now partially covered by pine trees), a moss-covered cemetery, and many square miles of fertile wetlands, along with all else in this area, were covered by tons of sand dredged from the river bottom to become the foundation of a great airfield.

The last thing to be bulldozed, St. John's Catholic Church with its "recording angel," stood in the midst of this desolation like a Daliesque nightmare before it, too, was burned and buried as debris.

The road built over the old JMP railbed disappeared as another, just outside the navy fence, was built for civilian use.

Ribault Bay, destined to harbor battleships and aircraft carriers, and Seminole Beach were lost to generations who loved them.

Residents forced to leave lands which had been in their families for generations bought other lands as close to Mayport Village as they could afford.

Later, the entire neighboring hamlet of East Mayport was annexed to the navy base. Many evacuated from this closely-knit old community settled west of the Intracoastal Waterway bridge and called their new town Dodge City. T. D. Floyd became its unofficial mayor.

The advent of this navy base was the beginning of an era of great progress in Duval County and would become a source of pride for the

nation. In the village of Mayport there is also pride in its giant peace-keeping neighbor, but a pervasive air of nostalgia will recall a life "before the navy base" for decades to come.

Tom Hoey, in a *Florida Times-Union* article published April 22, 1964, wrote perhaps the understatement of the century.

Sleepy little Mayport was partially aroused several years ago when the U.S. Navy decided to establish a major station nearby.

Hoey's article, entitled "Coast Guard's Big Base at Mayport Due Start . . . Another Boost for Tiny Town," told of a seven hundred foot stretch of riverside property being developed for a Coast Guard base. His was not a provincial point of view: Mayport's fishing industry was losing seven hundred feet of waterfront property.

Mayport has been shrinking for a half a century and residents fenced between the navy boundaries and the river are ever aware of this. From a store of collectible village anecdotes comes an apt but paraphrased illustration:

Joe "Beanie" Andreu was stopped by a tourist somewhere between the city septic tank (located where Captain Fred Terrible once rocked on his porch and watched river traffic go by) and the highly visible dumpsters now where Miss Jeanette Gavagan's palm trees and coral vines welcomed strangers for more than half a century.

A woman asked, "Can you tell me where I can find the quaint little village of Mayport?"

"Don't move an inch," Beanie cautioned her. "Lady, you are right up to your knees in the quaint little village of Mayport."

Chapter Fifteen

The Quaint Little Village of Mayport

Progress, perhaps like a plague, visits Mayport regularly. At least three times the village has been incorporated and records of this remain stored in state historical archives.

A close look at the 1909 Book of the Laws of Florida, Chapter 6073 - (no. 204) reveals:

An Act to abolish the present Municipal Government of the Town of Mayport, in Duval County, Florida; to legalize the ordinances of said Town and Official Acts There under; to create and establish the Municipality of the City of Mayport, in Duval County, Florida, and to Provide Its Jurisdiction and Powers and Officers Thereof.

Into this act were written seventy-seven sections regarding election or employment of a mayor, a city council, a marshall, a treasurer, a tax assessor, a tax collector and a clerk. Probably because the population was so small, it was appropriately stated that the offices of clerk, treasurer, tax assessor and tax collector might be held by one person. Joseph Roland King, Sr., was one deemed able to assume all these duties for there remain in some private collections receipts for city taxes with his name signed on them.

Major fires and city-wide clean-ups, including the demolition of buildings, may have destroyed local official records, but the laws on record in Tallahassee tell much about the ambitions of those involved.

The city council was empowered to make laws pertaining to health and the establishment of hospitals . . . to make regulations regarding the prevention and control of fires. On perusing these records one might expect that sewage and drainage systems, public lighting, new and well-maintained roads, protection from criminals, and many other civic needs would have been quickly addressed and strictly regulated by an all-powerful city government.

Few stories of politics during the first quarter of the twentieth century have lasted through the years but Elizabeth P. Stark wrote in her memoirs that Andrew Floyd was mayor when she arrived in 1914, adding that he ruled the town. Judge Alex Greenberg signed some few surviving papers that prove he also served as mayor. According to unwritten sources Louis Thomas, known as Louey Frenchman, was a town marshall.

There are a few stories of a jail that was on the Mayport waterfront before 1920. It was a one-room wooden building of undressed lumber and

flammable. Here a prisoner would share quarters with the city mule which pulled a dray for municipal work. According to one version, one cold evening a prisoner built a fire on the sand floor and the building was suddenly aflame. The inside of the little room as badly scorched but not beyond use. The city fire protection system worked well; a bucket brigade from the river nearby prevented total destruction.

What eventually happened to this historical building has not been uncovered by diligent research.

Mayport remembers what it can laugh at and fragmented stories of chases akin to Keystone Cop antics have survived. Among colorful lawmen was a deputy whose only weapon was a cue stick which had been filled with lead. He is remembered as "Stormy Weather with his Headache Stick."

Early in the century Mayport roads were ruts cut through sand, perhaps in some instances reinforced with shell. Only these existed when Viola Greenlaw Singleton moved to Mayport from Maine in 1913. Viola King Boley recalled the paving of the early brick road by mistreated white convict labor but the date of this is unknown. These bricks covered Palmer Street from in front of the Presbyterian Church to Ocean Street and followed Ocean Street past the McCormick Postoffice building which stood about where Gerald Pack's Safe Harbor Seafood building can be seen as one enters the village from the Atlantic Beach. It may be assumed that those who served the village during its years of incorporation could have requested this improvement from the county.

The federal government was responsible for changing a pre-turn of the century entrance into Mayport as the road from East Mayport was incorporated into the naval installation first commissioned during early years of World War II. The path of this single road into Mayport was later revised more than once. The Florida State Department of Transportation improved earlier roads with the construction of Highway A1A. The first ferries, *Manadnock* and *Reliance*, and those which have replaced them are symbols of progress well appreciated.

Mayport's post office sites, often tiny rooms sharing space with grocery stores, long fostered a custom that brought villagers together. Waiting for the mail was a daily, shared pastime.

Early in the century the McCormicks, Jim and Katy, kept the post office in their home which housed a grocery downstairs.

Hollis F. Anderson, the next postmaster, presided over an office attached to a drygoods/grocery store which was longest owned by Skipper and Margaret King. Later, Mrs. Anderson moved with post office boxes and other equipment to work in the building where S. C. Country Powell and his wife, Louisa, had installed a drug store. In this World War II vintage pharmacy with its soda fountains, ladies often sat and visited. There, one block at a time, they made a communal granny square afghan for Miss Louisa. High school students made this an evening hangout.

Lenora Hurlbert Brown and Charlie Sams were later postmasters here as was Dyle Johnson. Johnson still held this office when a new federal building, set apart from other places of business, brought a look of progress to Mayport.

Soon a letter carrier served Mayport so the small-town custom of waiting for mail with friends died. Country Powell's drug store closed and young people were left without a special place where they could socialize.

On Palmer Street there stands, boarded up and vacant, the last true gathering place for people of all ages and races.

During the 1920s Chauncey Singleton bought an earlier home of Captain Fred Torrible after the pilot's family moved to a new house at the corner of Ocean and Palmer Streets. Here Singleton lived with his family and, while he was a boatman with the U.S. Department of Engineers, his wife operated a grocery store.

There was a wrap-around porch with a swing on it and village children played here with the Singleton off-spring, Betty, Louise and Chauncey.

Here was a working mother whose children were satisfied, for "Miss Estelle" let them hold open house in a small room adjoining from the store. Here was a piano, a table and chairs, and stacks of children's books. Boys and girls came here to read, to enjoy cards or checkers or jackstones, and they were allowed to play the piano. Everybody knew how to play "Chopsticks."

Special memories for many include the visits of an ex-slave who entertained by playing the piano here or by beating out a rhythm with spoons. It was said that he could make music with bones. Called Uncle Eph, this venerable citizen sometimes was seen on the street wearing a frock coat and a tall top hat and he played question and answer games with children who approached him.

Ralph Tillotson, with his wife Lois, was the second proprietor of this picturesque place where sugar scoops and lard paddles were used to measure purchases. These and other items associated with a typical country store were passed on to later owners. After World War II Lois Tillotson's nephew, Dyle Johnson, and his wife Nell next operated this business, coming from Georgia to rear their family here on Palmer Street.

This family participated in church and community affairs as did that of the last manager of this unique grocery store which existed in the same building on the same site longer than any other in Mayport during the twentieth century.

While Singleton's store had provided a supervised place for children to linger and learn, Pickett's business attracted older generations including many retirees who exchanged village news or discussed politics here on a daily basis. The town, once teeming with children, had undergone a

population change with a predominance of middle-aged and elderly now most visible in the village. At least two of Pickett's regular customers had traded here since it had been opened by C. J. Singleton. Martin Cooper, in his nineties, daily pedaled his three-wheeled bicycle to pick up a few groceries and mingle with the morning customers who enjoyed congregating here.

Miss Lillie Thomas, Mayport's oldest citizen, sometimes walked to the store from her house on the river shore, declaring that she would live to be one hundred and ten when friends remarked about how well she could get around.

The village did not officially go into mourning when Robert Pickett shut up shop but the closing of this relic from an age of truly country stores made news in city papers.

A modern convenience store now stands on the site of the vine-covered home of Jim and Jeanette Gavagan, but there is no traditional place left for a daily meeting of old friends.

On October 1, 1968, the remnant of a spot once called the Town of Mayport again became part of an incorporated city. Early on it was evident that changes would come. On March 1, 1971, Mayor Hans Tanzler cut a wide red ribbon for a new sixty-one thousand dollar public fishing boat ramp. That was the beginning. Facilities for sports fishermen have expanded considerably since then.

Under the aegis of metropolitan Jacksonville, villagers and city officials made plans to also help residents of this community. The problems addressed but not solved by pre-World War I citizens were now being met by energetic people with financial backing. The Mayport Improvement Association, headed by J. C. Brown, had asked for and received help from Jacksonville's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Tom Hoey, always interested in Mayport, wrote "Bulldozers Rumble at Mayport, Razing Below-par Housing" in the *Sunday Times-Union and Journal* March 7, 1971. Demolition of twenty-seven buildings had begun and further such work would follow. Ironically, after the demolition of small homes left behind by fishermen who had moved away because of a changing economy, a plan emerged to develop Mayport as a fishing village and a tourist attraction. This was reported in the *Jacksonville Journal* by Reg Crowder, August 11, 1978.

One hundred and six pages of plans for Mayport were prepared by the Jacksonville Area Planning Board and in a decade of change many of the village's needs were addressed: city water, a drainage system, a network of roadways named long ago but never before opened and paved, garbage collection. Judge Alec Greenberg and Mayor A. J. Floyd would have been proud.

Much had been accomplished, but critics could say a more aesthetic approach to improvement might have been desirable. (See story about Beanie Andreu.)

One goal high on the list of local people working for change had not been reached. In this shrinking spot where children of the early twentieth century had recreation areas as big as all outdoors there was not space set aside for a ball field.

After the dust had cleared from all the ditch-digging, demolition and road-building of the decade, the City of Jacksonville planned a celebration that would rock the timbers of a few old homes left standing. The men who had thought of everything else as the village was incorporated in 1909 could never have imagined such an event.

The sleepy little town of Mayport woke up.

Chapter Sixteen

The Jazz Festival

Nobody thought it would really happen in the village but it did. It was neither Mardi Gras in Mayport nor Bourbon Street on the St. Johns but some of the best of New Orleans came and brought their music.

They called it "Mayport and All That Jazz" and the jazz had a Big Easy sound. Della Reese and Dizzie Gillispie, Buddy Rich and Buddy DeFranco and Urbie Green. Their repertoire ranged from Thelonious Monk jazz to the fluid swing of Benny Goodman with a bit of the Glenn Miller sound thrown in for good measure.

Orchestrated by Mike Tolbert, mayor's aide in charge of the happening, the Jazz festival on October 19, 1980, attracted an estimated forty thousand people. And that probably doesn't include disappointed passengers in miles of cars that didn't get inside the village.

There were tee shirts with the festival logo and the regional seafood dishes for which the area is famous, and, of course, there was dancing in the street.

When the crowd had gone, the trash was cleared away and inventory taken, Mayor Jake Godbold, lord of all Duval County, saw that it was good. It was so good that a second Mayport and All That Jazz one year later opened with the unforgettable Excelsior Brass band of New Orleans. Heady stuff this.

Jacksonville's own pianist, Marcus Roberts, then eighteen years old, received an ovation from the crowd.

The trouble was that the festival grew faster in two years than anyone anticipated. Seventy thousand people overran the village and the fifteen thousand parking spaces provided by the navy. It is on record that over two hundred law enforcement officers made only nine arrests, those for public drunkenness, but the CEO of the navy base wisely determined that the potential for danger in such a crowd in so small an area could not be ignored. The navy withdrew its support.

"I'd hate to jerk it away from Mayport because those people down there are so supportive of it," Godbold said.

"There *is* a certain, nice ring to 'Jacksonville and All That Jazz,' " said Mike Tolbert.

So there was not a third jazz festival in Mayport. In 1982 everybody went to Jacksonville for a new, expanded, better-than-ever music festival. Everybody but the Mayport natives.

They parked a camper with a kitchen by the little jetty and fried mullet that came fresh from a fisherman's net. They arrived with their friends and

neighbors and brought bowls and platters of home-cooked food and listened to the sweet sound of waves lapping the rocks in a light northeaster.

"Jazz festivals come and jazz festivals go," was the nonchalant village philosophy. Seventy thousand people and a few internationally known jazz musicians didn't change this fishing village very much.

Epilogue

Under an ancient hickory tree a stone's throw from the St. Johns Light House, a storied building grows old. Of the few that have survived a century of change even this has been remodeled.

Now owned by Stoddard Andreu, this is the home where Cornelius and Mary Daniels Sallas reared their family and it housed three generations while their grandchildren, James, Buddy, and Jack Rochester and Marjory Messmore, were growing up here.

Called Aunt Mary by everyone in the village, this grandmother was the daughter of Pilot John Daniels who was lighthouse keeper during the Civil War. According to legend, he disabled the lantern in the tower to keep it from aiding invaders from the north.

Aunt Mary was born before 1860 so she knew many tales from the war between the states; but she died in the midst of World War II before her stories were written down. Some the Daniels' descendants recall that this keeper of the light, high above tidal marshes now under the navy airfield, beheld a scene that could have come from *Treasure Island*. He watched four seamen row ashore from a sailing ship; when they entered the lighthouse hammock they carried a heavy chest. As he watched, three men, minus the chest, returned to their ship and sailed away.

There was always an aura of mystery about the old oaks here and the Daniels story did nothing to break its spell.

Other storied homes remain, called by names of former owners. The Kemps house on Palmer Street was built by a widely-known riverboat captain.

The ghost house, home of Captain King, has been restored to respectability but not to its former elegance. Home of long-gone pilots, the Spaulding house on Broad Street watches the ferry make its daily rounds. The once-proud home of Walter Galvin, linking the remnant of a tourist town with railroads of the past, is being restored.

Ghosts of the fine old homes of Gavagans and Torribles and Gordons remain but only in memory.

A few other relics do remain, waiting for their stories to be told.

Least changed of these, inside and out, the Mayport Presbyterian Church still stands in the shadow of the lighthouse. The sound of its century-old bell on a Sunday morning may be the single thing that has stayed the same in what is left of this village.

Appendices

The Old Order Passeth

(Because the Mayport Presbyterian Church has a small congregation with a budget to match, it often has been served by very young seminarians whose great enthusiasm and energy are vitalizing to the church. Pensioned retired ministers with rich and varied experiences bring their much-appreciated wisdom to this pulpit. Men in their middle years with family responsibilities less frequently have led this flock, but all have brought blessings to the congregation. Unfortunately, except for memories among the people whose lives they have touched for good, little is left here to characterize most of these men of God.

Because his relatively recent tenure here will be remembered by present communicants and because he may epitomize the qualities needed by those ministers who have labored to keep a small church alive, a sketch of John Brooke Bittinger seems fitting here.

He, necessarily, will have been the last minister here endowed with a Victorian upbringing, military service in World Wars I and II, firsthand experience with the Great Depression, and scholarly knowledge enhanced by an abiding love for classical literature.

He will long be remembered.)

"I lived in rural Virginia when I was a boy," the preacher said, "and we all (six siblings) had chores to do. One day I was chopping wood and I chopped my toe off. A chicken scratching around close by pounced on it and she swallowed my toe."

The little chore boy survived but the chicken did not. "She had ptoemane poison," the anecdote always ended.

What the ludicrous tale had to do with his sermon was irrelevant. The congregation always laughed. What the story really proved was that John Brooke Bittinger was *not* of the Presbyterian breed sometimes called "The Frozen Chosen." He easily could have been. He was son, grandson and nephew of Presbyterian ministers and before his twenty first birthday he had graduated from Hampden-Sydney, a Presbyterian college for men established in Virginia in 1776.

His early years in public school, during which he was a member of the Student Army Corps and a popular football player, plus a couple of years of teaching and coaching rounded out what could have been a too-sheltered youth.

Following his ordination after he completed work at the Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, he was led to serve in Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia before answering a call to the

Riverside Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville . . . experience enough to qualify him as the writer of the following:

Just what does a minister do?

He teaches, though he must solicit his own classes. He heals, though without pills or a knife. He is sometimes a lawyer, often a social worker, something of an editor, a bit of a philosopher, and an entertainer, a salesman, a decorative piece for public functions and he is supposed to be a scholar.

He visits the sick, marries people, buries their dead, labors to console those in sorrow, admonishes those who sin, and tries to stay calm when chided for not doing his duty.

He plans programs, appoints committees when he can get them to serve, spends considerable time keeping people out of each other's hair.

Between times he prepares a sermon and preaches it on Sunday to those who don't happen to have any other engagement and will stir their lazy bones to make an effort to attend (church). Then he smiles when some jovial chap slaps him on the back and roars "What a job! One day a week!" How many ministers are on the staff of Riverside? Actually it should be two thousand and nine, for in one sense every member of the church should be a minister of Christ.

A realist, not a cynic, Mr. Bittinger said what he thought and the church of which he wrote loved him. When he was sixty-six years old the congregation of Riverside named its fellowship hall/church dining room Bittinger Hall in his honor.

He later said that he may have been the only minister to have a church hall *and* a race horse named for him, for he received this latter honor early in his ministry. He never disclosed whether the race horse, "Mr. Bitt," was a winner.

Blessed with charisma, good health and a well-appreciated sense of responsibility Mr. Bitt's reputation was well known among Florida Presbyterians.

When he was ready to retire he was invited by the Flagler Memorial Presbyterian Church (United) to serve as minister of visitation in Florida's oldest city. To receive a call from this prestigious church would be an honor for any minister. Such an invitation issued to a seventy-two-year-old man of God would seem an impossible dream.

But Mr. Bitt had many friends in Jacksonville. Also, while living in this city he had sometimes served as substitute pastor in the quiet little church in Mayport which was now in need of a preacher. Given the

opportunity to choose, the man from Virginia, with his wife of half a century, chose to stay in Duval County. He became the regular minister of the Mayport Presbyterian Church and visiting minister for St. Johns Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville in 1972.

Rapport was quickly established between the man accustomed to ultraconservative congregations and the sometimes unconventional communicants in Mayport.

While Bittinger was in the pulpit the choir was small but dependable. Jane Wylie George, pianist, whose repertoire included works of Schubert and Mendelssohn, had a penchant for Scott Joplin and was sometimes innovative, but Mr. Bitt remarked that music might be presented with more vigor and enthusiasm.

With David Fisher as ringleader, the music makers conspired to liven up church services. With the addition of Fisher's guitar they practiced a spirited and handclapping song with an amen chorus.

In the quiet following the benediction they surprised the preacher just as church services ended. They rocked the staid communicants and Mr. Bitt was singularly unamused.

"It's starting to sound like a hootenanny," was his only comment.

The strains of "Rock of Ages" were still more acceptable in this congregation.

John Brooke Bittinger did retain old-fashioned family values in a fast-changing modern world. When Nancy Williams and David Fisher approached him with a wedding on their minds, he let them know his opinion on the subject.

"I only does them one way," he said. "For keeps. If you're not planning to stay married I'm not going to do it for you."

The wedding was performed at high noon, April 13, 1980, following the regular church service with all the congregation present. Later, Mr. Bittinger and his wife attended the reception at the home of Fred and Betty Williams. "That," says David Fisher, "was a hootenanny the Bittings could appreciate."

He and his parishioners understood each other.

Besides the charisma which would have endeared him to any congregation, Mr. Bitt brought to this maritime community some years of experience at sea. He had joined the navy instead of the army when the U.S. entered World War II, perhaps to follow family tradition. His uncle, Edmund C. Bittinger, was U. S. Naval Chaplain aboard Commodore Perry's flagship when it entered Japanese waters in 1853.

Having spent much time in the Pacific, the minister at Mayport had learned the wisdom of Psalm 107 and sometimes quoted:

They that go down to the sea in great ships, that do business in great waters.

These see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep.

He had empathy for Mayport's trawlermen and more than once officiated at the launching of a boat destined to do "business in great waters." His respect for seamen and for all servicemen gave him a close link with this little village which had more than seventy-five men in harm's way during World War II.

Intensely patriotic, he was present with an entourage of Jacksonville friends when his church celebrated the U. S. Bicentennial on July 4, 1976. From a friend dating back to his years in uniform came new flags for his pulpit inscribed:

Presented to Mayport Presbyterian Church in honor of
Reverend John Brooke Bittinger for his service to
His God and country by
PNC Harriet L. Howard, USNR
August 8, 1982

John Brooke Bittinger, born in 1900, did not choose to live in the past. However, he did look askance at some changes in the Presbyterian Church.

He had been trained in a church tradition that kept women in lesser roles. He had come to serve a congregation where deacons and elders invariably had been men long associated with this church. This was a church which fostered memories of its early days and its oldest active member, Viola Singleton King Boley, had worshipped within its walls before 1900. But changes even here were soon to come.

In June 1981, Mr. Bitt had officiated at funerals of his friends, Dyle Johnson, deacon, and Vivian "Bubba" Cason, elder.

Johnson, known to this congregation for half a century, almost single-handedly had built the Scout Hut that is used as a Sunday School room, and quietly had served both church and community in other ways. Cason, clerk of session for three decades, was the oldest of five siblings who had attended the church since the first quarter of the twentieth century. The passing of these men left a void which, because of the nature of the congregation, would have to be filled by women and newcomers.

Several months passed before Mr. Bitt announced that steps must be taken to fill these vacancies. Ben Hewitt, deacon, and Alton Mote and Aubrey Parsons, elders, needed some coworkers.

In November the first women to be ordained elders in the Mayport Presbyterian Church were Ethel Drew Thompson and Helen Cooper Floyd, both baptized in this church in early youth. Mrs. Floyd's father, Martin Cooper, elder emeritus, was present.

Both women knew the New Testament scriptures:

1 Timothy 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be silent.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak: but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

But times they were a-changing.

Betty Williams of Neptune Beach and her son-in-law, David Fisher, both willing workers but comparative new-comers, became ordained deacons at this time.

Mr. Bitt, not of the Frozen Chosen, coolly but graciously officiated. Perhaps he remembered the words of Tennyson:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
And God fulfills himself in many ways.

The Passing of Arthur

The change was only in principle. Helen Drew Mote, Viola King Boley and Viola Greenlaw Singleton had led youth groups and song services sixty years before; Jessie Davis and Ethel Thompson had served as Sunday School superintendents since the 1920s; and many more women than men had taught in Sunday School.

But John Brooke Bittinger waited two more months before he surrendered Books of Session to a Woman Clerk of Session. He also gave to her a copy of the following creed:

The Lord is my Pilot; I shall not drift.

He leadeth me across the dark waters; he steereth
me in the deep channel.

He keeps my way; he guideth me by the stars and the
sun for his name's sake.

Yea, though I sail mid the thunder and the tempest
of life, I shall dread no danger, for thou art
With me; thy love and thy care they shelter me.

Thou preparest a harbor before me in the homeland of
Eternity: thou anointest the waters with oil;

My ship rideth calmly.

Surely sunlight and starlight shall favor me in the
Voyage I take; and I will rest in the port of
God forever.

Author Unknown

Cemeteries

Near the St. Johns Lighthouse, within the boundaries of the U. S. Naval Station and covered by the pavement of Broad Street, the oldest cemetery in Mayport memory is sealed away.

Beneath spreading oaks, partially covered by shifting sands of a long-gone hill, there once were rusting wrought iron fences. Tilted headstones covered by blackberry brambles were overshadowed by an oleander tree that was taller than many houses in the village. Here robins flocked in February and violets bloomed in very early spring.

No one tended the graves and few questioned their origins. This was a place of mystery to children who sometimes chose it for a playground.

According to Martin Cooper, Sr., who last owned a square two-story residence on land abutting the known boundaries of the cemetery site, this burial ground may cover an area much larger than anyone realizes. In 1915, when workers for the Daniels family dug into the sand to build foundations for this house, they found posts set in uniform patterns suggesting grave sites. "Charlie" Jones who worked with Cooper on dredges gave him this information.

Rebecca Andreu Tillotson said the cemetery was by the old Catholic Church, whose ruins she remembered although she had attended "the new church" which stood tall, sans graveyard, beside the old railroad bed, later the shell road, between Mayport and East Mayport. A listing of names of those buried here has not been found in lay records, but one headstone was etched with the name Brown. In the King family it is recalled that two children of William Joseph and Clara Arnau King here were laid to rest.

Frank Floyd (1800-1885) said he remembered the last funeral held here. With his grandfather, also Frank Floyd, he attended services for an ex-slave named Yeppo.

The grandfather died in 1909, so the graveyard had long been abandoned when the navy claimed it at the beginning of World War II.

Oak tree, oleander and tombstones are gone. In the pavement where Broad Street makes a wide semi-circle near the navy fence are strange indentations. Perhaps they mark the graves of some long-gone and long-forgotten citizens of Mayport Mills. Or Hazzard. Or, conceivably, the Spanish occupation.

Viola Singleton King (1889-1986), Fred D. Haworth (1888-1983) and Rebecca Andreu Tillotson (1879-1975) referred to the present Mayport cemetery bordered by the Oak Harbor sub-division as Pablo cemetery. This possibly began as a burial plot for occupants of the ancient Pablo House that once dominated a plantation which had been called *Naranjal* by Spaniards. Now covered by houses of Oak Harbor, this area is one of the truly historical

spots in Duval County and has been the subject of much research for several years.

Here, easily accessible, are tombstones bearing names and dates of scores who have lived out nearly two centuries of Mayport history.

Perhaps ten miles from Mayport as the crow flies, a third cemetery, with its history well documented and its grounds still used for burial sites, is situated beside Girven Road in a community once called Mt. Pleasant.

Highly visible among smaller markers one finds:

Ephraim Todd Tillotson 1832-1903
Susannah E. Tillotson 1834-1904
FOUNDERS OF THIS CEMETERY

A poignant story is told on the two oldest headstones here. "Marion Frances, Wife of Marion T. Taylor, age 20 years, 8 months, 14 days, July 29, 1883," is inscribed on one.

Beside it, on a miniature marker, one reads, "Baby Marion Taylor, July 29, 1883."

Susannah Tillotson was a midwife and after she saw her daughter, called Frankie, die in childbirth she set aside a family plot as a last resting place for her immediate family and their descendants. There her daughter and grandchild were laid to rest.

Marion T. Taylor, according to a story told by Susannah's daughter-in-law, Rebecca Tillotson, was a mariner. After the funeral of his wife and baby he returned to the sea and was never heard of again.

Descendants of the original Tillotsons here are legion. Most by time and miles are separated from the land settled in the 1870s by these Ohioans. But many settled in Mayport and nearby areas and these make periodical pilgrimages to the old cemetery.

Not of this family but maintaining a strong relationship with Tillotson descendants, five generations of the Drew family, beginning with Charles Drew, Sr. (1843-1923) and his wife Eliza (1852-1912) have shared a cemetery, a village and a church these many years.

Here at rest are many whose stories have filled the preceding pages. It is fitting that the following inscriptions from headstones in the Tillotson Family Cemetery be included here.

Inscriptions on Tombstones
Tillotson Family Cemetery

Compiled by Mildred King Ogram

William A. Bentzel
1900 - 1957

Walter Edward Boley
BKR I U.S. Navy WWI
October 29, 1892 - November 24, 1972

Anna E. Brazeale
August 26, 1879 - May 28, 1924

Jesse J. Brazeale
Tec 4 U. S. Army
Nov. 15, 1916 - January 21, 1992
Purple Heart

Joseph E. Brazeale, Sr.
November 4, 1874 - March 29, 1930

Manus A. Brazeale
August 9, 1913 - October 13, 1984

Yaetive Merle Canova
1905 - 1965

Elmo W. Cason
Died November 24, 1985 - Age 78

Doris E. Cason
April 1, 1945 - April 1, 1945

Jeanette W. Cason
November 21, 1903 - August 6, 1992

Infant Charles Robert Cooper
May 24, 1960

James M. Cooper
October 24, 1898 - February 11, 1993

Harry Dombrowski
August 17, 1917 - Aug 1, 1985

Charles Drew, Sr.
1843 - 1923

Charles F. Drew
July 3, 1879 - April 6, 1969

Charles F. Drew
"Chuck"
September 21, 1958 - March 22, 1990

Eliza Drew
1852 - 1912

Frances A. Drew
May 2, 1882 - March 29, 1962

John Drew
1881 - 1942

John R. Drew
May 1, 1924 - July 14, 1992

Sara Elizabeth Drew
November 14, 1927 - June 3, 1992

Simonsen Greenlaw
1862 - 1923

B. Ellen Hardy
Aug. 10, 1905 - May 2, 1990

Norman Hardy
June 4, 1910 - November 28, 1945

D. P. Hurlbert
1835 - 1899

Vesta Lulu Kaplan
August 3, 1895 - August 21, 1965

Joseph R. King
January 3, 1887 - June 28, 1960

Viola Singleton King
November 21, 1889 - March 26, 1986

William Joseph King
1922 - 1936

Ingrid T. Mier
1906 - 1952

Jean Alice Powell
September 15, 1941 - Jan 18, 1942

Ralph David Powell
March 3, 1940 - November 24, 1979

John S. Shannon
June 10, 1922 - September 27, 1992
Home/Family/Honor

Carol Lynn Shannon
Jan. 26, 1946 - July.3, 1985

Chauncey J. Singleton, Sr.
PFC U.S. Army WWI
1894 - 1979

Claude R. Singleton
1925 - 1938

Dan Singleton
U.S. Navy WWII
June 1, 1925 - Jan. 22, 1990

Earl Todd Singleton
U.S. Army WWII
Sept. 8, 1913 - Sept. 1, 1981

Estelle H. Singleton
Mar. 28, 1894 - Nov. 4, 1989
"The Giving One"

Holbrook E. Singleton
U.S. Army WWI
Mar. 25, 1896 - Oct. 3, 1982

James L. Singleton
Sept. 16, 1907 - May 4, 1911

Madeline Rubenstein Singleton
Nov. 19, 1930 - Nov. 16, 1970

Melvin A. Singleton
Aug. 27, 1934 - Mar. 8, 1957
(Lost At Sea)

Nellie, Wife of Capt. Samuel Singleton
June 29, 1870 - June 14, 1931

Raymond V. Singleton
1898 - 1937

Robert E. Singleton
Pvt. U.S. Army WWI
Dec. 25, 1892 - Oct. 11, 1977

Capt. Samuel Singleton
Oct. 28, 1858 - Jul. 4, 1933

Samuel Singleton
1891 - 1949

Thelma Inez Singleton
July 18, 1904 - Oct. 8, 1991

William LeRoy Singleton
June 30, 1905 - Aug. 4, 1927

Baby Marion Taylor
July 29, 1883

Marion Frances, Wife of Marion T. Taylor
Age 20 years, 8 mos.
14 days
July 29, 1883

Alexander B. Thompson
Florida S1 USNRF WWI
July 11, 1895 - Jan. 16, 1966

Edwin Andreau Thompson
1864 - 1916

Ethel D. Thompson
June 19, 1912 -

Hans Leo Thompson
1898 - 1980

Jessie Viola Thompson
1866 - 1913

Laura Mae Thompson
1891 - 1914

Oscar F. Thompson
Pvt. 1st Class
124 Inf. 31 Div.
May 17, 1929

Roland E. Thompson
Feb 22, 1900 - Mar. 27, 1984

Alvie Tillotson
1896 - 1904

Ephraim Todd Tillotson
1832 - 1903

Frances F. Tillotson
1873 - 1918

Fred D. Tillotson
1874 - 1912

Freddie B. Tillotson
MM2, U.S. Navy WWI
January 4, 1894 - May 7, 1969

Ida M. Tillotson
1871 - 1952

Infants Nellie, Nelson, Walter
Triplets of Ida & Fred Tillotson
1904

Jennie R. Tillotson
May 15, 1902 - April 15, 1989

Jimmy Tillotson
1900 - 1902

John F. Tillotson
1863 - 1937

Johnnie Tillotson
1895 - 1909

Lesley Tillotson
Mar. 20, 1909 - Jan. 21, 1933

Ralph Chauncey Tillotson
August 17, 1862 - June 22, 1953

Ralph Tillotson, Jr.
Dec. 10, 1901 - July 17, 1988

Rebecca A. Tillotson
Aug. 15, 1879 - Apr. 23, 1975

Rutledge M. Tillotson
S.S., U.S. Army WWII
March 27, 1908 - June 22, 1984

Susannah E. Tillotson
1834 - 1904

Susie Tillotson
1902 - 1904

William Eldridge Tillotson
Oct. 12, 1906 - Jan. 13, 1950

Infant Turnage
June 15, 1935

Claude William Warren
Oct. 11, 1907 - Feb. 17, 1982

Elizabeth King Warren
May 23, 1913 - July 31, 1986

Infant son of Claude and Elizabeth Warren
June 28, 1944

Avery B. Weir
Pvt. U.S. Army WWII
October 8, 1908 - November 27, 1983

Doris Lillian Williams
May 3, 1909 - April 7, 1970

Isaac D. Williams
1933 - 1966

Jennings B. Williams
1897 - 1965

Jessie Vivian Williams
1892 - 1913

Infant son of Doris
and Jennings Williams
1929

Floyd Rhodes Wylie, Sr.
(Lost at sea)
May 13, 1930 - March 8, 1957

Kirven Carter Wylie, Jr.
January 3, 1930 - July 26, 1941

Lillian A. Wylie
November 2, 1927 - November 14, 1927

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____ Correspondence with D.A.R. concerning Ribault Monument 1923-24.

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Credits

In my search for Mayport history I have been assisted by staff members of the Hayden Burns Library Florida Collection, Jacksonville, Florida; St. Augustine Historical Society Library, St. Augustine, Florida; Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida; P. K. Yonge Florida Collection, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida; Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreat, North Carolina; Pascagoula Public Library (census records) Pascagoula, Mississippi.

Through the generosity of the following people I have had access to private collections which have provided valuable background for or details in my narrative. Olga B. Battisti: deeds of family property from the Dewees Grant, photographs, old newspaper clippings and other records from the estate of Frank Floyd, Civil War veteran.

John Brooke Bittinger: Autobiographical notes; items from newspapers and church brochures concerning his career; copies of sermons and photographs.

Joseph Brazeale: Genealogical findings concerning the family of Ephraim and Susannah Tillotson from the estate of his sister, Theresa Bodenmuller Kral.

Barbara Haworth Cooper: The collection amassed by her father, Fred D. Haworth containing family letters, deeds of property, newspaper clippings and personal observations of his father, Alfonso Haworth; medical records of his grandfather, Eli Haworth; promotional papers including plats and descriptions of the subdivisions called East Mayport and Burnside Beach; memorabilia from the Burnside House which was managed by Haworth family members; Indian relics from this area collected in the late nineteenth century.

Edith Singleton Cooper: Deeds, maps, photographs; oral history of the family of Ephraim Tillotson; vital statistics of Captain Sam Singleton and his wife, Helen Mae called Nellie, and of their thirteen children; records of wages earned in the Lewis Crab Company.

Aline Singleton Davis: 1913 journal of her mother, Viola Greenlaw Singleton, and pictures, taken by her mother, of Mayport people and sites 1913-1926. Genealogy of Tillotson family from early 1600s through 1800s.

Captain William R. Parker: Early records of the St. Johns River Bar Pilots Association and other information concerning river boatmen; records of maritime disasters affecting men of Mayport

William Singleton: World War I records of his father, Robert E. Singleton; family photographs.

Sandra Floyd Tuttle: Photographs from the families of T. D. Floyd, LeRoy Tuttle and Andrew Sallas.

Jerry Gavagan Margerum: Records of the *Donald Ray* disaster and photographs of the Gavagan family.

Mildred King Ogram: Maps of Mayport collected from various sources; memoirs of her mother Viola Singleton King; photographs of members of families of Captain Sam Singleton and Captain Joseph King; a list of names from all tombstones in the Tillotson Family Cemetery. A copy of a paper produced by her son, Andrew Vaughn Ogram, for the folklore department of the University of Florida, 1975. This paper, recording interviews of Ogram with his mother, his grandmother, Viola Singleton King; and a cousin, Blanche Drew Williams, could not be found in folklore archives.

Winifred Shepard: Papers giving obscure facts about families in Northeast Florida including Houstons, Floyds, Haworths; personal notes and documented records of keepers of the St. Johns Lighthouse.

Vera Wylie Weir: private collection of photographs of Mayport people and sites from 1935-1960.

Edgar Rives Taylor: Unpublished manuscript of his intensive research into families who lived in Pablo settlement and their descendants.

Mayport Presbyterian Church records from Books of Session I, II, and III dating from February 1912 when the church was chartered. These records are always in the responsible care of a current clerk of session and should never be lent to anyone. I served as clerk of session 1981-1983. Since that time Alton Mote, presently clerk of session, has sent me information which I have needed.

Helen Davis, historian, and Ruth Cason, secretary, are responsible for other records retained by the church.

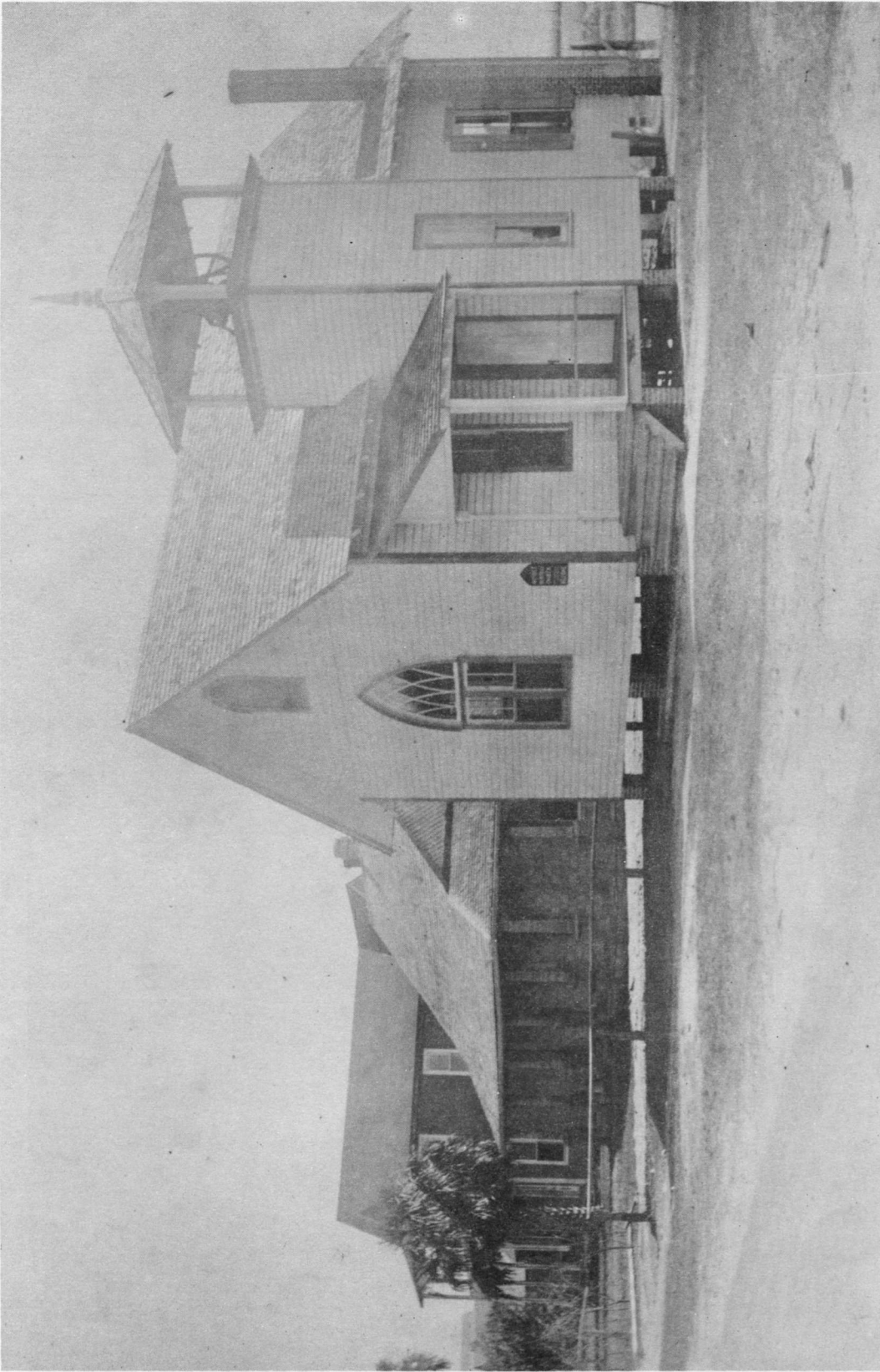
Copies of annual histories of the Mayport Presbyterian Women of the Church dating from 1936-1982 are filed in archives in Montreat, North Carolina, and xeroxed copies of these for the records of the Mayport Presbyterian Church historian were purchased during my term of office.

Taped interviews with the following were primary sources for this narrative. Those with stars were born in 1902 or before. Interviews were conducted between 1969 and 1979.

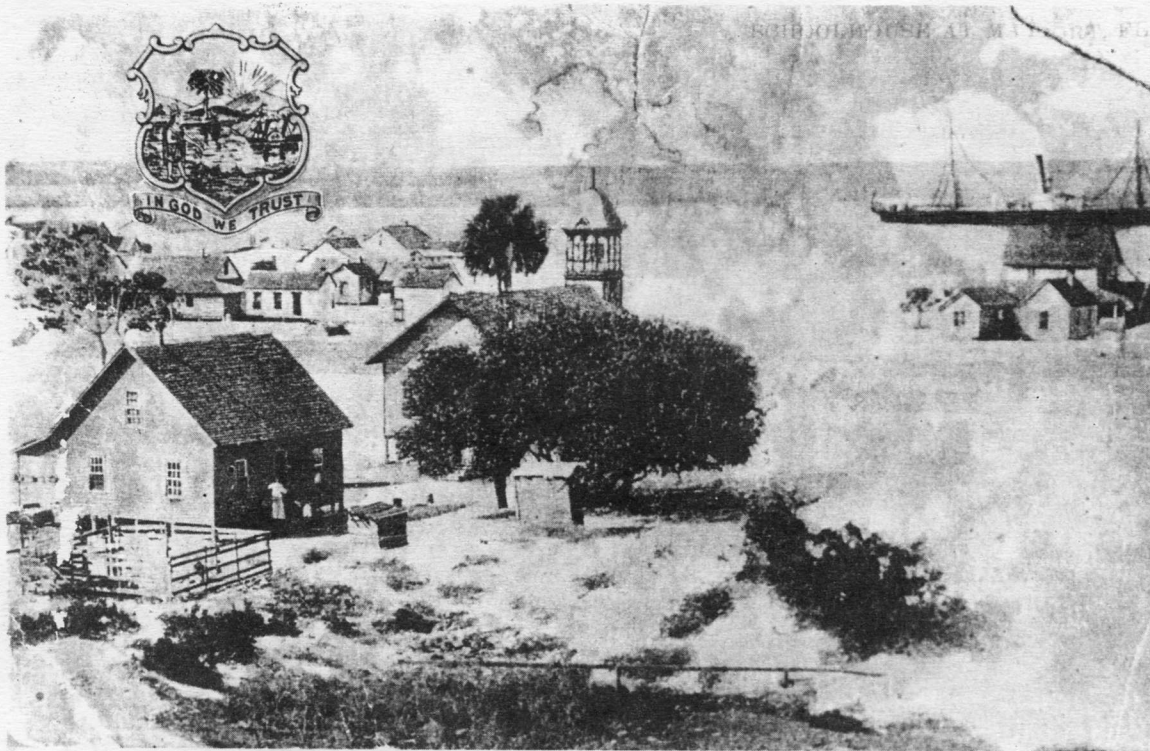
Viola King Boley*
Conway Buford*
Dorothy Buford*
Edith Cooper*
Martin Cooper, Sr.*
Leslie Daniels
David Floyd
Frank Floyd*

Helen Kennard Floyd
Hilton M. Floyd
Fred Haworth*
Mathias Roland*
Estelle Singleton*
Viola G. Singleton*
Elmer Thompson
Rebecca Andreu Tillotson*

**Photographs
circa
1890-1970**



View of Addie Fatio Chapel in 1900. Still standing, now the Mayport Presbyterian Church, it lost its neighbors with the advent of the Navy Base. The boarding house of Aunt Babe Floyd and the stone house where many Floyd descendants had lived were then demolished.



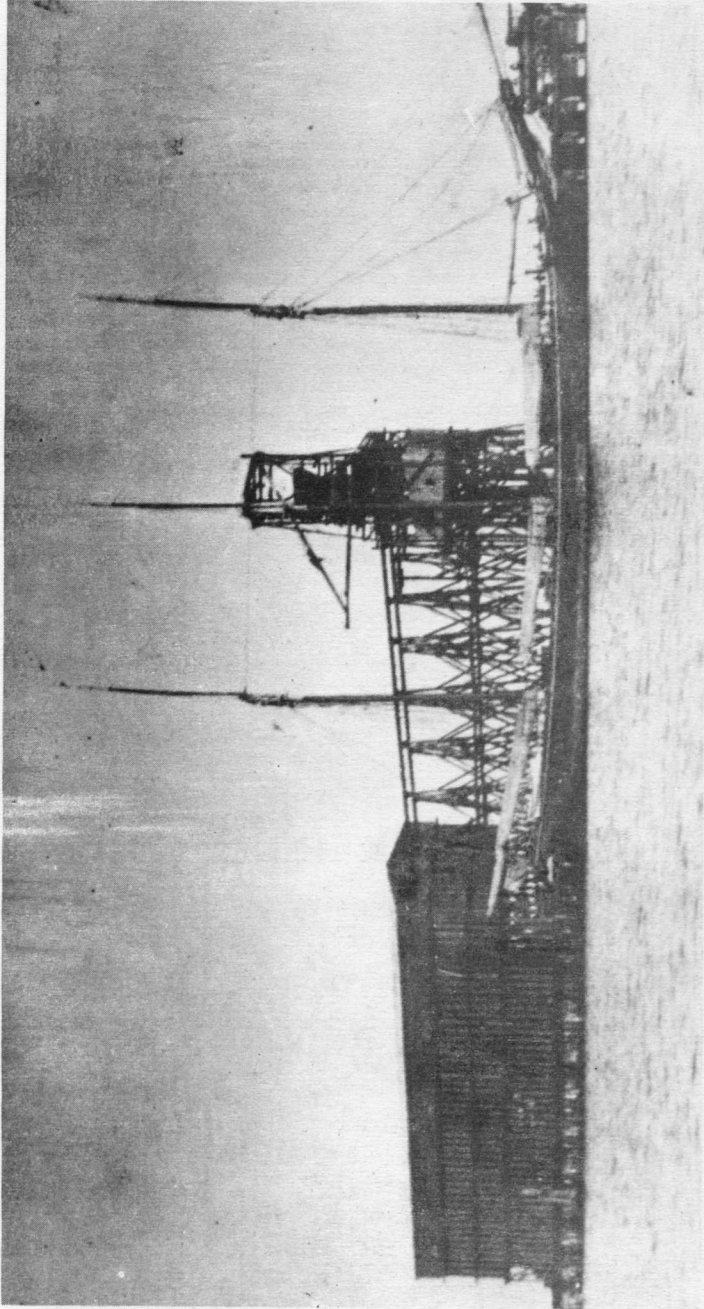
Oldest View of Mayport we could find:

Above, probable view from Lighthouse, showing Thompson house with out buildings, school before belfry was blown away. Osage Orange tree (still standing).

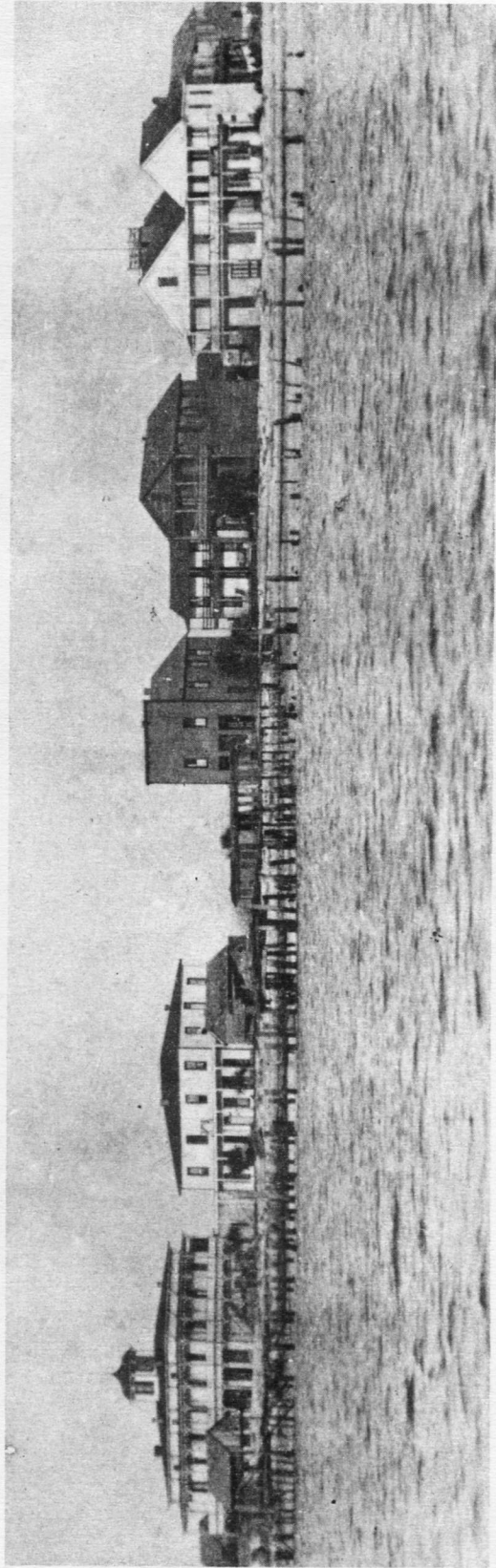
Below, second known Lighthouse, decommissioned by 1860.

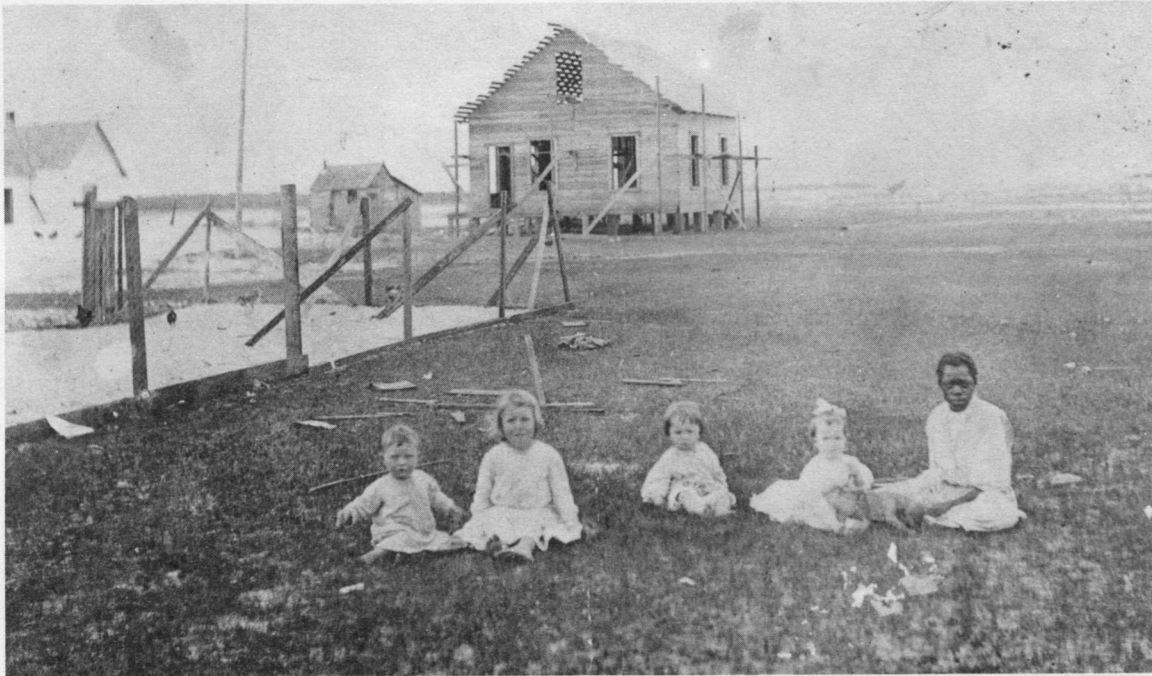


Left: Schooner
moored at
FEC coal dock
about 1900.



Below: 1900
waterfront
view of
Mayport.





Modest homes were built along the strand. Note chicken pen.

The home of Mayor Andrew Floyd was a period landmark.

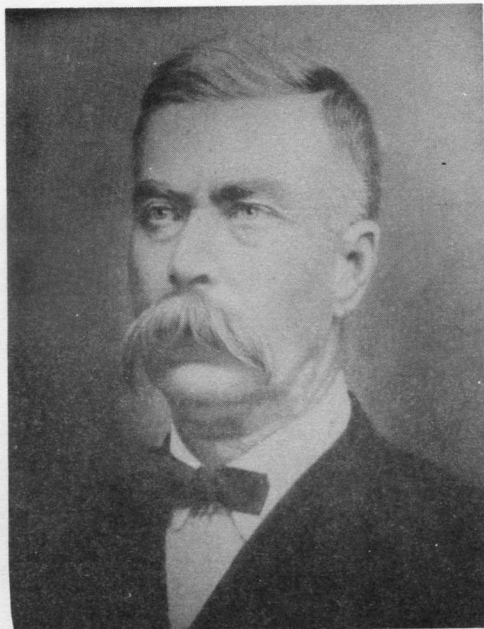




Home of Joe and Nettie Daniels, first known as Bruce House, located beside road to East Mayport. 1900



Genevieve Ponce Floyd



Civil War Vet Frank Floyd

**Home of Frank Floyd and
Genevieve Ponce Floyd**





Gavagan Hotel

Home of Capt. Fred and Mrs. Clara Arnau Torrible





Anna Bodenmuller
(later Brazeale),
Jessie Thompson (on left)
and Nellie Singleton (below),
daughters of Ephraim and
Susannah Tillotson, all married
foreign seamen.

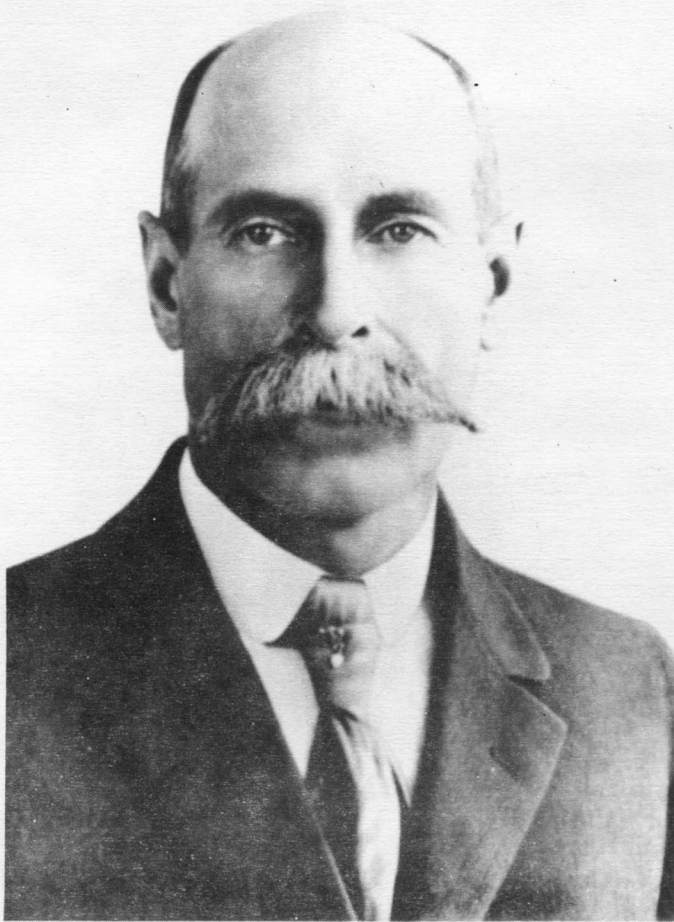
Captain Sam
and
Nellie Singleton with
children LeRoy,
Earl (in christening
gown), and Ada.
1913





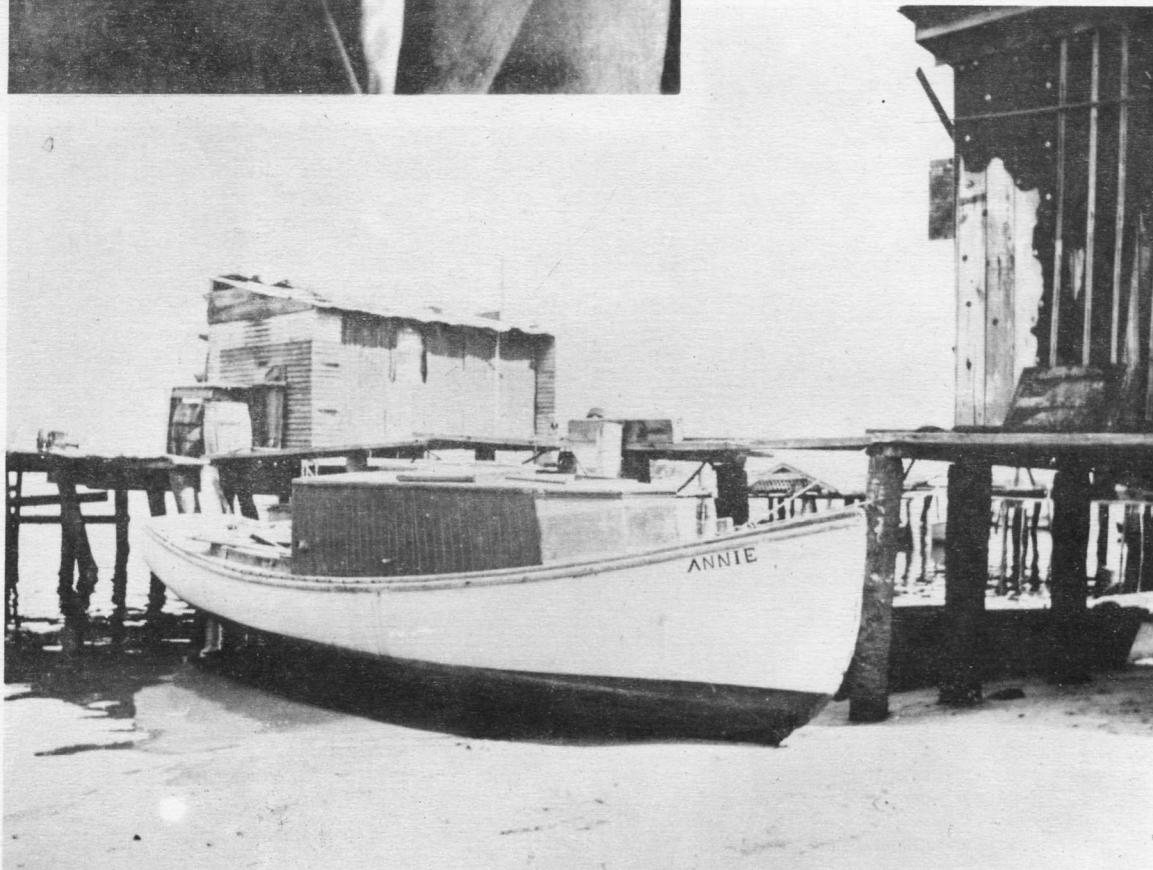
Young People gathered at the home of Sam and Nellie Singleton
to sing. People on porch unknown.
Edith and Hollie Singleton at piano below.





Simonsen Greenlaw
left Maine with boat
ANNIE to fish out
of Mayport.

His granddaughter
Aline Singleton
told him to cut off
his moustache
and put in
on his head.

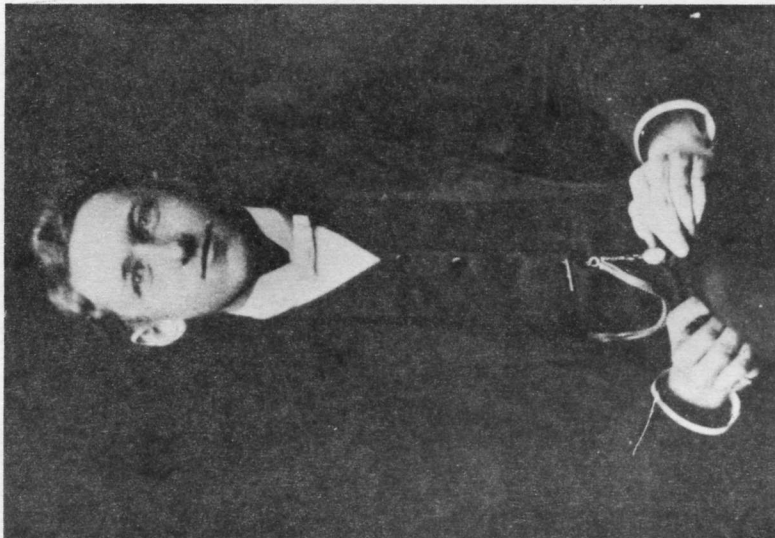




Mrs. Samuel (Viola Greenlaw) Singleton with niece, Mildred King, about 1920. Home of "Nee" and "Aunt Mary" Sallas on sand hill which is one of few standing as the 20th century ends.



Mayport Presbyterian Church about 1915.
Note brick road in front.



Andrew Painter Gregory



Clyde Douglas



Edgar William Way

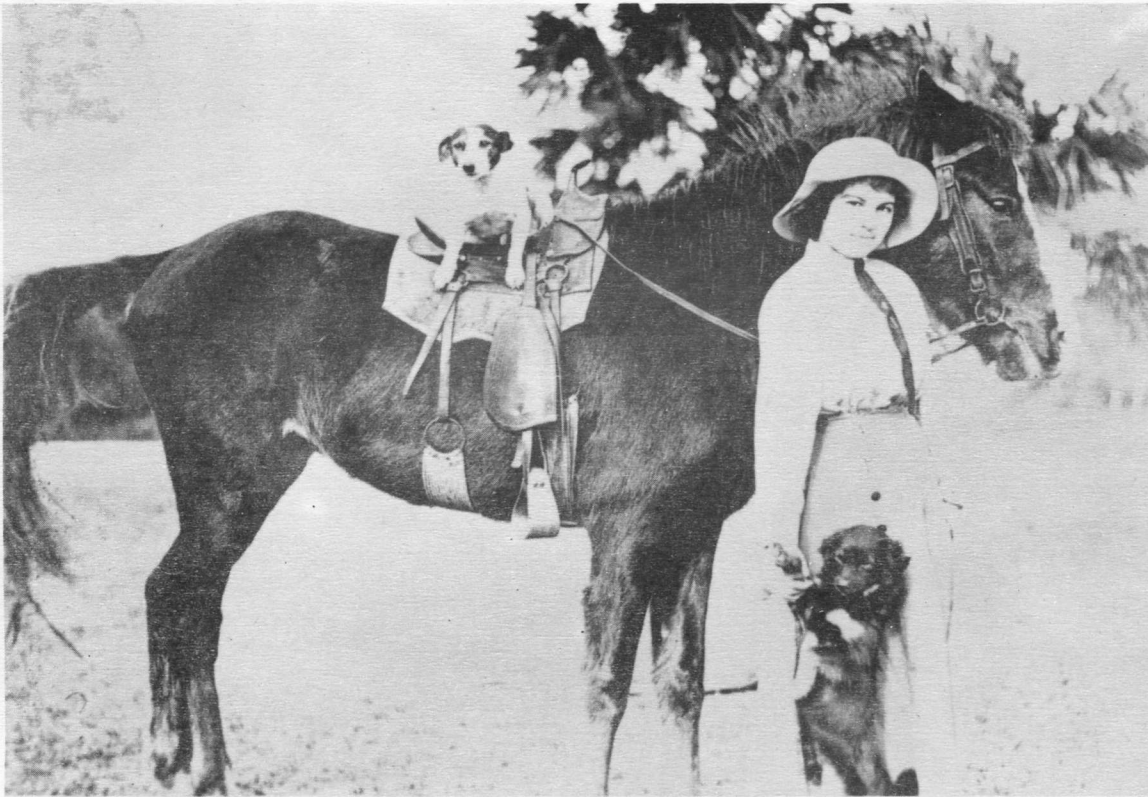
Early ministers in the Mayport Presbyterian Church.



Mrs. James W. (Jessie) Davis was the first member to sign the charter of the Mayport Presbyterian Church, February 8, 1912. She was a memorable Sunday School teacher and superintendent who contributed much to village life with participation in beach parties, picnics in the lighthouse hammock, etc.

James W. "Jim" Davis, elder in the church, was keeper of lights other than the St. Johns Lighthouse which were aids to navigation in the Mayport area. He was among the best remembered of Jetty Fishermen.



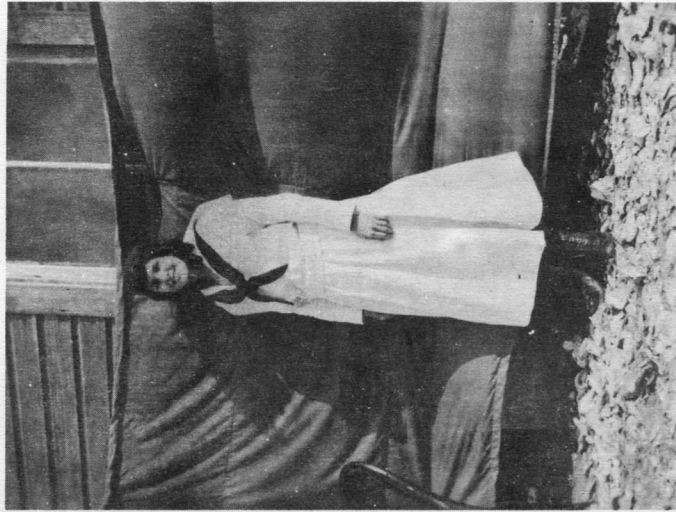


Mayport girls, not positively identified, became Girl Scouts and equestriennes under the tutelage of Elizabeth Stark. Hazel Hilgerson was a bloomer girl.

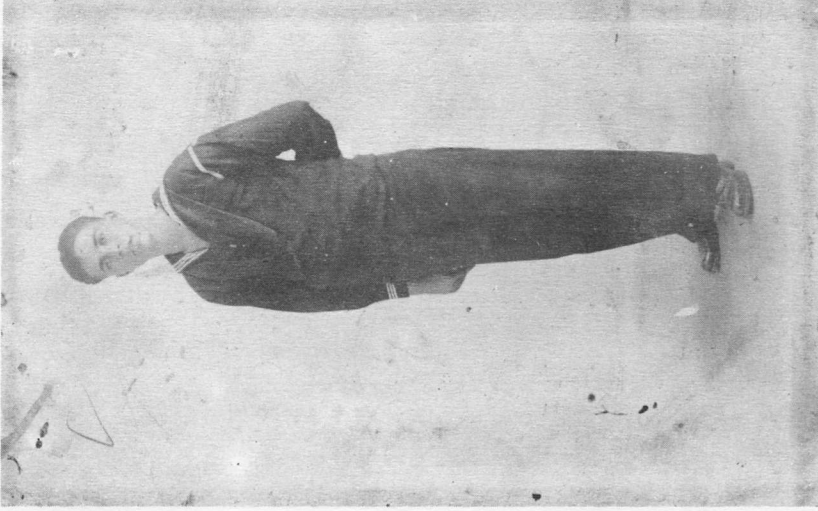




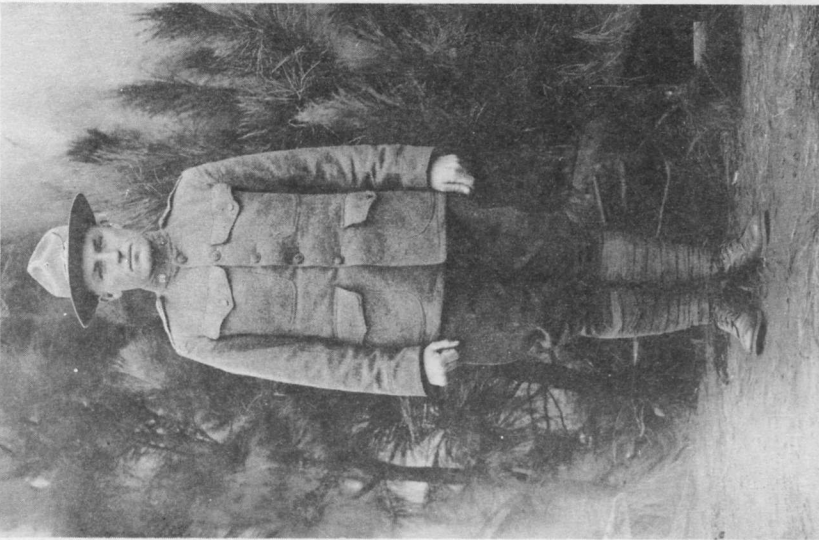
Alec Thompson in
World War I uniform.



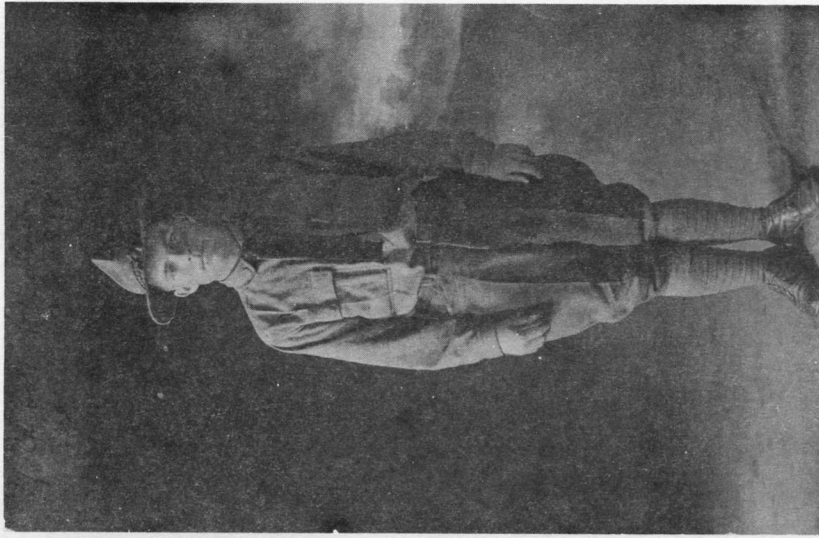
Mary Tillotson matched in
early 1900's fashion.



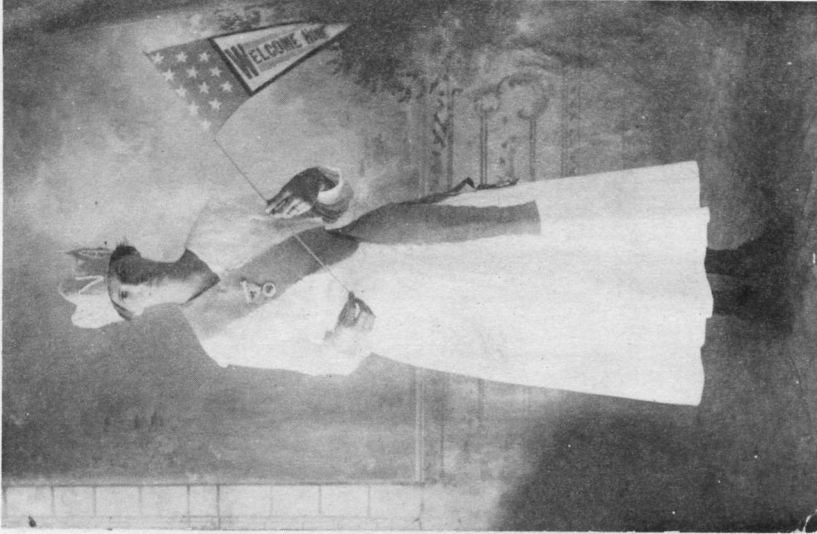
John King in
World War I uniform.



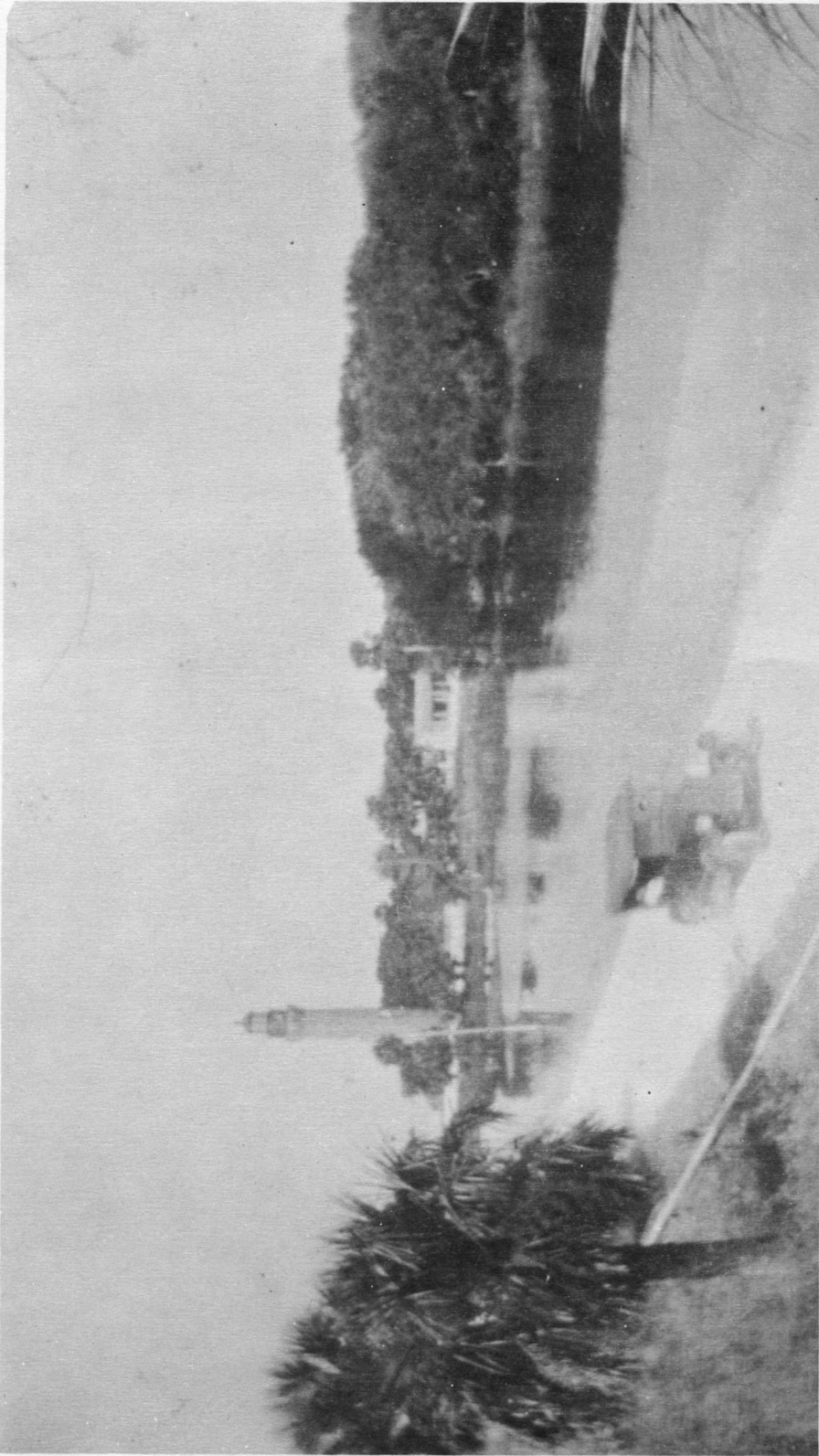
Chauncey Singleton in
World War I uniform.



Hollie Singleton in
World War I uniform.



Dora Thompson welcomed
doughboys home.



1920's view of St. Johns lighthouse from east, showing the shell road built over the JMP railroad bed, the wetlands, and the lighthouse hammock now under the navy airfield.



Kids on sand hill. Betty Singleton,
*Helen Mae Cooper, Louise Singleton,
Madeline Drew, and Joe King
*Author of this book

Elizabeth and Skipper King
1927



From left: Louise Singleton,
Robert Haygood, and Mildred King

Claude, Russel and Billy
Singleton at Ribault Bay





 Birthday party for Beulah Daniels, 1927
1st row L-R: Agnes Tuttle, Betty Singleton, unknown,
 Helen Mae Cooper, Lenora Hurlbert, Ann Hirth,
2nd row: Paul Hahn, Matilda Floyd, Beulah Daniels,
 Lydia May Sallas, Mary Lucy Mier, unknown.
3rd row: Tony Mier, Mildred Cason, Louise Singleton,
 Adeline Tuttle, unknown, Barbara Tillotson.
Back Row: Charlotte Daniels, Liza Mier, Amy Daniels, unknown,
 Jeannie Thompson.

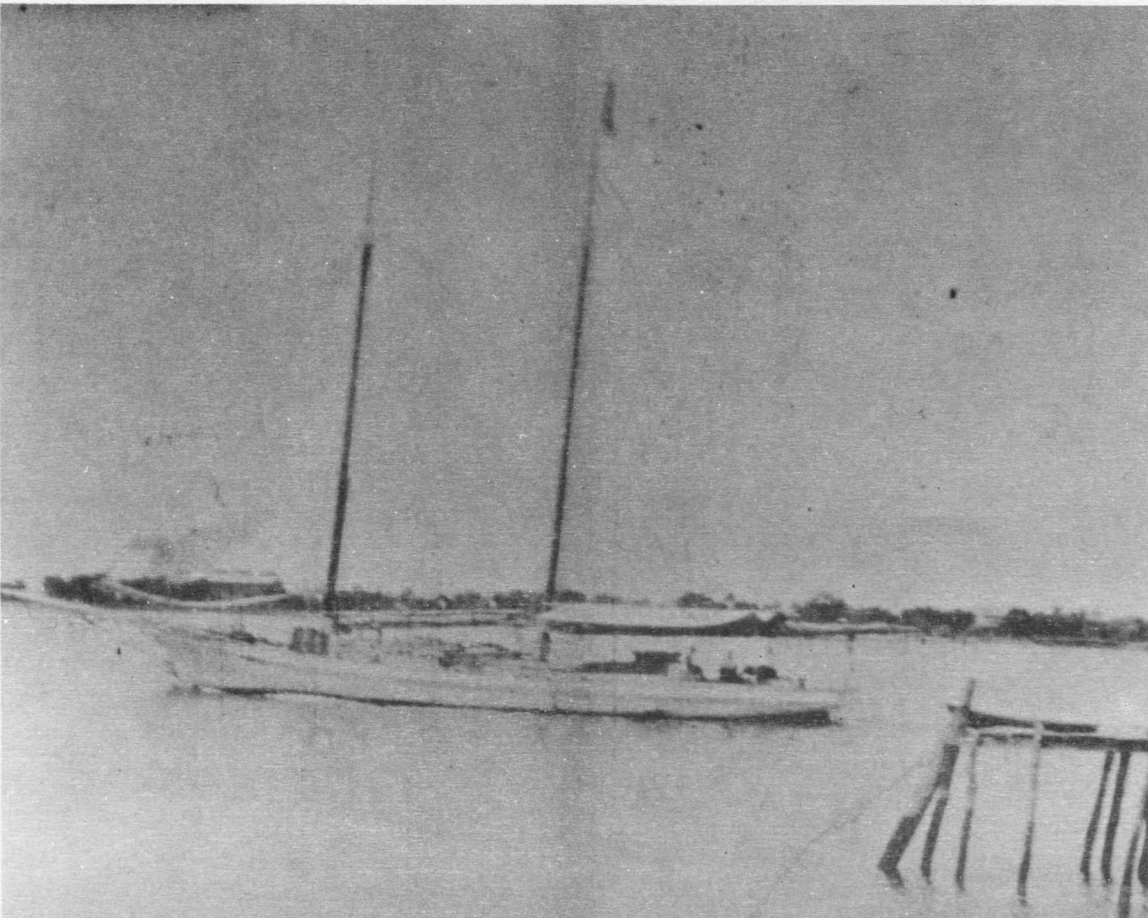


Picture from old Mayport school 1927

Front row: Stanley Cason, Arnold Thomas, James Hilgerson, Earl Singleton, Leo Singleton.
 Middle row: Mildred Cason, Martha May Johnson, Louise Arnau, Louise Gavagan, Aline Singleton,
 Nana Brazeale, Mary Frances Brinson, Laura Hancock (?).
 Back row: Dorothy Buford, Edna Jones, Alethia Johnson, Unknown boy, Effie Jones, Laura Arnau, Martha May
 Jones, Sam Mier, Estelle Jones, Clara Ponce (?), Lottie Singleton, Alice Wingate (?), Liza Mier.



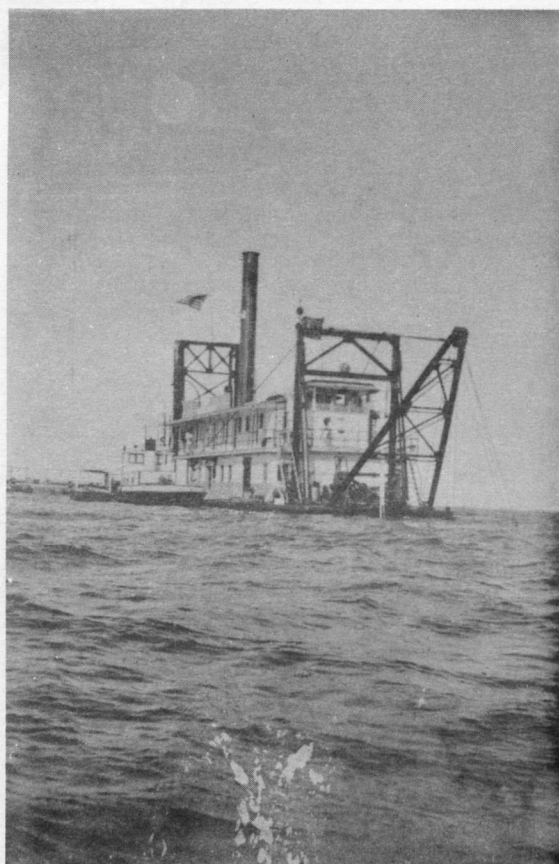
The light-house and keepers residence 1930. The light was not in service, and the pilot boat META, at anchor in Ribault Bay, would soon be retired.



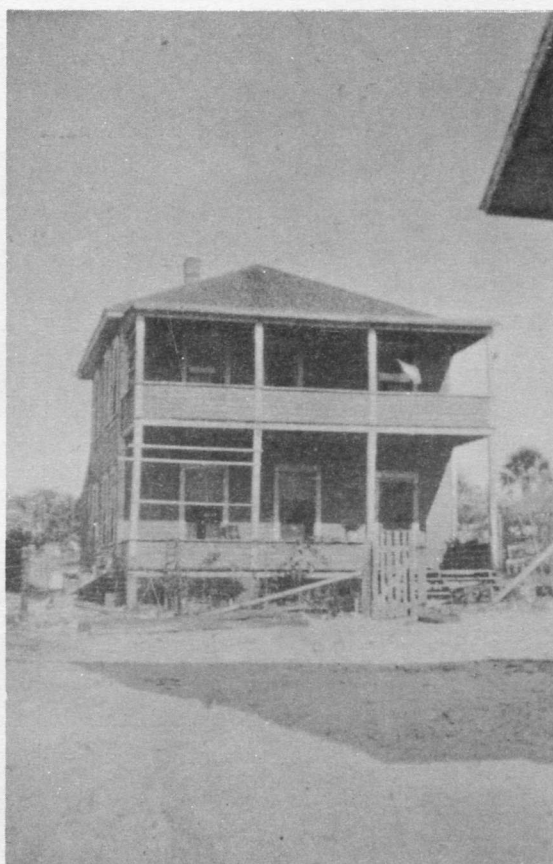


View of Mayport from lighthouse, 1936

Dredge CONGAREE



Home of
Martin and Edith Cooper



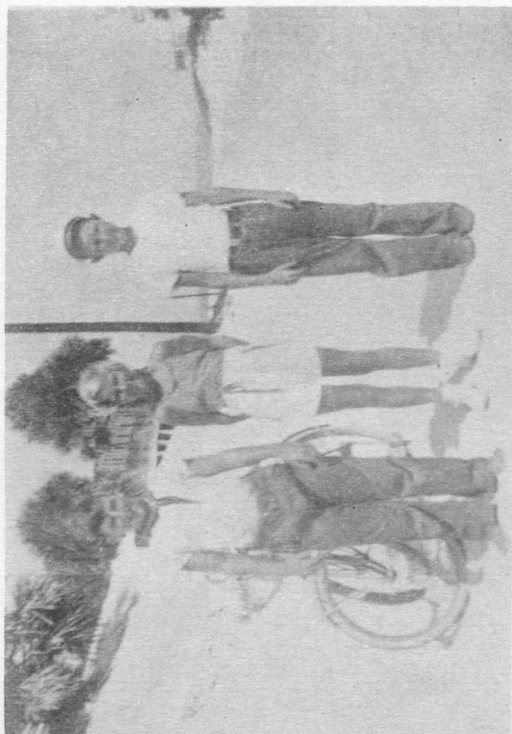


Aunt Sally Sallas kept an ice cream parlor open in the village.

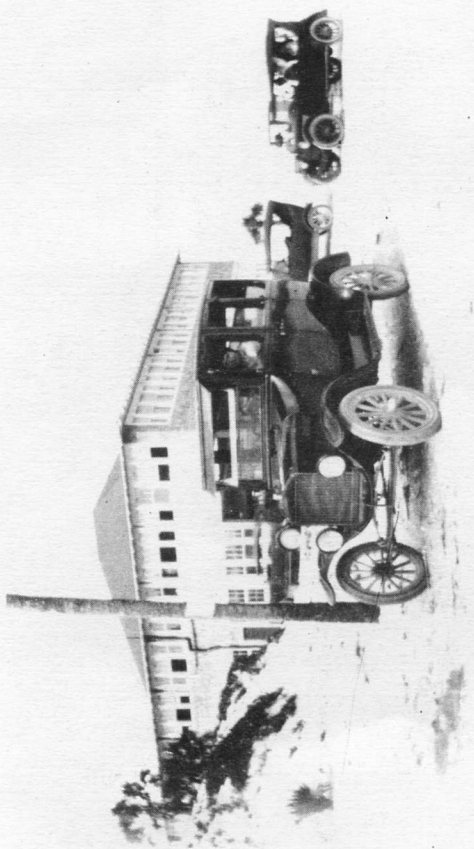
Millard Cooper played on a sand hill by a chicken coop. (J. R. King house in background)

Lenora Arnau hung up husband Rube's nets to dry.



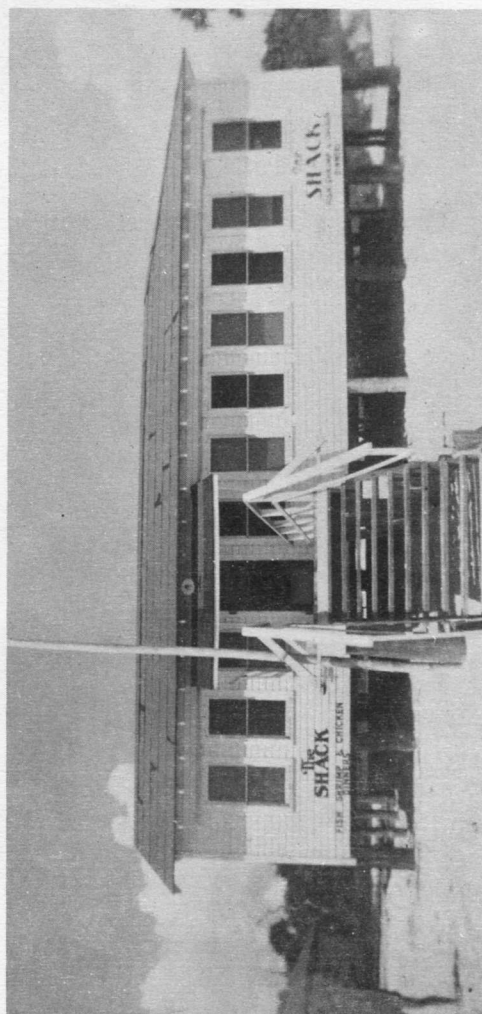


Chauncey Singleton, Ruth Drew,
Martin Cooper - 1930s



Seminole Beach

Aline Singleton with pan
for catching donax - 1920s



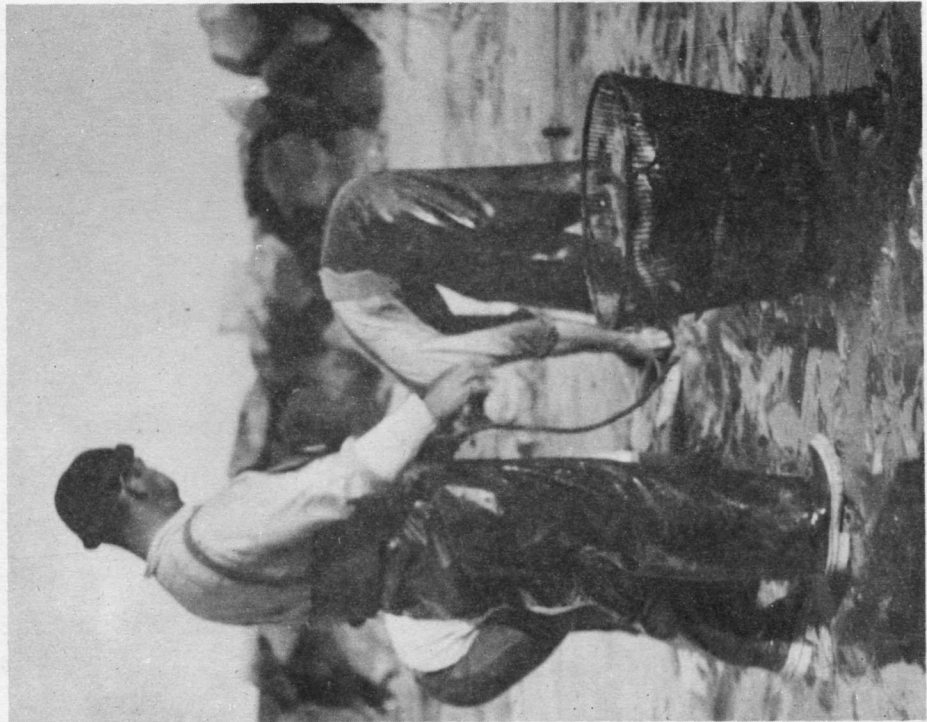
Howard and Virginia Jones King with typical 1940's beach rig.



Lower right, Jack Rochester sorting catch.



Below, Stoddard Andrew and crew at Jetties.





Ruth Drew (Mrs. L. V.) Capo,
Presbyterian Sunday School teacher more than forty years.



Justice of the Peace J. L. "Jim" Gavagan and wife, Jeanette, celebrate an anniversary.



Byron Mann



Martin Cooper, Jr.



John Mann

World War II men in uniform. Martin Cooper, Jr. fought in France. Byron and John Mann were in the Pacific where Byron gave his life for his country.



Ex-G.I. Thomas K. Wylie with
British war bride Doris Warner of Nottingham, England. 1946.
Note stars for service men of World War II center top.



And who can forget!
"Come as you are summer program"
Leader Mattie Harris. Early 1950's.



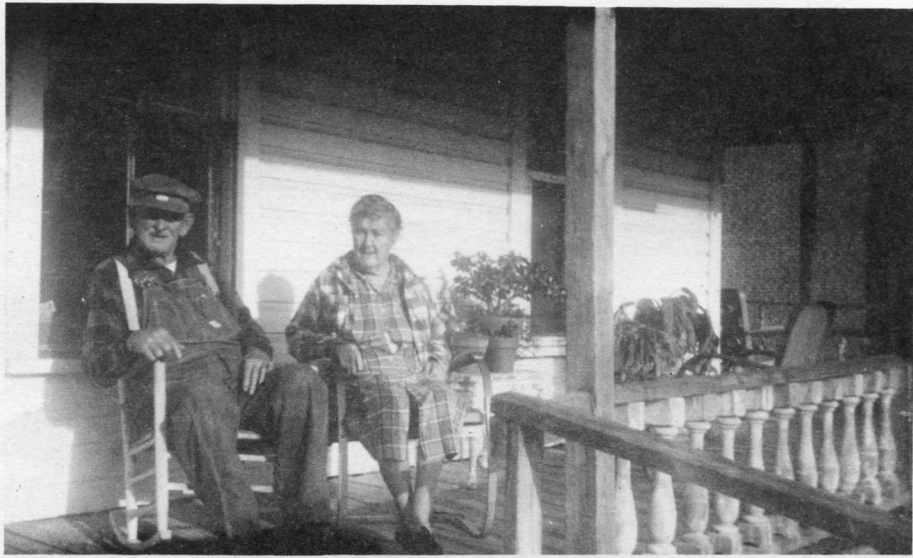
Times to Remember

Easter egg hunt, 1950's
Elena Floyd, Ethel Thompson,
Penny Floyd and
Beth Floyd, who grew up to be her
mother's computer person
in the production of this book.

Below L-R: Ethel
Drew, Skipper King,
Elizabeth King,
Gerald Tibbetts,
Irene Drew.
Seated, Martha May Johnson.

1920's hike to Wonderwood.





Places to Remember

Captain Charlie and
"Miss Frances" Drew's
front porch.



The drug store
bench. L-R: Cato Steen
and Roland King Sr.

The country store.
Robert Pickett, last
storekeeper.





Paul Kapperman, stationed at the Mayport Naval Section Base during World War II, worked with Mayport Presbyterian Church during that time.

He is the only known communicant of this church to become a minister, but was outstanding while here and has had a notable career since.



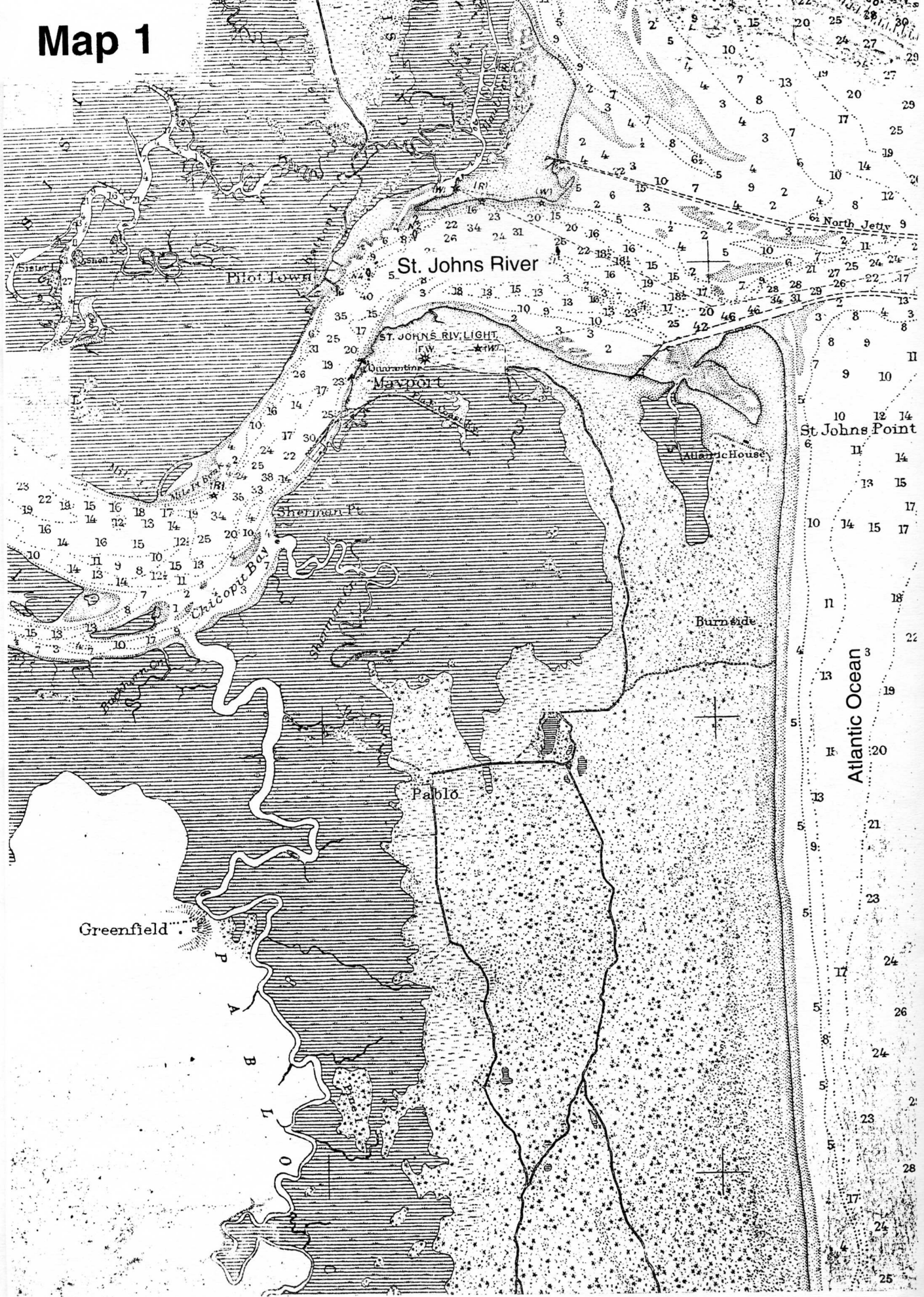
Courtesy of Florida Publishing Co.

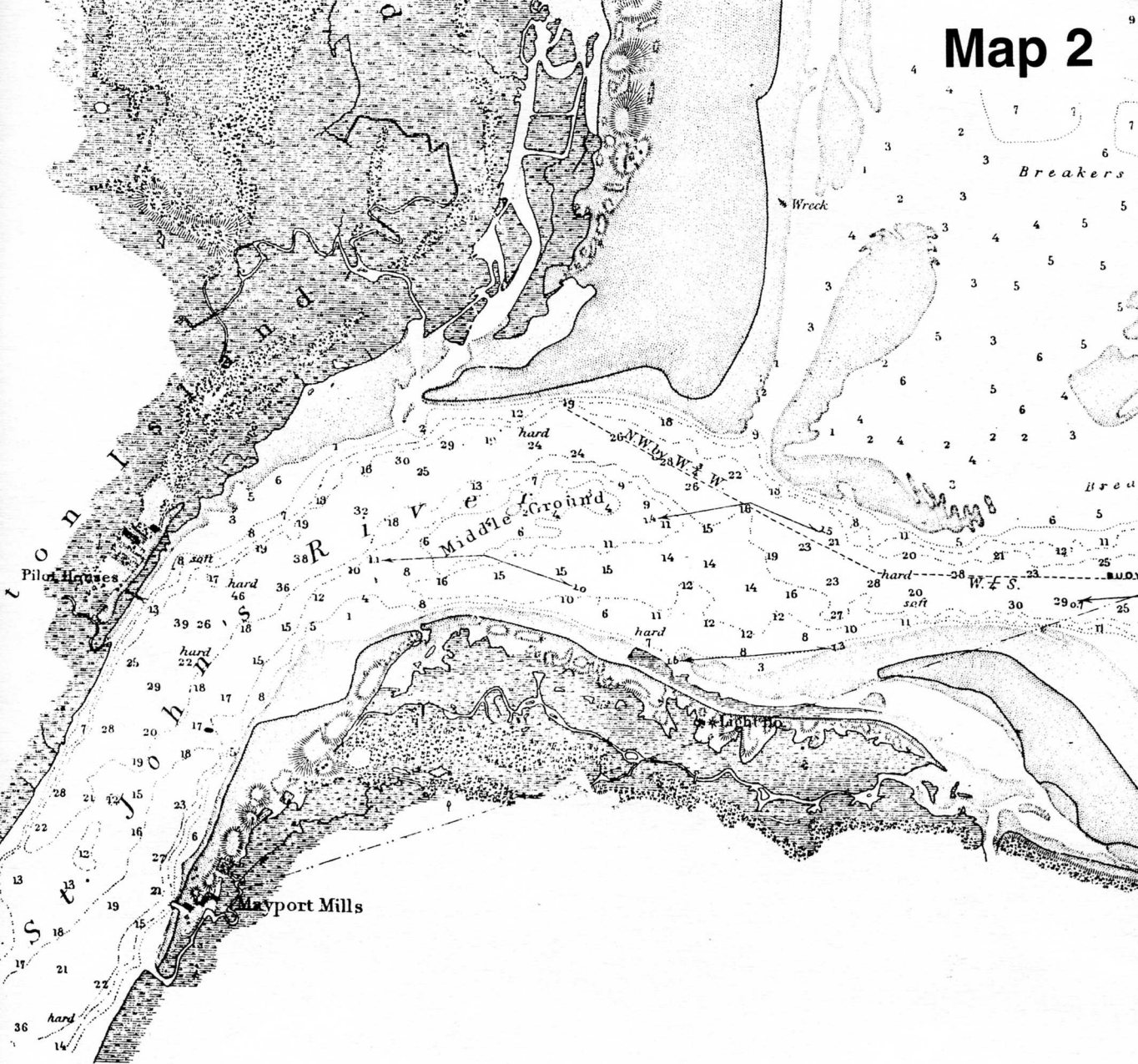
1888-1983

Fred D. Haworth, grandson of St. Johns Lighthouse keeper Eli Haworth, son of his assistant Alphonso, remembered their stories and passed them to new generations along with vivid memories from his own life.

MAPS

Map 1



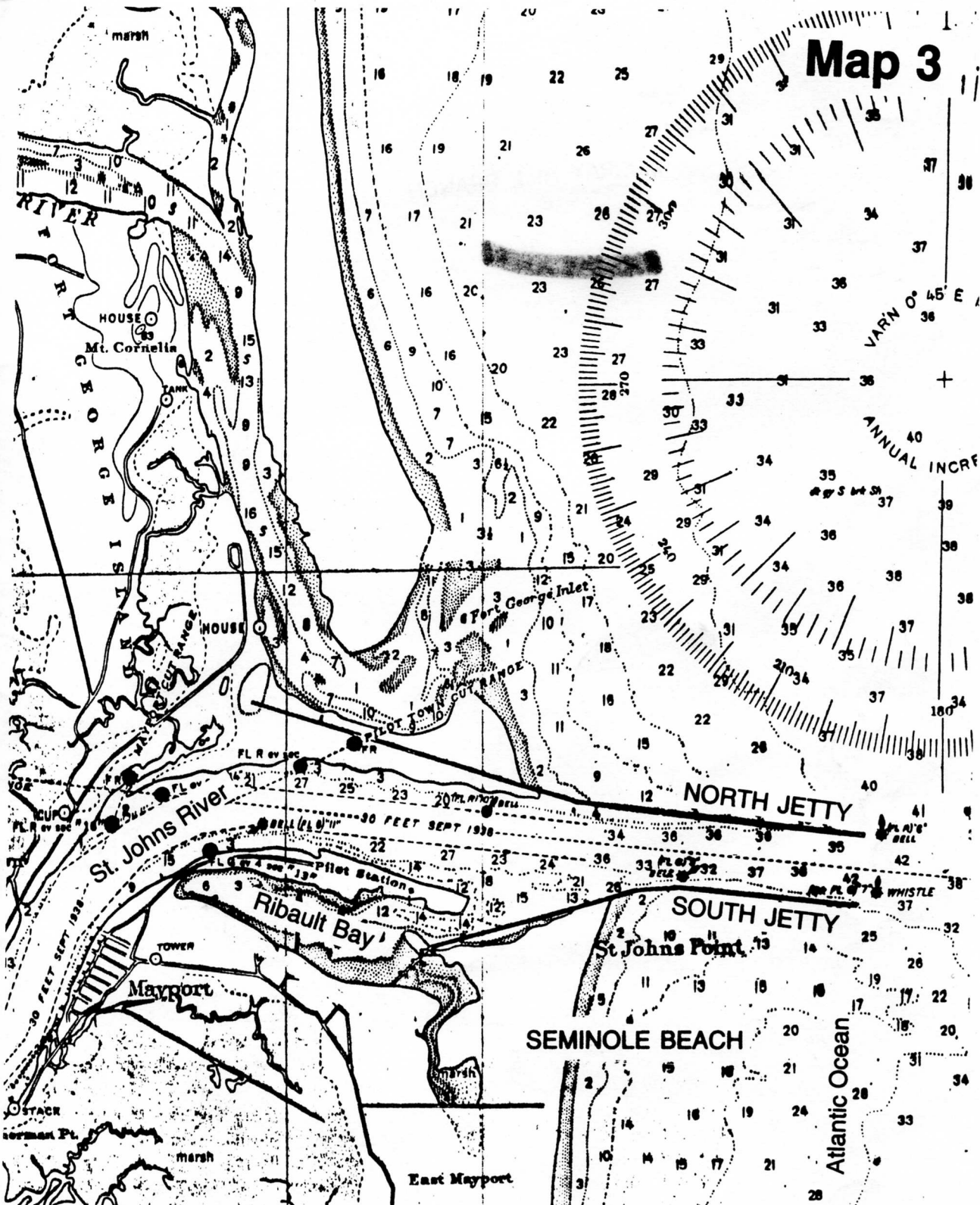


Map 1 The mouth of the St. Johns River during the tourist/railroad era. The Atlantic House was here from 1874-1916. The FEC railroad was active here during the 1st quarter of the 20th century.

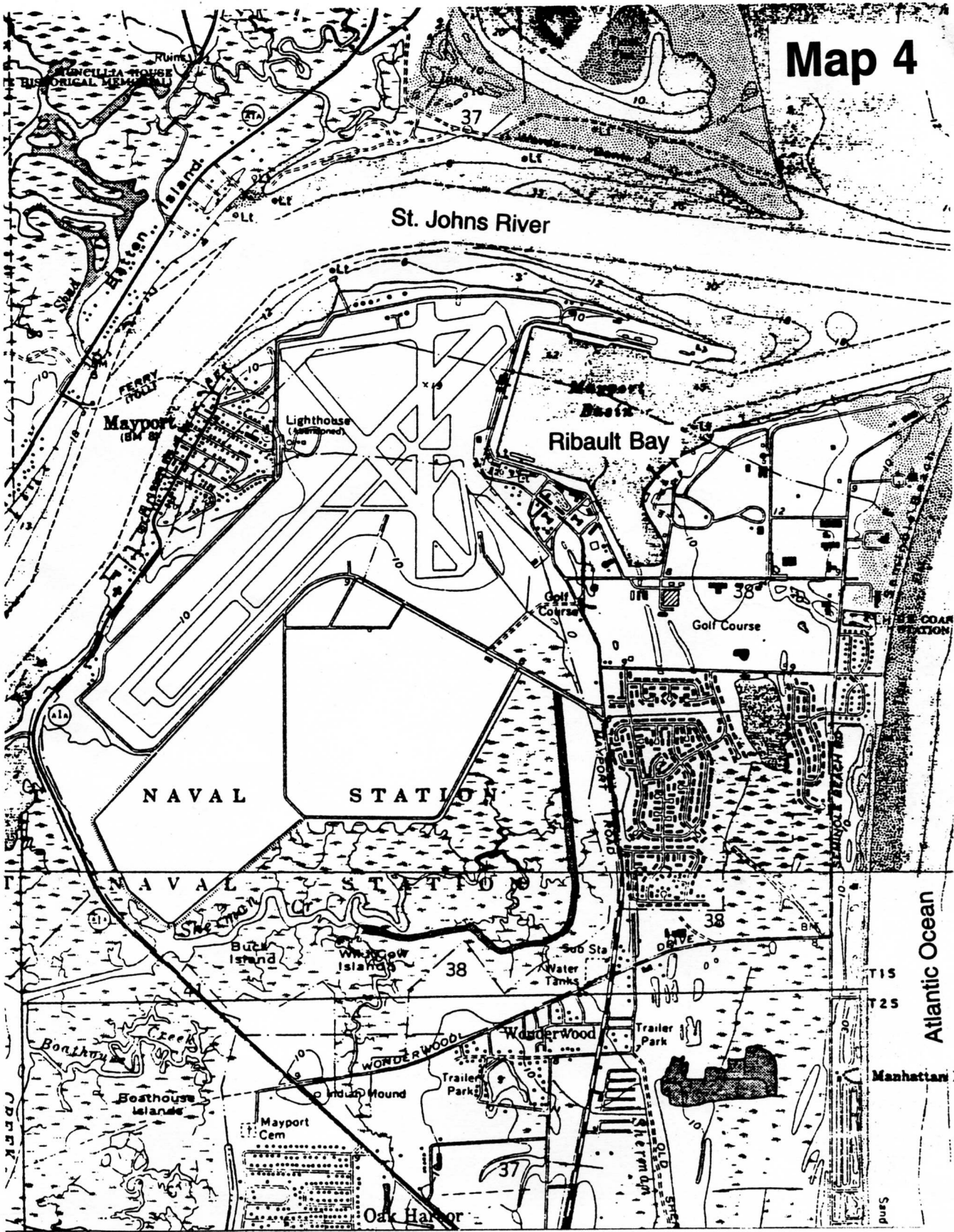
Capt. Alex Wallace, Attorney L. S. Burrows and R. M. Haworth promoted subdivisions of East Mayport and Burnside Beach during the late 1880's.

Pablo, where Oak Harbor and Mayport Cemetery now are, was an important settlement in the 1800's.

Map 2 Mayport Mills existed in Mid-19th century and was abandoned when yankees invaded.  Sand hills shown here were nearly all gone by 1970.



Map 3 Published in 1938, two years before the lands were taken by the Navy Base. Note Jetties which were begun by 1880, and Ribault Bay, which was completed by 1927. Original Wonderwood-by-the-sea was on the south shore of bay.



Map 4

Map 4 U.S.G.S. 1970 showing the Navy Base changes. Wonderwood shown here was last estate owned by Elizabeth and Jacob Stark.