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To the Register of the Land Office at *Merrinsville* *ES*

Under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved on the 4th day of August, A. D. 1842, entitled "An act to provide for the armed occupation and settlement of the unsettled part of the Peninsula of East Florida."

To all whom it may concern :

NOTICE is hereby given that under the provisions of the act of Congress above cited, I, *Peter Peterson* do hereby apply to the Register of the proper Land Office for a PERMIT to settle upon *One hundred and sixty acres* of unappropriated public land, lying south of the line dividing townships numbered *nine and ten*, south of the base line, and situated as herein described.

I aver that I am *the head of a family*

and that I became a resident of Florida in the month of *April* in the year *One thousand Eight hundred and thirty five*

I aver that the settlement herein intended is not "within two miles of any permanent military post of the United States, established and garrisoned," at the time of such settlement, and that the same is not known or believed to interfere with any private claim that has been duly filed with any of the Boards of Commissioners, surveyed or unsurveyed, confirmed or unconfirmed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTENDED SETTLEMENT.

A tract of Unsurveyed Land commencing at a stake on the North side of the Homosassa River called Prices Island running East on half mile North one half a mile West one half a mile South one half a mile to the place of Commencement
Given Under my Hand this 14th day

of June 1843
Peter Peterson
I do Certify that the above is a true copy of the Original from on file in this Office
J. M. Stephens
J. M. Stephens
Recorder

Q2-The party filing this Notice will sign his name at the conclusion of the description of the land intended to be applied for, affixing the proper date to the same—the description to be continued, if necessary, on the following page—the diagram of the survey of the land intended to be settled upon may be attached to, and form part of, this Notice. The statements herein made are to be sworn to by the applicant before a Justice of the Peace and the affidavit to be endorsed on this Notice.

JOHN P. JOHNS (b. 1830), a brother of Henry Madison Johns, is shown in the 1870 Hernando county farmer, age 40, living with Elsie (24), John (15), and Julia (3). According to information posted by Robert Johns was born in Georgia, moved to Pike County, Ala., and then to Hernando County in the mid 1850's family originally settled near Red Level near the Withlacoochee River. John P. Johns was supposedly married prior to the Civil War, then later married Elsie Peterson, whose father Peter Peterson served in the Cryst Coast Guards in the Civil War. John P. Johns supposedly served as a blockade runner off the Florida coast Crystal River. A naval report dated July 1, 1863, shows that John P. Johns and four other privates in the Army were captured by the boats of the Fort Henry while lightering cotton down the Waccasassa River. to Hernando County after the war and died sometime soon after 1885. He is shown as "Jehu P. Johns" in Captain James L. Miller's Company of Coast Guards, at Crystal River from May to August 1861.

Antoinette Beamer

Cleve Croft (father)
was 20 years old when
courthouse was moved
John Croft called - ^{80 yrs} old
re: story in paper about
moving courthouse - said
road - 5 miles between -
towns - Ino. - Secato - Mansfield

Contact
for information
and typing

off Croft Ave.

1940's + 3-2 note
for Croft Rd instead
of Bryan Hwy -
600 N. Croft Ave.

Jmw 23650-

726-1207

[Go Back](#)



[Captain Edward Croft of the Columbus Flying Artillery] [graphic]

Leader: kmKa0c

Fixed field data: khbz

Fixed field data: 991101s18uu in d

Local call number: Rc11557

Title: [Captain Edward Croft of the Columbus Flying Artillery]
[graphic]

Publication info: 18--.

Physical descrip: 1 photoprint b&w 10 x 8 in.

Series Title: (Reference collection)

Personal subject: Croft, Edward--Portraits.

Corporate subject: Confederate States of America. Army--Uniforms.

Corporate subject: Confederate States of America. Army--Officers.

Corporate subject: Confederate States of America. Army. Columbus Flying Artillery.

Subject term: Soldiers--Portraits.

Geographic term: Florida--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Portraits.

HTTP:



: Shelf number: 02306.

: tc

Held by: PHOTO

record 18 of 19 for search "Croft"

Continue search
in:
Google

Item Information | Catalog Record

[Portrait of two confederate soldiers] [graphic]

Leader: kmKa0c
Fixed field data: khbz
Fixed field data: 000215s186u
Local call number: Rc11558
Title: [Portrait of two confederate soldiers] [graphic]
Publication info: 186-.
Physical descrip: 1 photoprint b&w 8 x 10 in.
Series Title: (Reference collection)
General Note: The soldier on the left is unknown. The soldier on the right is William Gilmer Croft, Jr.
General Note: William served in the Columbus (GA) Guards. Later transferred to the Columbus Flying Artillery, a large well-appointed company raised by his father, Captain Edward Croft with 1st lieutenant Alfred J. Young. The unit left Columbus on December 23, 1861 for Savannah to protect the harbor there.
Personal subject: Croft, William Gilmer Jr.--Portraits.
Corporate subject: Confederate States of America. Army--Uniforms.
Subject term: Soldiers--Portraits.
Geographic term: Florida--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Portraits.

HTTP:



: Shelf number: 02305

: tc

Held by: PHOTO

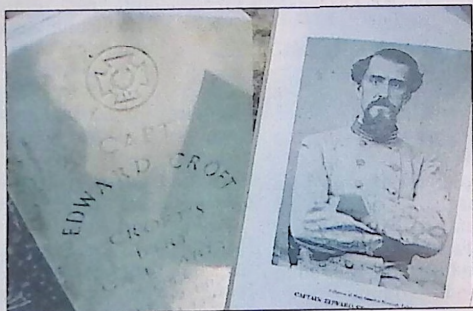


THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 2001

LAKE LIFE

Community news from Citrus County's east side

Written in stone



Capt. Edward Croft was a Confederate captain in the American Civil War, and is one of the Croft relatives buried in the Hernando cemetery.

*Pioneer Croft family's
impact can be measured
across the generations*



DAVE SIGLER/Chronicle

John and David Croft at the family cemetery in Hernando. The Croft family is one of the pioneer families of Citrus County. Some of John Croft's ancestors — the founders of the town of Hernando — are buried there.

— Pioneer Families —
C-Croft 3-1

NANCY KENNEDY
Chronicle

The Croft brothers, John and Robert, call it a "forgotten" cemetery. Right on the highway — County Road 486 — just before you reach U.S. 41 in Hernando, behind a short chain-link fence, sits the history of the town of Hernando.

Most of the graves belong to Croft ancestors, who settled in this area back in Civil War times.

"She was Mary Storey Croft, and she married Dr. Charles Nickerson — the first one buried here," explained Robert Croft, as he and his brother gave an impromptu tour of the cemetery.

Nickerson was originally from Baltimore and spent the Civil War years in Georgia. His grave lies next to his wife's.

From the back of her tombstone it says, "She founded the town of Hernando from her homestead in 1891."

Mary Croft — her family knows her as "Aunt Dot" — owned 160 acres; so did her brother. Her land was right where the railroad was about to go through, so she took 40 acres and, along with the railroad development company, laid out a town. Croft kept ownership of every other lot.

Hernando grew into a booming town. Aunt Dot bought a big house — not a log cabin, as was common in those days, but a house out of lumber. Her

66 **She founded the town of
Hernando from her homestead in
1891.** 99

Robert Croft

Explaining the role of pioneer Mary Storey Croft

husband had already died in 1887.

Downtown Hernando, where Ace Hardware is now, thrived with doctors' offices, grocery stores, everything that makes a boom town "boom." Behind the current Ace Hardware building was a two-story hotel with a ballroom upstairs.

Once the phosphate mines closed, much of the town eventually closed as well, and people moved elsewhere.

But the Croft family stayed, as evidenced by the graves scattered throughout the cemetery.

As John Croft straightened a stone that had been moved, his brother continued pointing out the

graves of their relatives.

There was William G. Croft, the first postmaster of the town.

Captain "Judge Edward" Croft, a captain in the Confederacy, who had served in the Mexican War and was a lawyer and a judge.

"His wife — my great-great grandmother — she died in 1914," said Robert Croft. "She was from Canton, Miss. That's where he met her in the Civil War. She was a nurse."

He pointed out their son, who served in the Spanish American War and his brother, who was also a judge in Citrus County. The Croft brothers said they developed their love for their family history from their father's sister, May Croft Ellis. Two years ago, she died at age 99.

However, throughout her life, she kept her nephews abreast of the stories from their past. In 1981, Robert Croft penned the book, "A Southern Legacy: The House of Croft."

Their grandfather was a Croft; their grandmother was a Van Ness. The Van Ness family settled in

Please see **STONE/Page 10D**

10D CITRUS COUNTY (FL) CHRONICLE — LAKE LIFE

STONE

Continued from **Page 1D**

an area halfway between Hernando and Inverness that was called Arlington.

Today, Arlington is still the name of the street that links U.S. 41 and Independence Highway. Just west of Independence is Croft Avenue, named for John and Robert's father.

The Croft family farm is still

there, and David, another Croft brother, sells barbecue at the edge of the farm every Saturday.

John Croft went to school in the old Hernando school building, first the wooden school building, then in the structure that's currently under restoration. Robert, the youngest brother, went to school in Inverness.

David drove Robert and a bunch of their cousins to school every day.

Before that, during World

War II, the cemetery fell into disrepair, with overgrown trees everywhere. As early as the 1930s, it was officially named the Hernando Cemetery when the WPA (Works Projects Administration) hired people to go through Florida and document the burial sites of veterans.

Now, John Croft is the one who cares for it, although the county does the mowing. Croft keeps the vines cleared, cleans up fallen branches after a storm.

The men's parents are buried in Lecanto — their mother's family is from Lecanto. When the time comes, they said, they will probably be buried in Lecanto, too.

For now, they want to let people know about the cemetery. It's part of Lake Life history.

— ■ —
Nancy Kennedy writes about community news. She can be reached at 563-5660, Monday through Thursday, or via e-mail at nancyk@hitter.net.

Judge Edward Croft.

PAGE
NO.

Excerpt from A Southern Legacy:
The Name of Croft. by
Robert W. Croft

PREPARED BY

DATE

Judge Edward Croft was born to George Croft and Mary
Marie Croft Sept 22, 1815 in Charleston S.C.

He married Susan Storey Reese - d. of Haratis Reese and
Margaret Carter Reese Oct 22 1835 in Pendleton S.C.

Only 3 children lived to adulthood - Alice, William & Mary.
All except Alice were born in Lafayette Ala. where they
had moved in 1838

Judge Edward Croft was a lawyer - Clerk of
Court, County Judge - Private in army during
war with Mexico, and a gold miner in 1949

1850 Moved to Columbus Ga. and established
Stinky-Croft Mercantile Co with his hard earned
gold. Son William was a clerk.

He owned a few slaves (house servant) as he
always lived in town.

1861

(at age
46)

In (1861) Raised the Columbus flying Artillery
to protect the harbor at Savannah. He was joined
by his son William. They left Susan and Mary
Storey "Dot" at home. (Dot was afflicted with
epilepsy. Just before the end of the war - Dot
was married to Dr Charles Pickerson) -
cont.

Judge Edward Craft

(cont.)

Charles Nickerson - Captain ^(Judge) Craft son in law came to Florida first to look things over. He wrote back to the Judge that prospects looked good.

pg. 53

They decided on a location in Central Florida near the large and beautiful Lake Tohope. It had been given the name by Indians meaning "The trout eating place".

In 1880 -

Eckman - Judge Craft, his son William and son-in-law Charles Nickerson selected their homestead, 160 acres each, then traveled to Gainesville where the land office was located. There they signed the necessary papers and the land was theirs.

The sites were in Dixie County - which became Hernando then divided into Citrus, Hernando & Pasco.

Son William became the first post master.

Judge Craft served as notary, lawyer and judge between 1881 and 1891 of Citrus County.

History of Citrus County

president, H. J. Dame, secretary pro tem, and W. H. Ross, treasurer. The group was organized to fight efforts underway to force the fencing of cattle throughout Florida. The new Association passed a resolution noting less than one per cent of the county was under fence. It went on, "Whereas, there is a large area of the county bordering on the Gulf coast that is fit only for grazing, being marshy and subject to overflow by the tides, etc." The cattlemen opposed the legislation sought by the No Fence League of Florida to require fencing. *The Tampa Times*, a strong advocate of a no fence law, conceded the law was not likely to pass in the 1921 Florida Legislature. Copies of the Citrus County resolution went to State Sen. Pasco Wilson of the 9th District and State Rep. M. C. Scofield of Inverness.

Another organization, the Historical and Scientific Society, was formed in Inverness with Attorney Strauss L. Lloyd as president.

REMEMBERING THE VETS

In Hernando, ladies of the community observed Confederate Memorial Day by cleaning up the cemetery and putting flowers on the graves of the old Confederate veterans buried there. Those remembered were Judge Edward Croft, William G. Croft, Thomas R. Bailey, Charles E. Nickerson, Francis M. Lamon and Samuel R. Frink.

The following year, on Jan. 2, 1922, Citrus County Confederate veterans still living attended a meeting of Theodore Brevard Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, at a New Year's dinner at the Dixie Hotel. Those attending were Dr. A. W. Lamar, C. Graham, J. C. Priest, J. I. Grambrell, Eugene Zimmerman, M. J. W. Dean and W. S. Paul.

An Inverness leader, George W. Scofield, was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Florida, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, at the convention in St. Petersburg in May, 1922.

The advent of the automobile was still getting a "bad press" in 1922. Newspapers carried the story about the automobile being indicted on charges of immorality by the DeKalb County, Ga., Grand Jury.

"The advent of the automobile has opened new and grave dangers to the moral purity of our young people," the Grand Jury presentment declared, and recommended that mothers refuse to permit their daughters to go on "joy rides" unchaperoned. "Numbers of young lives are wrecked or started on the road to ruin," they said.

Crystal River gained valuable citizens in January, 1919, when Dr. and Mrs. Porter James Hudson came to town and he became a general practitioner. No matter what time of day or night, Dr. Hudson was always willing to go to homes of those who were ill, and particularly during the malaria epidemic times he was a very busy doctor. He helped to wipe out malaria from Citrus County. He often told of being paid by his patients with farm foods rather than cash. The family was active in the First Baptist Church and Dr. Hudson became a deacon in 1922. He also was a school trustee, and active in the Masonic lodge in Inverness.

A native of Chiefland, Dr. Hudson attended the University of Alabama Medical College and later was graduated from Emory. Dr. Hudson died Nov. 18, 1960, at the age of 73. Mrs. Beulah Hudson, his widow, died in 1969.

The Hudsons had three children: Ruth (Mrs. F. Jones Smiley) Lake Worth; Margaret (Mrs. Edwin Braun, Jr.) Savannah, Ga.; and James Hudson, Lake Worth, who for many years was principal of the Crystal River school.

Telephones were becoming more commonplace in Citrus County and in 1919 Otto Wettstein, Jr., who was to found the Florida Telephone Corporation in 1925, built the exchanges at Inverness and Crystal River.

In 1922, Crystal River got its first telephone switchboard operator, Mrs. Jessie Sassard. She served in this capacity for many years. The office living quarters were above A. D. Williams'

Great Uncle

Judge Edwin Edward B. Croft

CC June 11, 1999

daughter of Charles
Cleveland Croft and
Annie L. Van Ness

Edwin's grandchild

Beulah Armstrong, 80, of Crystal River

Beulah E. Armstrong, 80, of Crystal River died Wednesday, June 9, 1999. She was born in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and came to Crystal River eight months ago from Clifton Park, N.Y. Mrs. Armstrong was a retired teller in the banking industry. She was Catholic and attended St. Peter's Catholic Church of Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Surviving are five daughters, Marcia VanNess of Crystal River, Judy Toussaint of Albany, N.Y., Paula Williamsen of Fort Myers, Toni Treadway of Crystal River and Terrie Boisseau of Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; seven grandchildren; one great-granddaughter and one great-great-grandson.

Fero Funeral Home, Beverly Hills.

Mark Bransfield, 39, of Inverness

Mark Robert Bransfield, 39, of Inverness died Monday, June 7, 1999. A native of Long Island, N.Y., he was born Aug. 25, 1959, to Robert and Joyce Heinz Bransfield, and moved to Citrus County 23 years ago from Selden, L.I., N.Y. He was Episcopalian. He worked in the construction industry.

Surviving are his wife, Vicki Kovach Bransfield of Inverness; son, Matthew David Bransfield of Inverness; mother, Joyce Bransfield of Floral City; father, Bob Bransfield of Hauppauge, N.Y.; paternal grandmother, Margaret Drape of Selden, L.I., N.Y.; brother, Adam Bransfield of Casselberry; half-brother, Robert J. Bransfield of Hauppauge, N.Y.; and half-sister, Margo Bransfield of Hauppauge, N.Y.

Chas. E. Davis Funeral Home, Inverness.

May Ellis, 99, of Hernando

May Croft Ellis, in her 100th year and one of Citrus County's oldest natives and pioneer families, entered into eternal rest on

June 10, 1999, at her home in Hernando. She was born at the Sweetheart Phosphate Mine west of

Hernando on Feb. 17, 1900, to Charles Cleveland Croft and Annie Lenthal VanNess. The Croft family came from Texas in 1881 and settled in the Hernando area. Her great-aunt Mary Storey Croft Nickerson founded the town of Hernando in 1891 from the northernmost 40 acres of her homestead. Her mother's VanNess family had come to the county in 1881 and settled midway between Hernando and Inverness



May Ellis

in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Inverness. May will long be remembered by the multitude of her surviving kinfolk who number in the hundreds.

Survivors include son, Joseph Cranford Ellis of Jesup, Ga.; daughter, Annie Virginia Ellis Sellars of Hernando; eight grandchildren, Don Griffin, Jackie Griffin Headless, Stephen Sellars, Tim Sellars, all of Hernando, Rosa Sellars Craig of Loganville, Ga., Susan Sellars Williams of Raleigh, N.C., Jill Ellis of Albany, Ga., and Lyn Burnett of Tifton, Ga.; 15 great-grandchildren and nine great-great-grandchildren.

Chas. E. Davis Funeral Home, Inverness.

Betty Fonk, 74, of Homosassa

Betty Louise Fonk, 74, died Tuesday, June 8, 1999, at her residence in Homosassa. Born Nov. 19, 1924, in Bloomington, Ind., she was the daughter of Glen Head and Gertrude (Hill) Scott. She started her career in the late 1930s with her family working on the Cole Brothers & Clyde Beatty Circus as an entertainer. Mrs. Fonk retired from Indiana University where she worked as administrative assistant to the director of the IU Art Museum. She was Catholic. She was preceded in death by her mother and father and her brother, Henry "Sonny" Scott.

Survivors include her son, John A. Fonk of Homosassa; stepfather, H. Louis Scott; and one niece, Cynthia Louise Ison.

Wilder-Fountains Funeral Home, Homosassa Springs.

Edgar Fulton Jr., 44, of Homosassa

Edgar "Buster" Lee Fulton Jr., 44, of Homosassa died Monday, June 7, 1999. He was born in Roanoke, Va., and came here 18 years ago from Delton, Mich. Mr. Fulton was a supervisor in the roofing industry. He was Christian.

Surviving are his wife, Pam Fulton of Homosassa; three sons, Edgar Lee III and wife Talli of Battle Creek, Mich., James of Delton, Mich., and Ryan of Homosassa; three daughters, Sara Fulton, Nicole Fulton and Brande Fulton, all of Homosassa; two grandchildren, Rita and Seth Fulton of Battle Creek, Mich.; mother, Pansy Jane Sluss of Roanoke, Va.; father, Hubert Siner and wife Sarah of Homosassa; five brothers, Hubert James Siner Jr. and wife Kathy of Melbourne, Lilburn Lynn Siner and wife Pam of Roanoke, Va., James William Siner and wife Tammy of Lecanto, Jimmy Hanson and wife Noah of Homosassa and Johnny Siner of Homosassa; three sisters, Candace Stevenson and husband John of Homosassa, Michelle Mason and husband Kevin of Homosassa, and Marie Cardinali and husband Jeff of Orlando; uncle and aunt, Willy and Louise Siner, uncle, Mike Siner; many nephews and nieces.

Fero Funeral Home, Beverly Hills.

Ralph Harrington 73, of Dunnellor

Ralph "Hop" Harrington Dunnellor died Tuesday, 1999, at his residence under the loving care of his family and Hospice of Citrus County. Hop was born on July 30, 1926, in Providence, R.I. He was Army veteran. He received Purple Heart for combat during World War II. He was member of the New England Racing Circuit from 1944. During his years in auto racing he competed at tracks: Consdale, Norwood, W. Stafford and Seekonk. He had race cars for Rolland I and Dick Armstrong. He served as crew chief for Geoffrey Bodine, Brett A. Bodine and Ronnie B. Hop was honored for his merits in auto racing in 1999 when he was inducted into the New England Antique Hall of Fame.

He is survived by his son and Sharon Pierce-Harrington Dunnellor, Rod and W. Harrington of Crystal River; grandchildren, Sherilyn I. Gainesville and Adam B. Crystal River.

Bynie Harrison, 82, of Beverly Hills

Bynie W. Harrison, 82, of Hills died Wednesday, 1999. He was born in Beaufort, Ga., and came to Beverly Hills 21 years ago from Detroit, Mich. Mr. Harrison was an independent tractor. He was a World Army veteran. He was a member of the First Baptist Church Beverly Hills.

Surviving are his wife of 67 years, Dora Kimball Harrison, Beverly Hills; two sons, J. Winter Haven and De. Douglasville, Ga.; five daughters, Rita Poriet, Fort Lauderdale, Bonnie Pr. Wyoming, Mich., Connie Br. Cedar Springs, Mich., and Cantu of Houston, Texas; brothers, Lester of Atlantic City, N.J., Lester of Kentucky and O.D. of Conyers, Ga.; sister, Dorothy Jones of Be. Ga.; 18 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.

Hooper Funeral Home, Beverly Hills Chapel.

O.J. Humphries, 73, of Inverness

Dr. O.J. Humphries, 73, of Inverness died at Citrus Memorial Hospital on Thursday, June 10, 1999. Born in South Carolina Dec. 17, 1925, to the late David and Corrie Severance Humphries, he came to Inverness 33 years ago from Miami to establish

Hernando Cemetery

Location : Located on the corner of North Calomonden Terrace
and East Oleander Lane in Hernando. Twp 18s, Range 19E, Sect.
26. Recorded March 1996

COLLEY, Willie A. 22 Jan 1896 2 Oct 1906
TAYLOR, E.A. 9 May 1898 8 Aug 1908
CROFT, Infant D/O C.C. & A.L. Croft died Sep 1893
CROFT, Infant child of W.G. & E. Croft born & died 18 May 1883
CROFT, Luke E. 23 July 1887 4 May 1890
CROFT, Horace R. 30 May 1880 18 July 1883 S/O W.G. & E.
STOREY, Susan no dates

CROFT, Capt. Edward 22 Sep 1815 2 Dec 1896 Btry Ga. Light Art.
CROFT, 2nd Lt. William G. 9 Apr 1839 26 Aug 1899 Ga. Light Batry.
C.S.A.

Broken stone

CROFT, Ella Bonthal 19 July 1848 26 Mar 1914
CROFT, John W. Co. A. 1 Fla. Inf. Spanish American War. no dates
CROFT, Edward B. 16 July 1866 8 Sep 1937

† Edwin Same
COLLEY, James M. 1 Feb 1867 22 Nov 1927
COLLEY, Kate 17 Nov 1853 2 June 1940
MAY, James Franklin (Dink) 21 Nov 1923 29 Aug 1938

GUYNNE, Walter 28 June 1895 14 Dec 1910 S/O E.A. & M.E. Guynn
-WILLIAMS, Cora Allene 31 July 1910 30 Aug 1911
GUYNNE, Mary E. 1849-1942
NETTLES, Leslie A. 28 Jan 1907 17 May 1907 S/O W.E. & A.E.

CAREY, George H. 1885-1915
FAYE, Raymond 1900-1915
OGLE, James T. 5 Dec 1868 16 Oct 1918
OGLE, Essie L. 13 Oct 1890 18 Dec 1907 D/O J.T. & A.E.

marker with cross no dates

FRINK, Martha C. 1850-1899
FRINK, Samuel R. 1850-1899
PETERS, 8 Feb 1907 6 Apr 1907 s/o L.F. & B.A. Peters

MORROW, Pearl 26 Feb 1897 22 Sep 1898
-LAMON, ~~E.~~ Marion Co. C. 14 Miss. L.A. C.S.A. no dates
BASDEN, Glen Missouri PVT 138 Inf. 35 Div. WW 1 died 31 Jan 1939

Sister of Edwin

WESTBROOK, Mary Alice 6 Feb 1869 21 Jan 1958 W/O James Ernest
WESTBROOK, James Ernest 1861-1929
WESTBROOK, Clarence Ernest 22 May 1887 25 June 1893
WESTBROOK, Sue 28 Dec 1899 20 Jan 1900
WESTBROOK, Reese Croft 2 Aug 1906 7 July 1910

NICKERSON, Charles E. Asst. Surg. Wayside Hosp. C.S.A.
2 Feb 1834 13 Nov 1887
NICKERSON, Mary Storey Croft Dot 8 Oct 1846 7 Apr 1896
D/O Edward & Susan Croft, W/O Dr. C.E. Nickerson

COFFEE, William of Floral City to Hattie Williams Floral City
23 Jan 1905 by Geo. W. Archie M.G. Page 454

COKER, James to Georgia Hopkins 10 May 1903 by Rev. P.P.
Williams Pastor C.M.E. Church Page 372

COLBERT, Edward of Floral City to Jane Williams of Floral City
15 Mar 1900 by Rev. J.E. White Floral City Page 266 (colored)

COLEMAN, Dan Citronelle to Christiana McIntyre Citronelle
10 June 1906 by Rev. Leonard Thompson Page 548

COLEMAN, Richard to Hettie S. Ward 21 Oct 1903 by O.B. Brown
M.G. Page 444

COLEMAN, William Citrus County to Anica Parker Citrus County
14 Feb 1900 by O.M. McQueen M.G. Page 263 (colored)

COLLINS, Frank to Agnes Washington 16 Dec 1903 by Geo. W. Archie
M.G. Page 395

COLLINS, John , Palmetto Mines to Mrs Patsie Thomas Palmetto
Mines 2 Apr 1896 by Rev. E.D. Myrick M.G. Page 149 (colored)

COLLINS, W.B. OF Fort White, Fla to Bessie Pittman of Floral
City 29 Apr 1906 Geo. T. Nelson J.P. Page 537

COLSON, Albert of Istachatta to Hetta Butler of Bushnell, Fl.
21 June 1905 by J.W. Knight N.P. Page 473

CONNER, Claude E. to Rubie C. Dunklin 2 Feb 1888 by J.W. Fleming
County Judge Page 8

CONWAY, Walter to May T. Nobles 19 Mar 1894 by Rev. E.K. Whidden
Page 97

COOPER, Kain Inverness to Lizzie Smith Inverness 9 Apr 1906
Geo W. de Muro County Judge Page 550

COOPER, Robert of Hernando to Bessie Henderson, Hernando
5 Apr 1896 by Willis Brice M.G. Page 150 (colored)

COPELAND, Hardy to Mary Turner 19 May 1894 by R.B. Williams,
Clergyman Page 104 (colored)

COPELAND, Ike of Floral City to Mardasette Mills Citrus County
11 Feb 1901 by I.M. Barton County Judge Page 299 (colored)

COPELAND, N.W. to Lizzie Wall 25 Jan 1903 by Geo W. Archie M.G.
Page 363

COPELAND, Will Floral City to Mrs Annie Smith Floral City
6 Mar 1898 by Oliver McQueen Min. Gos. Page 194 (colored)

COTTON, Hondro to Tobie Stipe 1 June 1888 Page 11

COVINGTON, Milton J. to Jessy Smith 22 May 1904 by Rev James S.
Goff Page 417

COX, Azee of Crystal River to Lizzie Williams Crystal River
1 Apr 1906 by John W. Davis J.P. Page 530

CRAWFORD, M.C. of Crystal River to Julia Mathews Crystal River
19 Apr 1906 by O.B. Brown M.G. Page 550

CRAWFORD, Sam Citrus County to Susan Williams Citrus County
14 Jan 1900 by J. Wesley Allen N.P. Page 257 (colored)

CRITTENDON, William Homosassa Springs, Fl. to Willie Lisk of
Pine Level, Fl 15 June 1895 by S.Q. Clark J.P. Page 128

CROFT, Chas. G. to Annie L. Van Ness 1 May 1892 by Chas.S. Young
Page 62

CROFT, E.B. Hernando to Maud L. Chaplin of Hernando 17 Nov 1896
by Charles S. Young Min. Gos. Page 160

CRUMP, E.B. TO Delia Ware 2 Jan 1892 by Wm J. Baker N.P. Page 57

CURRY, Julius of Hernando to Emma Adams 9 Apr 1906 by Rev. T.J.
Williams Page 531

Judge
Father of Edwin B. 53

On February 6, 1869, a little daughter, Mary Alice, was born to Ella and Billy. While they lived in Texas, four more children were born: Charles Cleveland in July 1871, Susan Minerva in May 1875, John William in November 1878, and Horace in May 1880.

The United States government was opening up land in Florida to be settled by homesteaders about this time. Judge Croft began thinking about moving his family to Florida, for the prospects were good. The weather was much more pleasant there and the citrus industry was proving successful. His son-in-law, Dr. Charles Nickerson, who had come to Texas with the family, went to Florida first. He sailed by schooner from New Orleans to Cedar Key, Florida, a port on the regular run to Port Tampa. He went by rail to Waldo, Florida and from there he traveled around the state, getting an idea of the opportunities which this new state offered. While in Florida he purchased a house in Waldo. He wrote to the Judge that the prospects looked good and urged him to send Dot and her mother to join him in Waldo. They soon came by schooner to Cedar Key and by rail to Waldo. The Judge and son, Billy, came next. The three men left Dot and her mother in Waldo, and they traveled over the state, asking questions of the settlers. They finally decided on a location in central Florida, near the large and beautiful Lake Tsala Apopka. It was surrounded by large, majestic, moss-draped oaks and had been given its name by the Indians, meaning "The Trout Eating Place." Each man selected his home site, which consisted of 160 acres, then they traveled to Gainesville, where the land office was located. There they signed the necessary papers and the land was theirs. Their home sites were adjoining, the Judge having the middle section, his son on the east side and his son-in-law on the west and all of the land touched the lake.

From Gainesville they traveled to Ocala where they bought mules, horses, wagons and supplies, and drove back to the selected locations, a distance of about thirty miles. In future years Ocala was to be their main source of supplies, medical attention, and entertainment center. The men came in 1880 and the rest of the family moved to Florida in 1881.

The home sites were in Benton County which was afterwards called Hernando and then divided into Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco Counties. The men pitched a tent, in which they planned to live until they could erect some kind of home. It took back breaking labor to clear even a small spot to build and none of them had ever been used to this kind of labor before. They realized that they would have to have help and Judge Croft decided he would send for some of the negroes who had begged to come with him to Florida when he left Texas. A former slave, Nelson Lyon, who was born in slavery and whom he had left in charge of the plantation and who was trustworthy and an excellent manager and a young negro boy, Wylie Thompson, were the two most anxious to come with their beloved "Marse Ed". So he sent money and instructions to Ella to send the two on to Florida. Shortly after they came and the Judge had gotten plans mapped out for the construction of two log cabins and a lean-to shed for the kitchen and eating area, he went back to Texas to finish out his

term as judge. While he was gone for six months the rest of the men labored very hard getting the two cabins built. Besides building the living quarters they had to clear land for a corral for the horses and mules. Clearing the land was harder labor than the actual building and it seemed to them that work went awfully slow. The raw wilderness was around them and the wild animals prowled even in the daytime. Some of them continued to hunt and the game and fish from the lake provided them with meat, which proved to be their main food. Living in the tents was rugged and conditions were almost unbearable. They labored hard in spite of the many difficulties and managed to complete the living quarters, such as they were, by the time the Judge returned.

Before the Judge returned to Florida he sold his plantation and home in Texas and sent Ella and the children to New Orleans to stay with Susan's brother's widow, Louisa Reese. After their visit with Louisa they took the train from New Orleans to Waldo, Florida, where they were to stay with Susan and Dot until the men could come for them. No trains ran any nearer to their home sites than Ocala.

When the men came for Ella and the children, her hopes for the future fell. The men looked so tired and so unkempt, the teams so crude and rough, that she decided right then that she wouldn't take the girls with them. She thought it would be bad enough for the boys, but even worse for the girls. So she left the two girls, May and little Susan with their grandmother Susan and Aunt Dot. After a hard, rough journey by wagon through swamps and deep rutted sand roads they finally reached the home site. Ella's possessions which she had carefully packed, many coming from her girlhood home, looked so out of place in the rough log cabins, but she made the best of her situation and took over the insurmountable task of cooking, washing, and cleaning for the three men, four boys, and the two negroes. Eddy was fifteen, Cleve was almost eleven, John was three and Horace was one year. They were delighted with their new surroundings, especially the lake where they looked forward to splashing many a day away. Little Horace was only one year old when they moved to Florida and lived to be 8 years old before his death in July 1888.

Eddy and Cleve proved to be welcome help toward their rugged living. "Uncle Lyon" taught the boys how to handle and use their guns and how to care for the mules and horses. Soon the boys were providing wild game and fish for the table. They also brought water from the lake for cooking and drinking.

The Judge resigned his judgeship in Texas, completed the sale of his property there, and came back to Florida in May 1881, where he remained the rest of his life. He was anxious for Susan, Dot, and the girls to join them and so went for them soon after he came back to Florida. They traveled by mule train from Waldo to the home site which was a long and tiresome journey. May was twelve years old and little Susan was six. They were looking forward to going to their new home and could scarcely wait for the end of their journey. Grandmother Susan was not anticipating living in this wild



THE FAMILY OF JUDGE EDWARD CROFT IN HERNANDO, FLORIDA

(left to right): Edward Benthall Croft, Annie Lenthal Van Ness Croft, Susan Minerva Croft Sanders, Judge Edward Croft (in chair) , Charles Cleveland Croft holding Edith Croft, Ella Benthall Croft holding Mary Susan Sanders, and William Gilmer Croft.

at heart and in spite of all obstacles he had to satisfy that adventurous urge of his.

Finally, the new home was finished and they moved in with a great sense of relief for now they would all have more room and really enjoy living there. There were four bedrooms on the second floor, so sleeping arrangements were no problem. Ella, as soon as she got the kitchen provided with the necessary cooking utensils, began to make plans for a vegetable and flower garden. Land was cleared and ploughed and both gardens planted. The long back porch proved to be a favorite place for the family to gather. There were comfortable rockers, palmetto fans for keeping the insects away, and a wonderful view of the lake. The lake became known as Croft Lake and is called that to this day. The house was always referred to by all the family as the "Big House" probably in comparison to the small log cabins. Ella soon had the old-fashioned seven sisters roses growing on a trellis, as well as honeysuckle and woodbine. She also planted phlox and other annuals in the front yard. The men cleared land and built a barn for the livestock and cleared and ploughed a large area for the citrus trees which the Judge had planned on planting ever since coming to Florida. Citrus groves were springing up all around them and proving to be successful. They purchased a cow with a calf, so now they could have milk and butter. Ella persuaded the men to build a washbench down by the lake and with the help of the children, who carried water from the lake for washing she managed to keep the family's clothing clean.

The large home site which Dr. Nickerson had acquired was surveyed and laid out in streets and lots were sold for homes and stores. The Doctor reserved a select spot for his home overlooking the lake. The town was given the name of Hernando, in honor of Hernando De Soto, who had traveled his ill-fated journey through this area. A public road was opened up from Ocala to Tampa and the road ran within fifty yards of the Judge's front porch. W.H. Havron was instrumental in establishing a Post Office in Hernando and Billy Croft, who stood the Civil Service Examination, was appointed the first Postmaster. The Spooners, the Harrisons, the VanNesses, and Judge Barton moved into the surrounding country about the same time as the Judge and his family did. Wertz and Pike opened the first store. It was south of the town and they boarded with the Judge's family. The Judge was delighted when the orange and grapefruit trees began blooming and the air was fragrant with their odor. He felt a great satisfaction in realizing that his dream of owning a citrus grove was at last fulfilled and hoped that before long the trees would be bearing.

Mr. M.V.B. Van Ness opened a saw mill on Gopher House Pond south of Hernando and Tompkinsville, afterwards named Inverness, was chosen as the county seat. Little settlements such as Anita, Arlington, and Mannfield sprang up around the county and more settlers moved into the county.

Dr. Nickerson hadn't been well for some time, so he and Dot went to Homosassa on the Gulf Coast, hoping that he would benefit from the salt air. While there the doctor died and Dot had to

arrange for his body to be taken home. Imagine her grief as she accompanied the body of her beloved Charley on that miserable journey home. He was the first person to be buried in the little cemetery which the family was to give to the town of Hernando. He was buried on November 13, 1887.

In 1888 Phosphate was discovered by a man named Voght in Dunnellon only fifteen miles from Hernando. Land was becoming valuable for prospecting for phosphate and the Florida Phosphate Company made the Judge a generous offer for the log houses and surrounding land for that purpose. Mr. L.R. Chazal was manager and Mr. Ancrum from Jasper, Florida was superintendent. Judge Croft accepted their offer as he had no further use for the land or the cabins.

Prospecting paid off and soon there were many phosphate mines near Hernando. Among them were King, Dunnellon Phosphate Company, Standard, Mutual, Buchenbach, Chisholm, and Early Bird Mines. Men of all races and kinds came in or near the town to work in the mine. Almost overnight Hernando grew from a few houses to a wild, lawless town and gambling, fighting and often murders took place. Five or six grocery stores of various types were opened, also a drugstore, restaurant, bakery, ice cream parlor, a millinery store and a men's tailoring shop. The Silver Springs, Ocala and Gulf Railroad was built and the right-of-way for the railroad was purchased from Dr. Nickerson's widow, Dot. The streets were widened and hard-rock and wooden sidewalks were built. May Croft Westbrook and husband, Jim, built and opened a hotel. Several boarding houses were opened providing accommodations for the managers, superintendents and some of the mine workers. By about 1900 the mines were operating at full capacity and hundreds of workers were employed. A Mr. Steven as paymaster, and his assistant were carrying the payroll for Kin Mine by horse and buggy from town to the mine, when they were ambushed and murdered and the money stolen. Four negro men were suspected of the murders and they were captured and lynched.

The Croft citrus grove, carefully cultivated and fertilized by the Judge and his grandsons, began to bear and it wasn't long before they were selling fruit and also shipping it to market. The Judge made the crates and the boys picked and packed the fruit and for two seasons their fruit was in great demand. The freeze of 1894 and 1895 killed the grove completely and the Judge was not equal to the struggle of overseeing the replanting. Instead, he took his daughter, Dot, and went on a visit to relatives in South Carolina and Georgia. He also sent Ella and daughter, Susan, to Mississippi to visit her relatives in Canton and Sharon. Grandson, Edward went to Texas for a visit, and grandson, Cleve, visited in Georgia.

Before the railroad was built, a stage line and private conveyances ran to Ocala, the nearest railroad station. They also went to Brooksville and Crystal River.

Susan Reese Croft was an Episcopalian of strong faith and at the same time conscious of her ancestry and her status in the

communities where she had lived. After moving to Florida, since there was no church in Hernando, she taught her grandchildren from her Episcopal prayer book. Later on, after her death, a Presbyterian church was built at Gopher House Pond and several members of the family joined. Much later, a Methodist church was built in Hernando and now several churches are there.

The Croft family, like the other settlers in Citrus County, endured many hardships. Malaria was very prevalent there and all of the family at some time or other had it. Ella and Billy Croft lost two small children with malaria, Horace, a little boy of eight years and Lulu, a little girl of three years. They were buried beside their grandmother Susan in the family cemetery at the home place.

In spite of the necessary hard work and heart-breaking sorrows, they were conscious of the lack of cultural advantages. The "Ladies Literary Society" was organized at the Croft home and met regularly for some time. They bought a piano and had musical evenings. The woman found time to entertain and often served visitors tea and cookies. They called it "taking tea." Many of the settlers, aware of the advantages of living near the beautiful lake, bought sailboats and the young folks enjoyed sailing and boat racing. Today boat races are still held on the lake.

The Judge's grandchildren were all married in the Presbyterian Church. Cleve married Annie Van Ness, May married James Westbrook, Edward married Maud Chaplin, Susan married Brittain Sanders and John married Cecile Mann in Ocala. May, Cleve and Susan all had children and many of them or their descendants still live in Hernando.

In 1896 Dot Croft Nickerson died and was buried in the cemetery in Hernando beside her husband. The bodies of Susan Reese Croft and the bodies of the two Croft babies were moved to that cemetery.

During the period 1881 to 1891 the Judge was very prominent in Citrus County, serving as notary, lawyer and judge. He was always called Judge Croft and was loved and revered by citizens of the county. The loss of his loved ones and the hardships he had endured began to take its toll and at the age of 81 on December 2, 1896, he passed from this earth. He was a gentle, devoted husband, father and grandfather. He was truly one of God's noblemen. He was buried in the cemetery which the family had given to the town. His son, William Gilmer, who served in the Confederate Army for four years is buried beside him and his grandson, John, who served in the United States Army during the Spanish-American War is also buried there. Ella Benthall Croft, who was the backbone of the family, was buried in the cemetery in March 1914. Many of the Judge's great and great great grandsons served in the United States Army or Navy in World War II. Most of them live in or near Hernando today.

The Judge's grandson, Edward, sometimes called Edwin, served as judge of Citrus County for years. He had always admired his grandfather, and altho' deprived of a formal education, he studied law by correspondence and elected judge of the county in 1932.

History of Citrus County

bananas, persimmons, pecan and hickory nuts, tea and coffee, "strawberries are unsurpassed in size, color, flavor and perfume", whortleberries, blackberries and dewberries "grow wild in the utmost profusion."

The 1886-87 Florida Gazetteer reported that Hernando County had a greater number of acres of land assessed for taxes than any other county in the State, and "Its lands for the most part are abundantly productive."

HERNANDO THE TOWN

The town of Hernando, named for the explorer Hernando DeSoto, who passed this way, emerged when three men and their families came here from Texas in 1881 and settled. The trio were E. Croft, W. G. Croft and Dr. C. E. Nickerson. Soon there were six families. In 1882, there were 11 families; 1883, 18; 1884, 25. The population in '85 was 30. In the 1886-87 publication, W. G. Croft was listed as postmaster and E. Croft as a lawyer, notary and Justice of Peace.

Webb's reported in 1885 that there were valuable stone quarries and plenty of good clay in the Hernando vicinity. The shores of the lake were bordered with orange groves, the owners including I. D. Spooner, T. Harrison, A. D. Tompkins, and Duey & Co.

"The society here is of the best, and many of the residents have ample resources," Webb's reported in 1885. It said there is a good opening for merchants and mechanics. Orange Grove Academy with a Mrs. Perkins as principal was described as a "thriving institution." A sawmill of good capacity was operating, and, the reference work noted, "Insects and mosquitoes are but little known."

It was noted that Lake Chalo Apopka (sic) was "navigable for good size steamboats." Also, that there was no stage line. "Private conveyances to Ocala, the nearest railroad station, time one-half day."

The Gazetteer listed the Rev. J. R. Biggs as clergyman. Growers and their acreage were shown as R. P. Owen, 2; James Ed Reeves, 4; W. A. Sheppard, 2½; James A. Vayles, 10, and R. O. Woodfire, 5.

When interviewed in 1964, at the age of 79, Donald Croft, descendant of one of Hernando's founders, recalled when phosphate pits were in full operation and laws regarding child labor were non-existent.

Croft described the town during the period as something that would be found in the wild west complete with gambling, "sporting women", and a killing or murder at least every Saturday night.

Croft said he worked in the pits for 15 cents an hour. At each pit there was a commissary or dry goods store owned and operated by the pit owner and employees were compelled to purchase from the store on credit and later the money was deducted from their pay.

This old-timer related the story of a "shoot-out" that took place in Hernando in the early 1900's when the town marshal squared off with the town's "bad guy" behind two trees. When the smoke of the battle cleared, both men emerged with their guns empty and without a scratch on either one of them!

Croft remembered as a boy travelling to Inverness in late 1906 or 1907 to see the first car that had ever been in the area. It was driven from Tampa and took three days. The owner spent the night at the Orange Hotel. Eventually, a few local citizens, Ashley Spooner and W. A. Boswell among them, acquired cars.

W. H. Ogle who was 79 in 1974, descendant of a Hernando founder, told a reporter that as a child of 12 he worked in the phosphate pits for thirty cents a day. Ogle was among citizens who incorporated Hernando in the 1920's and he later was elected Mayor in the only election the city held. The city charter was left dormant for many years, then in the early 1970's the citizens there voted to abandon the charter altogether in a referendum vote.

New Court House, Jail, Masonic Temple

of 13 miles through Chattahoochee County, Ga., which will be made this summer." Willis Powell was city editor of *The Times*.

Dr. George Dame was being kept busy these days setting the arms of "automobilists" who broke them cranking their cars. Among the victims were Earl Dampier in Inverness and J. T. Love in Floral City.

There were only five Socialists reported in Citrus County by Supervisor of Registration W. J. Moon in 1914. The veteran official ran for re-election that year and got a big boost from the *Chronicle*, which commented "While the compensation for the work is exceedingly light, Mr. Moon is as faithful in the performance of his duties as if he was receiving \$10 a day, and will continue to be if chosen again. But few will have the job, owing to the pay allowed, but in reality it is one of the most important offices to be given out in the June primary, and we do not believe a better man than W. J. Moon could be found in Citrus County to fill it."

Moon served as Supervisor until his death on Dec. 24, 1929, at the age of 71. A native of Alabama, he married Mattie Dunn at New Hope, Ala., in 1890, and they immediately came to Floral City. He was active in the Methodist Church.

Another public official to get a wholehearted endorsement of the *Chronicle* was County Treasurer Frank M. Dampier, Sr. "Mr. Dampier is too well known by our people to need commendation from us," the newspaper stated. "He has held the office for seven years past, and not a penny has been found missing. He is capable, honorable and trustworthy and, furthermore, is worthy of any office to be given out by the people."

The matriarch of the Croft family passed away when Mrs. Ella Benthall Croft died on March 26, 1914. She was born in 1848 and moved to Florida in 1881 and settling in Hernando. She united with the Presbyterian Church in 1894 but in 1906 joined the Methodist church. She had nine children, five of whom survived. They were E. B. C. C. and J. W. Croft, and Mrs. J. E. Westbrook and Mrs. B. H. Sanders. A friend who wrote the obituary for "Grandmother Croft" said of her: "No purer, sweeter, gentler spirit have we ever met."

Edwin B.

Born 1866-
died 1937

THANK YOU FOR NOT SMOKING!

George Butler, the 70-year-old editor of the *Chronicle*, joined the "anti-cigarette craze" and wrote a blistering editorial against the weed. He noted that Thomas A. Edison, who employed 6,700 men in his plants at West Orange, N. J., had placarded the works with signs reading, "Cigarettes not tolerated. They dull the brain." He abhorred cigarettes, although he was a heavy smoker of cigars and liked to chew tobacco. Butler predicted that "the time will come soon when a cigarette smoker cannot get a situation anywhere in the State." He also predicted that "Cigarette smoking will soon be barred from every vocation, not only in Florida, but in every other State, not only for the loss of time alone, but from the danger of fire attributed thereto."

A front page item in the *Chronicle* in the summer of 1914 revealed that "Mr. Voyle, with a large force of men, is putting up poles and wire in and about Floral City for the East Florida Telephone Co."

By mid-summer of that year, Albert W. Butler had become editor and owner of the *Chronicle*. Each week he was informing Citrus County on the war crisis in Europe. There was ominous news right on the home front about the war in the Hernando News Notes: "The mines of the Dunnellon Phosphate Co., in this vicinity closed down on Friday eve-last for an indefinite period, pending operations of the European war. The sand pump at Plant Eleven will continue to run on for the present, or until further orders. The prospecting work in operation by the Buttgenback Co. at Plant Twenty-Six, has been discontinued for the present, also the prospecting by J. D. Robertson on the lands of Marion Co., north of town, and this city has a deserted look at present." European nations, particularly Germany, were the major phosphate buyers.

R. G. Wood, the Inverness "agent" for Ford Motor Co. was advertising low prices on Ford cars

History of Citrus County

president, H. J. Dame, secretary pro tem, and W. H. Ross, treasurer. The group was organized to fight efforts underway to force the fencing of cattle throughout Florida. The new Association passed a resolution noting less than one per cent of the county was under fence. It went on, "Whereas, there is a large area of the county bordering on the Gulf coast that is fit only for grazing, being marshy and subject to overflow by the tides, etc." The cattlemen opposed the legislation sought by the No Fence League of Florida to require fencing. *The Tampa Times*, a strong advocate of a no fence law, conceded the law was not likely to pass in the 1921 Florida Legislature. Copies of the Citrus County resolution went to State Sen. Pasco Wilson of the 9th District and State Rep. M. C. Scofield of Inverness.

Another organization, the Historical and Scientific Society, was formed in Inverness with Attorney Strauss L. Lloyd as president.

REMEMBERING THE VETS

In Hernando, ladies of the community observed Confederate Memorial Day by cleaning up the cemetery and putting flowers on the graves of the old Confederate veterans buried there. Those remembered were Judge Edward Croft, William G. Croft, Thomas R. Bailey, Charles E. Nickerson, Francis M. Lamon and Samuel R. Frink.

The following year, on Jan. 2, 1922, Citrus County Confederate veterans still living attended a meeting of Theodore Brevard Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, at a New Year's dinner at the Dixie Hotel. Those attending were Dr. A. W. Lamar, C. Graham, J. C. Priest, J. I. Grambrell, Eugene Zimmerman, M. J. W. Dean and W. S. Paul.

An Inverness leader, George W. Scofield, was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Florida, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, at the convention in St. Petersburg in May, 1922.

The advent of the automobile was still getting a "bad press" in 1922. Newspapers carried the story about the automobile being indicted on charges of immorality by the DeKalb County, Ga., Grand Jury.

"The advent of the automobile has opened new and grave dangers to the moral purity of our young people," the Grand Jury presentment declared, and recommended that mothers refuse to permit their daughters to go on "joy rides" unchaperoned. "Numbers of young lives are wrecked or started on the road to ruin," they said.

Crystal River gained valuable citizens in January, 1919, when Dr. and Mrs. Porter James Hudson came to town and he became a general practitioner. No matter what time of day or night, Dr. Hudson was always willing to go to homes of those who were ill, and particularly during the malaria epidemic times he was a very busy doctor. He helped to wipe out malaria from Citrus County. He often told of being paid by his patients with farm foods rather than cash. The family was active in the First Baptist Church and Dr. Hudson became a deacon in 1922. He also was a school trustee, and active in the Masonic lodge in Inverness.

A native of Chiefland, Dr. Hudson attended the University of Alabama Medical College and later was graduated from Emory. Dr. Hudson died Nov. 18, 1960, at the age of 73. Mrs. Beulah Hudson, his widow, died in 1969.

The Hudsons had three children: Ruth (Mrs. F. Jones Smiley) Lake Worth; Margaret (Mrs. Edwin Braun, Jr.) Savannah, Ga.; and James Hudson, Lake Worth, who for many years was principal of the Crystal River school.

Telephones were becoming more commonplace in Citrus County and in 1919 Otto Wettstein, Jr., who was to found the Florida Telephone Corporation in 1925, built the exchanges at Inverness and Crystal River.

In 1922, Crystal River got its first telephone switchboard operator, Mrs. Jessie Sassard. She served in this capacity for many years. The office living quarters were above A. D. Williams' stores which were located on Citrus Avenue (now a vacant lot). Mrs. Sassard was a widow with

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During the period 1881 to 1891 the Judge was very prominent in Citrus County, serving as notary, lawyer and judge. He was always called Judge Croft and was loved and revered by citizens of the county. The loss of his loved ones and the hardships he had endured began to take its toll and at the age of 81 on December 2, 1896, he passed from this earth. He was a gentle, devoted husband, father and grandfather. He was truly one of God's noblemen. He was buried in the cemetery which the family had given to the town. His son, William Gilmer, who served in the Confederate Army for four years is buried beside him and his grandson, John, who served in the United States Army during the Spanish-American War is also buried there. Ella Benthall Croft, who was the backbone of the family, was buried in the cemetery in March 1914. Many of the Judge's great and great great grandsons served in the United States Army or Navy in World War II. Most of them live in or near Hernando today.

The Judge's grandson, Edward, sometimes called Edwin, served as judge of Citrus County for years. He had always admired his grandfather, and altho' deprived of a formal education, he studied law by correspondence and elected judge of the county in 1932.

6.114.1. Alice Rutledge Croft was born 22 Sept 1836, the daughter of Edward Croft and Susan Storey Reese. She married on 20 Dec. 1854, Henry David Cropp of Columbus, Ga. He was of the Roman Catholic faith. She died on 22 May 1857 at Columbus, Ga. No issue.

6.115.2. William Gilmer Croft was born on 9 April 1838 at Chambers County, Alabama, son of Edward Croft and Susan Storey Reese. He married Ella Benthall on 10 Oct. 1865 in Sharon, Mississippi. Ella Benthall was the daughter of John C. Benthall of Wales and Minerva Richards. She was born on 19 July 1848. William Gilmer Croft served as a second lieutenant under his father in the Columbus Georgia Light Artillery in the Civil War. He served under G.B. Young in the same company after Edward Croft was invalided out. William Gilmer Croft studied accounting at Vanderbilt University. He enlisted in the Confederate Army after leaving Vanderbilt. He served in Virginia during the early part of the War Between the States as substantiated by the Pension application of his widow. He was paroled out at Meridian, Mississippi on 10 May 1865. It is said that he had the heel of his boot shot off by a yankee, but was never injured during the war. After returning home to Columbus, Ga. following the war, he decided to go to Mississippi and marry a lady he had met while fighting there---Ella Benthall. They were married by the groom's father, Edward Croft. It is not known where they settled following their marriage. His father, moved on to Texas. However, some report that William G. Croft and Ella Benthall's eldest son, Edward Benthall Croft was born at Union Springs, Alabama. It is known that William G. Croft's uncle, Cleveland L. Croft lived at Union Springs, Ala., though no certain dates are known. However, it is known that William G. Croft and his family moved to Cass County, Texas and purchased land from his father on 2 January 1869. The remainder of William G. Croft's children, excepting Lulu Estelle, were born in Cass Co., Texas. In 1881 the entire family moved to Hernando, Florida and homesteaded there. William G. Croft was the town's first postmaster and he raised some citrus crops. He died of Bright's Disease on 26 August 1899 and was buried in the Hernando Cemetery. Ella Benthall Croft lived on at Hernando with her family until she died there on 26 March 1914. She was buried beside her husband and children. She had received a pension from the state government for her husband's service during the Civil War in the amount of \$10.00 per month.

An incident told to the author by Annie Lenthall Croft Spooner recalls her father Charles Cleveland Croft remembering as a boy the day a letter edged in black was delivered to their home. It bore the news of the death of Ella Benthall's mother. This incident stood out indelibly in his memory.

The children of William Gilmer Croft and Ella Benthall were:

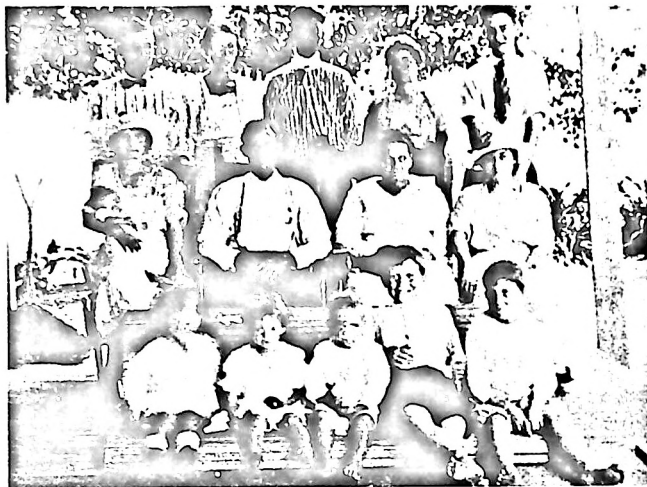
- 7.120.1. Edward Benthall Croft (name later changed to Edwin)
 b. 16 July 1866, Union Springs, Alabama
 d. 8 Sept. 1937, Hernando, Florida
 m. Maude L. Chaplin

- 7.121.2. Mary Alice Croft
 b. 6 Feb. 1869, Cusseta, Cass Co., Texas
 d. 21 January 1958, Hernando Florida
 m. James Ernest Westbrook
- 7.122.3. Charles Cleveland Croft
 b. 7 July 1871, Cass Co., Texas
 d. 8 July 1954, Hernando, Florida
 m. Annie Lenthal Van Ness
- 7.123.4. Susan Minerva Croft
 b. 5 May 1875, Cass Co., Texas
 d. 9 July 1951, Tallahassee, Florida
 m. Brittain Hunter Sanders
- 7.124.5. John William Croft
 b. 11 November 1878, Cass Co., Texas
 d. c. 1927, buried Hernando, Florida
 m. Cecile Mann
- 7.125.6. Horace Reese Croft
 b. 31 May 1880, Cusseta, Cass Co., Texas
 d. 18 July 1883, Hernando, Florida
- 7.126.7. Lulu Estelle Croft
 b. 23 July 1887, Hernando, Florida
 d. 18 July 1890, Hernando, Florida

*Edwin B.
 McPha*



ELLA BENTHAL, WIFE OF WILLIAM G. CROFT (6.115.2)



HARLES CLEVELAND CROFT'S YOUNG FAMILY: (back row-1.to r.) Donovan
roft; Edith Croft Ogle; W.H. Ogle,Sr.; May Croft; Fred Spooner.
2nd row-1.to r.) Ruby Spencer Croft holding Lenthal Belle Croft;
harles Cleveland Croft; Annie L. VanNess Croft; Annie L. Croft
pooner. (front row 1. to r.) Charles Ogle; Eileen Ogle; James F.
roft; Cleveland Benthall "Ben" Croft; John Edward Croft.



JOHN WILLIAM CROFT (7.124.5.)
son of William Gilmer Croft and Ella Benthall



CHARLES CLEVELAND CROFT
at 7 months of age



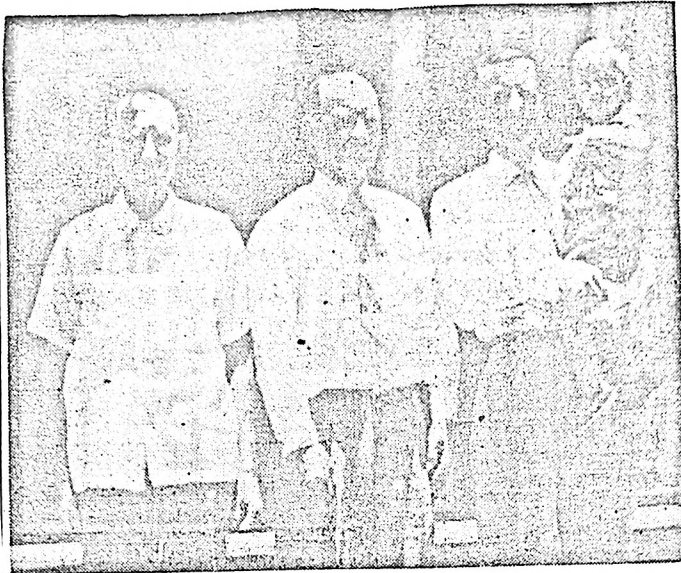
ANNIE LENTHAL VAN NESS
about 12 years old



JOHN WILLIAM CROFT
(7.124.5.)
Spanish-American War Uniform



EDWARD BENTHAL CROFT
7.120.1.
age 1



FOUR GENERATIONS — Pictured left to right are C. C. Croft of Hernando, his son, W. D. Croft; Grandson Donovan S. Croft and Great Grandson Kenneth Donovan Croft.

Great Grandson Helps C. C. Croft Celebrate Eighty-First Birthday

By MRS. R. M. SPIRES

July 4th was a gala day at the Croft homestead on Lake Tsala Apopka which through more than 50 changing years has had many gala days.

This special occasion, however, was the gathering of three generations of children, grand-children and great-grandchildren. Along with many other relatives to congratulate Mr. Cleve Croft on his eighty-first birthday.

Mr. Croft came to Citrus County with his parents, two brothers and two sisters of whom only he and his sister, Mrs. Mary Westbrook survive, when Citrus County was still a wilderness.

He has seen the county progress through the hectic boom of phosphate mining, and the struggle of more

than one financial depression to the present era of fine pastures and pure bred cattle and hogs on what was once open range with raw honey stock, from primitive farms to present day methods of scientific farming and citrus growing.

The lake shores, once a jungle of oaks and palmetto festooned with wild grape vines, all of which furnished food for cattle, hogs and countless wild game on which there was no closed season, have become a haven of rest and health for many who have cleared the jungles and erected small modern houses in which to relax and enjoy the fruits of the labors of more youthful years.

Mr. Croft views all these changes with no yearning for the "good old

(Continued on Page Four)

MORE ABOUT—

C. C. CROFT BIRTHDAY

(Continued from Page One)

days". While still able to enjoy a day in the saddle along with other range riders his hearing is not good and he spends much of his time reading and reminiscing.

Since the passing of his faithful companion of fifty-five years, some of his children have lived in the home with him.

At present the oldest son, Rev. W. D. Croft, retired Nazarene preacher, with his wife are living there. Incidentally Rev. Croft is the oldest son of his first son, the oldest Croft grandson, and the grandson's first son the oldest great grandson.

After a bountiful dinner with plenty of birthday cake to serve to all callers many friends came to honor this venerable gentleman. Ninety five persons signed the guest book.

MRS CROFT PRAISED FOR HER GOOD WORK

By MRS. R. M. SPIRES

Annie Lenthal Van Ness, daughter of M. V. B. Van Ness and Anne Lenthal Eels Van Ness, was born in West Point, Wisc., Oct. 13th, 1871. With her parents, brothers and sister, she came to Florida in 1881, thus becoming one of the pioneer citizens to whom this section of Florida is greatly indebted.

May 1st, 1892, she married Charles Cleveland Croft member of another prominent pioneer family. In 1902 they built their present home on the shores of lovely lake Tsala Apopka. There they reared three daughters and four sons.

Mrs. Croft was active in every phase of work that helped to promote better living. She was a charter member of the Hernando Methodist Church and served faithfully many years as organist, Sunday School teacher and president of the Womans Missionary Society.

Later she and her family withdrew from the Methodist Church and were instrumental in establishing the Church of The Nazarene in Hernando. Her loyalty to the cause of Christ and her love for humanity made her life a testimony for the cause she loved.

She entered into eternal rest, after five years of intense suffering, on April 10, 1951, less than a month before her 59th wedding anniversary, leaving besides the devoted husband, three daughters; Mrs. W. H. Ogle, Hernando; Mrs. T. C. Ellis, Rocky Mount, N. C., and Mrs. F. E. Spooner, Hernando; four sons, Rev. W. D. Croft, Live Oak; C. Benthal, John E., and James F. Croft, Hernando; 24 grand children and 26 great-grandchildren; one sister, Mrs. Sarah Chappell, Kendrick, Fla.; three brothers, J. S. Van Ness, Dunnellon; M. M. Van Ness, Inverness, and R. E. Van Ness, Hernando.

Funeral services were conducted in the Hernando Church of The Nazarene April 13, by the local pastor, Rev. H. L. Lewis assisted by Rev. J. E. Redman from Plant City and Rev. J. H. Drake, from Tampa, both former pastors. Mrs. Derr at the piano accompanied Mrs. J. H. Drake, who sang. A large concourse of friends accompanied the bereaved ones to Inverness where her casket was tenderly borne to its last resting place by grandsons as pall-bearers. The beautiful and profuse floral offerings were silent tributes of love and sympathy. Truly a good woman has gone Home but her Christian influence will live on.

Citrus County Chronicle, Thursday, April 19, 1951

during the past year for h building. The church now total membership of more

two new members have d to the church roll during nth period, only four mem- z lost by letter, making a in membership of 28.

advancement the church is the creation of a build- the money to be used for urch sometime in the fu- nued bn Page 8).

to Allotment e Distributed

an 7,000 Pounds To Given To Relief nts Next Week

l allotment of more than ds of Irish potatoes will ed free to relief clients in on of Citrus county next . Schlemmer, WPA audit . Schlemmer, WPA audit Citrus county, who will be of the distribution an- ay.

allotment was distribut-

ammer said the distribu- e made probably Thurs- and Saturday of next e had been advised by uarters that the potatoes led to arrive here next

nily certified as a relief ceive an average of from unds of the potatoes, he e according to the size of s. There are approxi- families listed as clients .y.

00 pounds of the pota- distributed to Inverness Schlemmer said, as there ts here. The Inverness will be from the com- r at the rear of the In- g company's store.

tributions will be made . Homosassa, Crystal ndo, Floral City, Holder unnellon.

es are perishable Mr. rges all clients to call re at their commodity ickly as possible after e potatoes.

FIN BUYS UP S STORE STOCK

n, operator of the Grif- l Poultry market here, ough out the entire ry remnants and other

The session were Frank Morris, Sam Cooper, Mr. Hendix, Edgar L. Bee- son, J. W. Sasser and Rev. E. C. Tyner.

Simmons Forms New FFA Chapter

Agriculture Instructor Will Teach In Crystal River As Well As Inverness

A new Future Farmers of Ameri- ca chapter for Citrus county was organized at the Crystal River high school last Friday by W. H. Sim- mons, vocational agriculture instruc- tor for this county.

Membership of the new chapter comprises students in Mr. Simmons' vocational agriculture class at the school.

Buster Johns was elected president of the group. Clifford Harmon was chosen vice president, F. M. Pearl, jr., secretary, Hoy Williams, treasurer and Winifred Burké, re- porter.

Besides the officers other mem- bers of the chapter are Billy O- Berry, John Brooker, Harold Har- mon, Charles Pearl, John King, Dowell King, Junior Allen, E. J. Al- len, Tim Wise, James Hudson and James Turner.

Mr. Simmons' vocational agricul- ture work in the Crystal River school began with this term. Last term he confined his daily classroom work only to the Citrus high school here, with one class a week in two of the small schools of the county.

Under his new schedule he will teach in the Inverness school every morning and at the Crystal River school every afternoon on week days.

The Crystal River Future Farmers held their first regular meeting Tuesday night with a large attend- ance. Plans were made at the ses- sion for agricultural work projects for the year to be carried on as sup- plimental work to classroom studies.

Mr. Simmons said yesterday that his agriculture class in the Inverness school shows an increase over last year, the first year the subject was taught in Citrus county. The class now has an enrollment of 34 stu- dents, he said, as compared to 28 last term.

The Future Farmers chapter, com- prising the members of the class, elected officers for the coming year at a meeting last Friday. Harold Thomas was elected president, Carl Deal vice president, Hugh Knowles secretary, Henry Landrum treasurer and Claude Johnson

Coming Year

The senior Baptist Young Peoples union, which has been inactive dur- ing the summer months, was reor- ganized at a meeting last Sunday night, with the following holding office:

Ann Williamson, president; Norma Lee Wagner, vice president; Milton Clegg, secretary-treasurer; Mrs. E. C. Tyner, pianist; Mary Lowe, cap- tain of group number one; Lamar Morris, captain of group number two; W. H. Simmons, quizz leader, and J. A. Thompson, B. Y. P. U. di- rector.

CC - September 1937
Judge E. B. Croft

Funeral Today
D. Sept. 8th
Former County Judge Dies In Hospital In Ocala Yesterday Morning

Judge Edwin B. Croft of Hernan- do, formerly county judge for Cit- rus county and long a leader in pol- ital and civic affairs of the county, died in the Munroe hospital in Ocala yesterday morning after a long pe- riod of poor health. He was 71 years old.

A complication of heart and kid- ney trouble caused his death. He was taken to the Ocala hospital Monday night in the Conrad & Mor- ris ambulance when his condition be- came grave.

Funeral services will be held this morning, Thursday, at the home. Burial will be in the Hernando cemetery under the direction of Con- rad & Morris.

Judge Croft was a native of Ala- bama, but had been a resident of Citrus county for more than 40 years. He was appointed county judge in 1925 when Judge Strauss Lloyd resigned the office. Judge Croft served until 1929 when Judge Allan McFarland took over the of- fice, having defeated Judge Croft in the primaries.

Prior to serving as county judge, Mr. Croft was justice of peace at Hernando for more than 30 years.

Judge Croft is survived by his wife, Mrs. Maude Lena Croft, a brother, C. C. Croft of Hernando, two sisters, Mrs. B. A. Sanders of Reddick and Mrs. Mary Westbrook of Jacksonville, and an adopted daughter, Miss Helen Croft, 18, of Hernando.

FLORIDA GETS BREAK

Tampa, Sept. 8.—(FNS)—Florida

to the WPA state offices for ap- proval.

E. D. Henry, WPA area engineer, has given the go ahead signal by re- questing the city council to prepare complete details for the proposed work.

The project, if approved, would call for the expenditure of at least \$10,000, part of which would have to be furnished by the city; the bal- ance to be a grant by the WPA.

The county commissioners have agreed to cooperate with the city by providing the rock for the work, which would pay the city's share of the project. Thus the city would have no cash outlay.

Community leaders have long- sought to have Inverness' Main- street improved, as it has been in- timated that unless this work is done the state road department might build a cut-off on state road five, which would run this highway around Inverness.

Examinations Will Be Given Teachers

Tests For Certificates Will Be Held In The Courthouse Here Beginning September 16th.

An examination for all grades of Teacher's certificates will be held in the courthouse Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Sept. 16, 17, 18, I. R. Nolen, Superintendent of schools, has announced.

Teachers from other counties who want to stand the examination are required by state law to secure writ- ten permission from State Superin- tendent Colin English of Tallahas- see and their own county superin- tendent, upon forms provided by any county superintendent.

Applicants who desire to stand the examination for primary or special certificate are required to get writ- ten permission from the state super- intendent before the examination be- gins.

All applicants intending to take the examination are required to noti- fy Superintendent Nolen as to what kind of a certificate is desired upon forms furnished by any county super- intendent, before the examination begins.

All applicants must supply them- selves with pen, ink and legal cap paper and pay the fee of \$1 for third grade certificate, \$1.50 for second grade certificate and \$2 for first grade or special high school certi- ficate.

METHODIST SERVICES

Rev. C. E. Cook, Methodist minis-

Source: The Tampa Daily Times
Thurs. Feb 25, 1933
Page 5

C. W. Croft

MR. CROFT has lived in Homosassa for the past thirty years and now represents District No. 2 as county



commissioner. In addition to these duties, he operates a successful mercantile and wholesale fish business in Homosassa. During the World war he served in the United States navy. He is an active member

of the American Legion, Disabled Veterans, Woodmen of the World and a Mason. Mr. Croft was born in Hernando county.

Middle Ground Oct. 18th 1840
 Dear Cousin & friend
 Your esteemed favor of Sept. 10th is at hand
 you may be sure it was at welcome
 visitor to my dwelling I have long looked
 for this pleasant news & had come
 to the conclusion that you had forgotten me
 I will now proceed to give you all the news for
 and for Mrs. Stet & living at the same place
 since adding along it is slow & rising
 A fine crop is to be had from about 4
 bushels of corn I made about 200 bushels of corn
 which is about 10 barrels Sugar & Syrup
 Potato crop is fair for a good crop
 general thing is at a good even
 especially the church & ornaments
 but like is our pastor the best
 have also everything all appear
 to be careless & unconcerned
 at sister Mrs. I fall on a visit
 she makes her home
 I study as my house
 pretty much helpless she has
 sent her out of the house for
 3 or 4 weeks. Lody is a little
 crazy she has lost her
 baby but died on the 24 of August
 she had her oldest child
 Sept. she has been quite
 sick at while Bush has
 been in better health
 fact in colored people
 consideration of sickness

between the two Rivers James W Jones has
 been quite sick & his two children with the
 Chills & fever. As they arrived again he is at home at
 Head Spring Place. Now the Market Place Jimmy has
 lost down his horse at Short time. Back he came
 come to the him. Cottons are mounted. Cottons are at
 at his same old place getting a young strong
 he has lost his horse has some chills & fever in
 the family. John P. Jones remains at his place
 doing tobacco. Will some fever in his family
 John Willis & family is all with Cows fever has
 had at Riding. Her Lip which give her mounted
 Pains & throats her in the fever. She is well now.
 Thomas his sold out going to move on an island
 on Salt River about 3 miles from the Rock
 he thinks he is living in the best portion
 of Baga. Deep the cliff with him I think it will
 be over the left. Robert Allen was up here at Short
 time back he said he is owing very well to speak
 of moving to Texas at some time. I saw at
 Mrs. Cantabria your old friend is living at
 John's old place near by the getting a large stock
 as you might expect. Midday at 2 days
 old. Dr. Davis is at the old place owing very bad
 lots of. Prudence he is owing as a Christian. I send me
 your I believe I will take better care of them ^{that} putting in the
 Collins Patrick's. Will send all the letters. I have plenty of
 by saying. John remains ^{years of service} at the ^{of A. H. Jones}

(17)

Salt River Fla. Apr. 21st 1872

Dear sister, brother and nephews I take the present opportunity of dropping you a few lines in answer to your kind letter which I received a short time back and was very glad to hear from you all once more and to hear you were tolerably well - This leaves me tolerably well. Mr Willis had a severe attack of sholic short time back caused from sickness from hand lifting he is about over it now - it seemed as if he would die - it was the first spell he has had since that was a baby he had been hauling up some cedar very hard work for one hand to do I think was what brought it on him - The children are all going to school now to a miss Blane from South Carolina we have a nice school room as near as any as Sister Puff was to mother in Ala. our neighbour Mr Morton is a little farther ^{than} the schoolhouse - it is nearly half way between us - This is the Mr Morton that lived at the Middle ground near Early when you lived in this country - we can pass on land back and forth - The only places on the Islands arrange so conveniently - the children are learning very fast - we have a three month school now but expect to continue it 3 or 5 more my children have had no advantages of school much since we have been in this country we expect to have a school every year now until we educate our children it is pretty late on two to pay \$30 per month and board a teacher that is what we are pay

ing now the school has ^{been} in session 7 weeks I have had
the teacher up to this time we are very well pleased
as you wanted to know how we like the Islands I
am well pleased the longer I stay the better I like we are
all well pleased none of us willing to go back to the coun-
try we can live like fighting cocks here when once get a
start - we are eating hard head cabbage, Irish potatoes, onion
~~and turnips~~ ^{sweet potatoes} and all such every day

3. Sweet potatoes raised last year we have a good many
on hand finest kind more than we can use we averaged
upwards 1100 hundred bushels to the acre last year we
have 1 bbl of Irish potatoes planted now I wish you had some
of these they are fine some of them large as my fist nearly - our corn
and corn looking well we have some cotton growing it is look-
ing very well they cultivate their crops with hoes what work it gets
too rough for plowing until the roots rot out - once and a
while we have a blow from the southwest that send us
a big tide it has covered our little Island that our houses
are on several times nearly all over only once all over but
its fast but a short time before it is off and gone - it is
small about one acre dry land one it is cut off from
the Island we cultivate by a little marsh like it is between
us and Mr. Morton we have a good road across to the field
we have a bout 5 acres in cultivation 3 in corn and then
in corn now waist high in places, ^{some as high as man head} so I wish we had found
these Islands when we all first came here and settled we
might all have been a great deal better off than we are
when you were at Westrock you heard of Salt river
and probably saw it I do not know we are 4 miles down
~~that~~ the river from there Dick Willis lives there on what
they called buzzard roost Island they have not had good
health there they have been sick good deal it is thought to
be on account of the salt and fresh water meeting there - they
were all well there yesterday Lenora has had 2 children
since you left here about 13 months between them
girl and boy uncle Abe and John's family all well last
account I heard uncle John's wife has 3 children 2 younger
than one she had directly after you left here which did
I think I wrote to you of Samantha and Warren Paul
marrying she has no heirs as yet Jim's wife has had
2 more children since you left he is living on an Island

over near Dr Hodges Warren Paul also uncle Mac is living
at a place called bear landing, ^{on the Littlecochee river} that old man Rogers set
that and died there last fall uncle Johnny is living where uncle
uncle lived when you left there he owns both places now
I believe I have not been to uncle in 3 years I have not
seen some of them in over 3 years uncle Mc Jimmy and
Warren Paul were here last fall and picked them out

the house
I returned back west of us I visited and said they were
coming to go to work soon but they after wards decided to go
where they were now after they did not come to the Island they had
picked out George and Proctor has laid claim on it it had
been cut down some and stanted in gotten it is a very large
island they no not know how large no one has been all over it 2 or 3 fine
beautiful settle ments near together on it right on the banks
of the river beautiful shell banks for building on there
is a great deal of scenery here to see all these nice shell
mounds as large as houses all rounded up like potato
banks all up and down the river the school children
and teacher went out yesterday to the bird keys to get
eggs but they were too late by et many they were all hatched
and spoilt they also went to shell Island out at the mouth
Crystal river - do you wanted to know of Bob and his tribe
but you no nearly as much as I do I have not heard from
them in some time and have not seen them since last summer
over Mill camp and the child. in were here I have not seen
Bob ⁱⁿ 18 months they were well last we heard from them they
live down on the hammock near Westy Allens they only had
2 children last I heard from them Lucy Allen has 4 children
she is making rather a slow start you will think I reckon
old aunt Hilda and George Allen are keeping house
down there near Bob - I like to forget to tell you Lucy
Allen in Henry Allen married last Thursday
night - Old man Christia died about 4 weeks ago I
hardly know what was the matter he was taken with se
were cold and chill air died in three days as wicked as
evils. Lady Christia has gone entirely blind and Lady
Ann is confined to her bed all the time and has ^{been} for 3
years or more Aunt Betty Allen was down here 4 or 5
weeks ago and stayed 2 weeks she was well and looking well
Mary Allen has had 9 children since I can hear

vis although we live on an Island we have more company here than any place since we have been in the country it is only half mile by water to the main land where people can come with their horse or buggy and at a dry time they can walk to the river side in front our house and then only have to cross the river it is up a creek where they can ride that is the way we moved and floated our things across we have a large flat we are all perfectly healthy here as we could expect to be any where.

Myself and my family getting very well fed all up here we have a small house
comprising and joined house-our dwelling is 110 ft long 2-16 ft square
rooms with 5 ft passage between them shed on the back side the boys
room 16 ft long 10 ft wide then at the other end joining my room we
have a cook room an dining room the shed at that end the house is set
back 2 ft further out leaving a shed 18 ft long then a partition run through
dividing it in 2 rooms cook room 8 by 10 dining 10 by 10 - then I have a good
stove up in my cook room - the gas burn ^{is} right out at the door of kitchen
cook room meat house a few ^{more} steps further there ^{is} a well water around
one plenty - we have oysters in abundance 2 months out the 12 and
can have fish when ever we want them we were out some time ago and
was - Gillies caught the largest red fish I ever saw it must have
weighed 50 or 60 lbs its head weighed 12 we had nothing to weigh it with
except straw scales 24 lbs its since we have been on the river the boys
have killed two porpoises they were a show they must have ^{weighed} 50 or 500 lbs
each they got 10 gals, all out of them it is worth \$1 both 50 per gal
it is very good for lamp oil - now. as I must begin to draw my letter to
a close. it has been so long since I have written that I make a
poor out and then I have got so I cant see without glasses I dont
expect you will read it in a week it is so bad - you wanted to
be about the children they are nearly grown all of them George is only
a few lbs behind his pro. and Porocher weighs 125 or 30 lbs Mattie is
nearly as tall as I am and I dont think far behind in weight I am lean
myself and have been ever since I came to this country - the children
will write to you before long - you said some thing of some nice Latin
you would send if you could for Mattie she is very anxious
for it you might wish some in my letter so it is spread out in it
to as not to make too large a bundle the letter not be too heavy she
would hardly be what to do with her self if she was to get it she has
the little cup you gave her yet - but you said you wanted the children
pictures I don't send George and Proctor in this letter they have a wife
but Mattie only has one and her pa one and I cant let them go
until I get some more of will send them as soon as they can get some
taken the artist that took the ones we have is over at Dr. Wood so
he may be at the head of the river before long - it is 3 miles to the
head from here there is where we go to preaching when we have any
have had none this year so far - we had Sunday School at our school
every Sabbath its mother sent one to you and the childrens picture
last year I have them in my album a very nice one I present from
my old man - I was proud to get yours an now I want
Giles to send me his in next letter to put in the yours in my
album I have plenty of room in it - it holds about 50 pictures
I have been expecting Buds and his family's pictures but never have
got them yet - I have not had a letter since last summer
from home in answer I sent my picture to Bud to forward on to
you and it was so long to fore I heard from it I thought it was
lost I guess by your getting it that it went through but I have not heard
from Bud yet at all no what is the reason they dont write soon
as when you write again tell me how far you live from Sandy an
if Eliza Goodenhead went with them to George's mother's
I want to hear the news generally tell Giles to write too we will
glad to hear from you any time as you wanted to me if I had quit
smuff I have been trying to quit for the last 2 months but have not yet
I have been trying smoking - none but it is too much trouble I have
to quit every thing else to smoke so I dont get time to smoke often I had
been troubled with pushting in my breast for some time some thought it
was caused from smuff and I concluded to too I have been better off since
I have used less of it - I had nearly a whole jar of smuff and sent
it back to Mr. Harad I was not satisfied with out's and don't get
out and broke from it some I have been looking for a good strong this

Spring some thought as was from, children Druff I have enjoyed
some lately - sis Islands are carrying the day now a great many
talk of settling islands - several have already below us on the river
3 or 4 miles - old man Lebrisha had settled and island near with
Willis - will at must close by asking you and Giles to write after an
as soon as they get a little better - advanced - ever Willis and his
best respects to you all - the children have all grown so you
would hardly know them if you saw to see they want to see you all
the of ten talk off the ship would be so glad to see you all once more but
have but little doubt that we will see you meet on earth as air but hope
we will meet in a better world as I have some strong ties in that
world of hope to meet again to part no more although I don't live as I should
permeated me forgive me money good (L) Willis to M. E. E. Ford
we all down in love to

Saturday, March 5, 1994 Citrus County (FL) Chronicle

Service scheduled today for James Francis Croft Sr.

James Francis Croft Sr., 77, of Inverness, a well-known Citrus native, died Wednesday.

The Service of Remembrance for him will be at 11 a.m. today, March 5, at the Inverness Chapel of Hooper Funeral Homes. The Rev. Larry Brincefield will conduct the service.

Interment will follow at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Inverness. Friends may call from 9:30 a.m. today until the hour of service, at the Inverness Chapel.

Croft was a retired farmer and he and his wife were well known for their generosity, community spirit and helping fellow Citrus Countians over many years.

He was a graduate of Citrus High School; a World War II Army veteran; a member of Citrus County Cattleman's Association; the Farm Bureau. His wife, Carolyn Gasset Croft, died May 24, 1991.

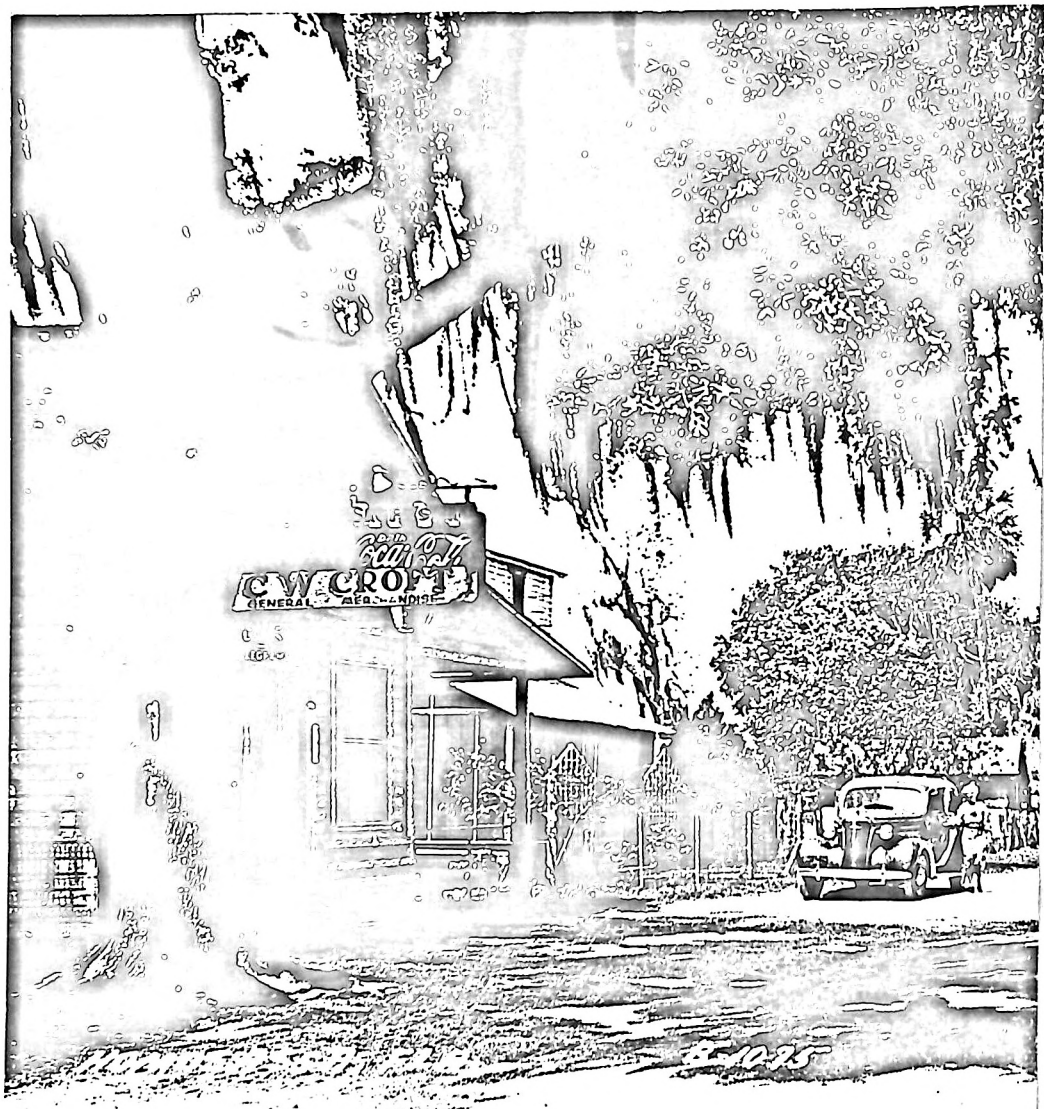
James Croft, 77, of Inverness

James Francis Croft Sr., 77, of Inverness, died Wednesday, March 2. He was a native and lifelong resident of Citrus County. Mr.

Croft was a retired farmer; a graduate of Citrus High School; a World War II Army veteran; a member of Citrus County Cattleman's Association; and the Farm Bureau. He was married to Carolyn Gasset Croft, who died May 24, 1991.

He is survived by two sons, J. Francis Jr. of Tampa and C. Cleve Croft of Inverness; two daughters, Elsie Croft Crippen of Ocala and Bertha Mae Croft Stanley of Apalachicola; a stepdaughter, Kay Anderson Willard of Brandon; one brother, John E. Sr. of Inverness; one sister, Mae Ellis of Hernando; nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Hooper Funeral Homes, Inverness Chapel, is in charge of arrangements.



5-10-25



Dave Sigler/Chronicle photo

David Croft moves a slab of ribs from the hotter to the cooler end of the fire at Croft's Custom Smoking & BBQ stand located on Croft Avenue in Inverness. The stand offers ribs and chicken along with favorites like baked beans, cole slaw and potato salad as well as homemade desserts.

Basically Barbecue

SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 22, 1998

By Sarah Hayes
Staff writer

DAVID CROFT'S HOBBY of barbecuing turned into a job four years ago when he and his wife, Ruth Mary, decided to open Croft's Custom Smoking & BBQ.

"We always barbecued at home as a hobby," Croft said.

Croft had occasionally barbecued for fellow workers when he worked in road construction, and when the time came to retire, he and his wife decided they needed to find a way to earn an income. Opening a barbecue stand seemed to be a good idea.

"People liked (the barbecue) so well, they thought I ought to do it," Croft said.

Their barbecue stand is located on Croft Avenue in Inverness. It sits on farmland Croft's father cleared in 1934. Croft was born on the farm. The Crofts were early residents of Citrus County, coming to the county around



1880 and founding Hernando.

David Crofts' four siblings still live in the county.

The Crofts' stand is open every Saturday from 11 a.m. until about 6 or 7 p.m. The hours change a bit depending on when the sun goes down.

"We're here until dark usually," Ruth Mary Croft said.

They offer ribs, chicken, chopped pork, sliced beef and sausage. They



Dave Sigler/Chronicle photo

Above: Ruth Mary Croft works the kitchen making most of the food items herself from favorite family recipes. The popular barbecue stand is open only on Saturdays and draws customers from all over the county to taste the delicious barbecued foods and desserts.

Left: The cooker at Croft's Custom Smoking & BBQ is filled with pork rib slabs. The tempting aroma can be smelled from miles away, often bringing hungry customers in search of the barbecue stand.

Please see

BBQ

continued from Page 1D

offer both dinners and sandwiches. They use a barbecue sauce they developed and a mustard sauce that was Croft's grandmother's recipe. All their side dishes, including cole slaw and potato salad, are homemade. For dessert they offer sweet potato pie and bread pudding.

Food preparation begins on Friday night, when the side dishes are made and the meat is seasoned. Three large cookers are on all day Saturday, as the meat cooks.

When they started their stand, the Crofts figured it would be something the two of them, who've

been married for 20 years, could do by themselves. They now have to employ help.

"We had no idea that it would go over so well," Mrs. Croft said.

The Crofts don't advertise their stand much, but rather rely on word of mouth and the wind to attract customers.

"Depends on which way the wind's blowing, where my customers come from," David Croft said.

Mrs. Croft said they have a lot of regular customers who come weekly.

"We feel fortunate we have so many repeat customers. That's what makes your business go," she said.

Although their business has thrived for four years, the Crofts don't have any plans to expand their stand into a full-fledged

restaurant. David Croft has gone back to work fulltime and doesn't have time to barbecue more than one day a week.

In addition to selling barbecue at their stand, the Crofts have also catered dinners for special events. They served barbecue to former President George Bush at the Ted William's Heavy Hitters Hall of Fame ceremonies a couple of years ago.

They've also cooked for events at the Florida Power nuclear plant in Crystal River and most recently cooked for last weekend's dog show in Inverness.

"We've done some big ones," Croft said, including providing meals at the Olympic torch relay in Brooksville in 1996. Croft said they can provide food for as many as 2,000 people.

Well-known Citrus native dies

By Esther Duncan
Chronicle writer

Lucy Mae Johns Croft, 77, of Inverness, a well-known, old-time native of the county died Tuesday, Jan. 26, 1993.

She was born in Lecanto and was a lifetime resident of Citrus County. She was a charter member of the Hernando Church of the Nazarene and member of the Home Demonstration Club.

Mrs. Croft's grandfather, John Porterhouse Johns, was born in this area before Florida was a state. Her father, Joseph, who was born at Red Level in 1876, married Vellie Savannah Mountain, the daughter of another pioneer family.

Mrs. Croft and her husband are known for their work at Hernando's Church of the Nazarene, where they were founding members, and their kindness in helping countless needy fami-



Lucy Croft

lies.

Long-time friend, Mrs. Lurie Coulliette of Inverness, once said of them, "I don't know how many poor families the Crofts have fed. They believe in sharing whatever they have."

It was Mrs. Croft and Mrs. Coulliette who established the county's first school lunch room in Hernando.

She is survived by her husband of 59 years, John E. Croft Sr.; sons John Edward Jr. of Inverness, David Anthony of Lecanto, Thomas Eugene of Ocoee, and Robert William of Kingsland, Ga.; daughter, Irma Lucy Bonds of Nazareth, Pa.; and her sister, Mrs. Myrtle Matilda Pendleton of Ocala.

Services will be 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30, at the Hernando Church of the Nazarene with the Rev. Larry Brincefield, the Rev. Pat LaFon, Dr. J.T. Gassett Jr., and the Rev. Douglas Alexander officiating.

Interment will follow at the Magnolia Cemetery, Lecanto. Visitation will be from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m., Friday, Jan. 29, at the Inverness Chapel of the Hooper Funeral Homes.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Early settlers found frontier

Yankees, as far north as Michigan, came to Florida, the "God-forsaken land" as they called it. They settled in a diversified frontier and called themselves Southerners.

Those in Lecanto, Crystal River and other small towns, like to call it a way of life, comparing their living to the Northerner's existence. A southern gentleman living in Lecanto, or Dunnellon, with his code of chivalry, his paternalistic lordship, his cigar and drinks, his leisure he knew, or thought he knew, how to live in dignity and comfort. These were the settlers of our towns in Citrus County.

Hernando was settled in 1881 by E. Croft, W.G. Croft and Dr. E. E. Nickerson. Hernando was originally a homestead owned by Mrs. Nickerson, believed to be the doctor's mother, and who bargained with West Coast Development Company to lay out a town site. She was to own every other lot. The town plat, or map, was recorded at the court house, supposedly, in September 1891.

Hernando had a post office 10 years before the town was settled. An ancestor of the Croft family, believed to be from Michigan, was the first post-master. The mail was brought in by horseback from Brooksville. The carrier then went on to Camp Izzard just north of the Withlacoochee River, near the present site of the bridge on State Road 200. There was no bridge then so people crossed by ferry, operated by a man named Stokes.

In 1882, Lecanto had a popula-



Leo Richard

Withlacoochee Trails

Hernando had a post office 10 years before the town was settled.

An ancestor of the Croft family, believed to be from Michigan, was the first postmaster.

tion of 125 residents, and was settled in that year. Residents of that town in those days were H.B. King, John A. Allen and J.J. Davis. Descendants of these families are still living in Lecanto and Inverness.

In 1889, a new county seat for the new county of Citrus was up for vote. The name of Inverness appeared and no one knew where this town was.

Tompkinsville was named in honor of the county's first tax collector, Daniel Tompkins, who was appointed by the governor after Citrus County was created by legislative action from the Hugh Hernando county. It was soon

learned however, that Tompkinsville, had changed its name to Inverness.

The new county was given two years to elect a county seat. The temporary location of Mansfield was named in honor of A.S. Mann, who had been successful in guiding the bill through the legislature.

After six indecisive elections, the city of Inverness was chosen as the official county seat in 1891. And not until 1889 had anyone ever heard the name of Inverness.

A surveyor by the name of Mason, who was employed by the Florida Orange and Transit Company, was engaged to survey the 160 acres of the original site for the city of Inverness. The plat was drawn by John E. King of Lecanto, and Francis M. Dampier, was employed to clear the site. So it was in 1889 that a new city was born, the city of Inverness, Florida.

Wednesday, June 28, 1989



MRS. CROFT was given a 9 carat amethyst by a nephew, Frankle Pendleton of Alabama, who brought it back from Brazil. Mrs. Croft had it mounted by Green's Jewelry and wore it proudly at the anniversary party. She and her husband are seen admiring the pendant. (Photo by Esther Duncan)

Fami
Continued from
Fronting

MRS. CROFT was given a 9 carat amethyst by a nephew, Frankle Pendleton of Alabama, who brought it back from Brazil. Mrs. Croft had it mounted by Green's Jewelry and wore it proudly at the anniversary party. She and her husband are seen admiring the pendant. (Photo by Esther Duncan)

Celebrating with Citrus County's first families

By ESTHER DUNCAN
Chronicle Writer

Members and friends of a pioneer Citrus County family, the John Crofts of Inverness, just celebrated an important event — their 56th wedding anniversary.

Over 90 guests gathered at son David's home in Hernando for an outdoor picnic under tall trees to wish the popular couple well and share the happy occasion. Both Croft and his wife were recalling their wedding day to a number of the guests clustered about them.

Mrs. Croft patted her husband's hand, perhaps once again seeing her young groom before her. She was then a slim Miss Johns. "A friend drove us to Crystal River where we were married at the E.G. Edwards home. There had been an awful drought and right in the middle of the ceremony it started to rain."

She started to laugh as her husband joined her. "Afterwards," she continued, "folks said it was too bad we didn't get married earlier."

"Would you marry him again?" a friend sitting at one of the long tables under the trees called out.

Mrs. Croft turned to her husband of 56 years, "Well, if I were silly and 17 again, I guess I would." While everyone laughed she quickly added, "Really, it's been great."

"What about you?" someone called out to Croft. "Would you marry her all over again?"

Croft grinned, "When we were courting, a friend and I took turns driving over to Crystal River on a long, rambling road through the woods. There was a rival fellow who threatened to dig a ditch in the road, though he never did it."

But that hadn't been the worst of it, he said. "One of the girls tossed a bucket of water on the driver's seat for fun and my poor friend who had driven his car that visit, was so uncomfortable driving home, he didn't think it was funny. He quit going to see the girls."

Croft chuckled. "If I'd happened to be the driver who got in that wet seat, maybe I'd have quit going to Crystal River, too — and history would have been changed."

Croft spoke of the ranch property he and his wife have long lived on located off Croft Road. "My father only paid \$6 an acre for the original 20 acres," he said.

Like most "old" families, the Croft roots are intertwined. Croft's mother was a Van Ness — early settlers who founded a community called Arlington on Lake Connell.

Mrs. Croft, also from a pioneer Citrus County family, said that a great-grandfather, Peter Peterson and wife, Edith, are "buried on the Hollis ranch." She added, "From Denmark, they homesteaded out where K.C. Crump's is today."

The Crofts have four sons, John Edward, Jr., David Anthony, Thomas and Robert, plus a daughter, Irma (Bonds).

"And we have eight grandchildren," Mrs. Croft added. "Don't forget that."

□□□

The descendants of another pioneer Citrus County family made news recently.

Members of the Van Ness clan of Hernando just completed a new house "almost debt free," according to Glenn and Carol Van Ness who celebrated the completion of their dream with an open house for 70 guests on a recent Sunday.

Generally, a new house means going in debt, especially for younger couples. But not so for this unusual couple.

"When my wife and I decided on the plan," Van Ness explained, "then started the house about two years ago, we decided we would pay as we go."

"It's practically paid for," Van Ness added. "We took our time, with friends who buy from my auto parts store doing a lot of the work when they were free."

Please see Families, page 2C



THE VAN NESS FAMILY are ready to welcome guests at an open house for their "mortgage free" new home, much of which they built themselves. Their children are Matthew, Rebecca and (holding pen) Christine.

Families

Continued from page 1C

Fronting on S.R. 200 just north of Van Ness Road where the senior Van Nesses once had a fruit outlet for their famous citrus, the house is a simple, old-fashioned one. Though made of cement block, it has a long narrow front porch, 10-foot ceilings and lots of windows for airiness.

Barbara Osterhout, one of the guests, pointed out a few of the special features of the 2,000-square-foot house, such as its highly polished native pine floors and ceilings.

She escorted several guests into the kitchen with its generous cupboards, also of native pine — their charm set off with the Van Ness antique collection, which includes glass pitchers and English teapots.

She pointed out two large bathrooms, one off the master bedroom, and noted that the other three bedrooms each have built-in vanities.

"This is the way they did it years ago in old Florida bedrooms," she said. "The Van Nesses worked real hard on this house. Carol spent a lot of time planning everything, resulting in a very functional home."

Mrs. Van Ness stressed that they had avoided investing in new furniture for their house, saying that it had been furnished with "hand-me-downs and second hand furniture picked up here and there."

She spoke of two antique dressers that she'd refinished. "These belonged to my husband's family, the Van Nesses, or maybe to my mother-in-law's family, the Catos."

She added that both families were among the county's earliest settlers, explaining that their property, which has long been in the Van Ness family, was once part of an old phosphate mine.

Carol's mother, Mrs. Rockne of Hernando, remarked that her daughter "redid" an old iron bed which belonged to her mother-in-law.

Painted a bright marine blue, with matching spread, it now adds character and color to son Mathew's room.

Pastor Chappell Van Ness of Hernando introduced his wife and himself. "I'm one of the preachers of the Van Ness family," he said. "For a long time I was a Methodist preacher in the Midwest."

His wife added, "I met him in Indiana — I'm a Hoosier."

As Mrs. Van Ness Ramsey helped pass out some of the special Van Ness orange juice to those who attended the open house, she spoke proudly of her son.

"A lot of people lay out for a house like this with a big mortgage, but not Glenn. He's my only son, you know, and I'm very proud of what he and Carol have done here."

Volunteers of the Month



MR. AND MRS. JOHN CROFT pose at their farm off Croft Road near Hernando and have helped countless people with food, clothing and transportation. (Photo by Matthew Beck)

Old-fashioned values of sharing never change

By ESTHER DUNCAN
Chronicle Writer

A pioneer Citrus County couple, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Croft, have been chosen as the Chronicle's Volunteer of the Month for February. The Crofts are descendants of early

MR. AND MRS. JOHN E.

which I think they did before the year was up."

When the Crofts were told what Mrs. Coulliette had to say about their long-time generous sharing with others, they smiled and nodded.

"We share right out of our freezer, and

Health

CMH sets on invalid

A special program to teach the lay techniques for caring for an invalid at home offered at Citrus Memorial Hospital.

"Providing Care" is a free, two-part course that teaches the correct home health care techniques for a personal care nurse. The availability of courses, and the role of the caregiver.

The first session was held Monday, Feb. 20, 1-5 p.m. and the second session will be Tuesday, Feb. 21, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Classes will be held at Citrus Memorial Hospital, on the corner of Citrus Avenue and Citrus Avenue. Instructor: LaChance, RN, Education Coordinator; McGee, RN, Patient Education Coordinator; Gayl Ellis, Gu... Coordinator.

Enrollment is limited and admission is required. For more information, contact the Citrus Memorial Hospital, Citrus County Health Department, 344-6513, no later than Feb. 24.

Hospice house is

Hospice of Citrus County will hold an open house on March 1, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Hampton South Essex. The program will include the following:

8-9 a.m. — Presentation by the administrator who will come introduce the program. 9 a.m. to noon — Presentation with Hospice volunteer service. Employment opportunities in hospice care.

If unable to attend, please call...

Old-fashioned values of sharing never change

By ESTHER DUNCAN
Chronicle Writer

A pioneer Citrus County couple, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Croft, have been chosen as the Chronicle's Volunteer of the Month for February.

The Crofts, descendants of early settlers, live on their picturesque ranch just off Croft Road near Inverness in the rambling ranch house they built shortly after they were married over 55 years ago.

And during all those years the Crofts have been the kind of couple who thought of the needs of others. Who have always believed in sharing what they have, according to several of their closest friends.

"Farming was tough," Mr. Croft said as he leaned on a fence and looked at his cattle roaming around the wooded property. The blades of an old windmill, no longer in use, still whirled in the wind. "Now that we have the fill dirt going here we're not so poverty-stricken as we were most of our married life, so we can do a little more for others."

That "little more" is a lot, according to Mrs. Lurie Coulliette of Inverness, a long time friend.

"I don't know how many poor families the Crofts have given food to," she said. "They believe in sharing what they have. They're always helping someone out."

The Crofts have a herd for milking, they slaughter their own beef and pork, raise chickens, ducks and geese, she said. And also have their own vegetable garden.

"It's all shared with the poor and underprivileged all over the county," Mrs. Coulliette said. "The meat, the poultry, the vegetables, the eggs."

"Have you ever whipped up a couple of goose eggs for meringue for a pie?" she

MR. AND MRS. JOHN E.

CROFT

asked. "It stands up so well and tastes so good."

The Crofts are founding members of Hernando's Church of the Nazarene, Mrs. Coulliette said, which has an active, ongoing program of assistance to those in need of help.

The couple doesn't just supply food to the poor, according to Mrs. Coulliette. They give clothing and offer transportation when needed. In addition, they faithfully prepare and serve meals to shut-ins.

She spoke of one typical situation — an elderly couple who depended on the Crofts for their daily meals for some time.

"Every day Mrs. Croft faithfully prepared and delivered meals to the couple," she said. "Then the couple's son finally came and put his mother in a nursing home. So the Crofts continued bringing

meals to the husband until he too had to go in the nursing home."

Back in the mid-40s Mrs. Coulliette recalled working with Mrs. Croft on a Hernando school project.

"She and I started the first lunchroom there," she said. "The Crofts are the kind of people who have always helped out where they could."

The former school building had been replaced and there wasn't any government money then, so volunteers made a kitchen out of a cloakroom. Some of the men, including Mr. Croft made benches and a long table for the lunchroom. And Mrs. Coulliette and Mn. Croft did the cooking.

"I remember that the Home Demonstration Department donated a refrigerator," Mrs. Coulliette said, "and the county commissioners promised to pay for the stove,

which I think they did before the year was up."

When the Crofts were told what Mrs. Coulliette had to say about their long-time generous sharing with others, they smiled and nodded.

"We share right out of our freezer, and anything else we think is needed," Mrs. Croft said simply. "We believe in sharing."

She spoke of keeping a lady supplied with wood for her heater, saying, "She can't afford the extra expense of an electric heater and likes using wood."

The Crofts admitted that they support two children in day school, and are involved in supporting the missionary work of the church.

Citrus Countians, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Farmer, spoke of the Crofts as long-time leaders in their church.

"They're so generous and so kind," Mrs. Farmer said.

Her husband added, "And that's only the beginning. They'd give you the shirt off their backs if needed. We love'em."

Croft talked about what life was like when he was a boy. "I got up before it was time to go to school to help with the milking," he said.

"And we walked to school, maybe several miles," Mrs. Croft said, "Not like they do now, ride in a bus."

Croft attended school in Hernando; his wife, then Lucy Mae Johns, went to a two-story school in Lecanto, she said, then at the corner of C.R. 491 and S.R. 44.

Asked how the two met, they smiled at each other.

"Well," Croft said, "I told a friend, suppose you and I ride over there to that cane-grinding party. Maybe we'll meet

Please see **Croft**, page 9C

Croft

Continued from page 1C

some of those good country girls."

"We did," he said with a grin. "I married one of them."

"When we moved out here about a year after we were married," Mrs. Croft said, "it was all open. There was nothing from here to Inverness and just a few farms between here and Lecanto."

Croft's father, Charles Cleveland Croft, was born in Texas where his parents, William Gilner Croft and Ella Benthall, lived a brief time. Charles was only 10 when he arrived in what was then Benton County, Florida in 1881.

"My great-grandfather, Edward and his wife, moved to the Hernando area too, as homesteaders," Croft said.

The father and son, along with a son-in-law, Dr. Hutchinson, acquired a vast stretch of land, including what was to become Hernando.

Croft's great-grandfather, Edward, "a restless man," was born in South Carolina, studied law and was admitted to the bar when 21. He married Susan Storey Reese and became a judge in Alabama, leaving

his family during the Gold Rush, but returning "well pleased with the venture." As Captain of Columbus Flying Artillery, he outfitted his regiment and served with distinction during the war between the states.

Croft's grandmother, Annie Lenthal Van Ness, was a direct descendant of John Alden and Priscilla Mullens who came over on the Mayflower in 1620.

The Crofts have four sons, John Edward, Jr., David, Thomas and Robert and a daughter, Irma Lucy.

Mrs. (Lucy Mae) Croft's parents were Joseph Anthony Johns and Velie Savannah Mountain, whose families were pioneers in Citrus County. Not too long ago, Mrs. Croft wrote a brief chronicle of her life for a family history her son, Robert, spent ten years assembling. The impressive volume is called, "A Southern Legacy: The House of Croft."

The following is excerpted from her brief account: "Among the first things I remember as a young child was sitting on Papa's knee by the fireplace. Sometimes he would hum his favorite tune, Jesus, Lover Of My Soul. And again, he would play a little on his fiddle. Now and then Ma-

ma would get out her guitar, chord a little and sing, Two Little Girls In Blue."

In writing of her early life, she said that she didn't remember much about the Depression.

"We had cows, hogs, and a herd of goats and always a garden. If Mama wanted something different, she'd take the shotgun and go to the hammock for a mess of squirrels. She had a quail trap too, but the last time she caught a mess of quail, she didn't have the heart to kill them, so that ended her quail trapping."

Mrs. Croft's account continued: "We had a dairy at that time and I got up about 4 or 5 in the morning to help with the milking and then to go to school. We sold milk in Homosassa Springs and Old Homosassa."

She completed her history by writing: "In November of 1932 John Croft came courting and we were married 10 June 1933. I moved and still live just a few miles from Lecanto. Time has gone some place and now I have grandchildren older than I was when I got married."

Yes, "time has gone some place" for both Mr. and Mrs. Croft, February's Volunteers of the Month, but they're an inspiring example of how simple, old-fashioned values of neighborliness and sharing are as good today as they were over 50 years ago.

1. Ruby Montague^(Sp) - oldest 91 yrs / Wright
2. ~~_____~~ youngest 10 mo. / Jeff Smith.
Descendant of J.A. Smith.

3. Rocks - 76 #9. 14 #.
Pinner 14
Cott. 14
Priest 7 Allen - 10
Statos. 6.
Catos. 4
Landoni 10
Millers. 7.
Bellamy. 7
Jarrish 6
Spren 2.
Telewore 1
Marsh 1

Twins Alward - Landrum Marie ^{Wright} Peterson.
1. Hampton & Sis Dunn.
Horse Allen - contrib to Citrus Heat &
Cattle Ranch
given by the Citrus Cow-Bells.

Dave McCee
Ham

GRADUATION EXERCISES

Citrus High School, Inverness, Florida, May 25, 1937

8:00 P. M.

School Auditorium

Processional _____ Mrs. I. R. Nolen

Invocation _____ Rev. C. E. Cook

Salutation _____ Beulah Maude Spires

Piano Solo _____ Helen Croft

Valedictory _____ LeRoy Rooks, Jr.

Address _____ Dr. H. P. Constans

English Dept., University of Florida

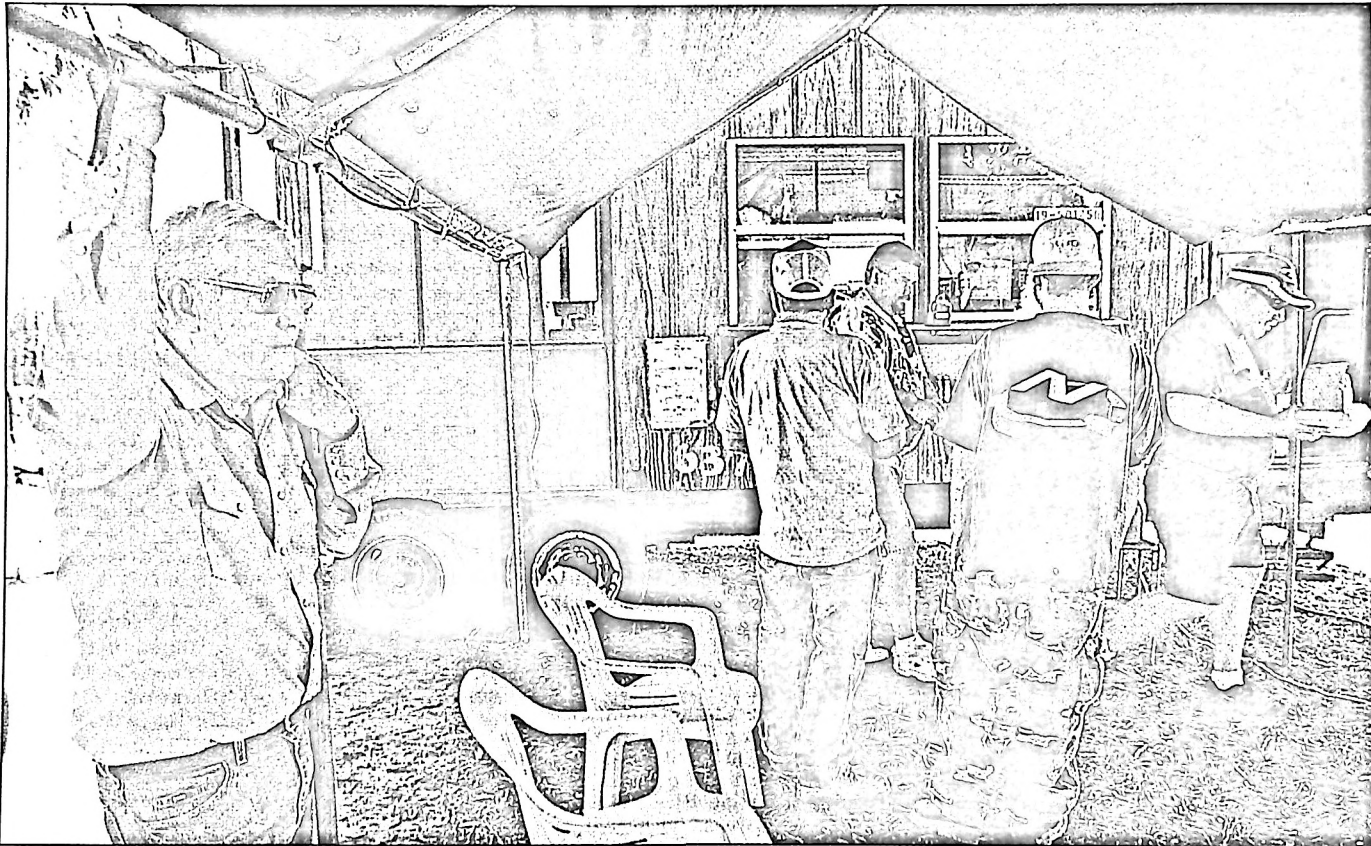
Diplomas Conferred _____ Supt. I. R. Nolen

Benediction _____ Rev. M. S. Avery



Where's the beef?

11-14-02



BRIAN LaPETER/Chronicle

David Croft has been selling "Croft Barbecue" at his stand on Croft Avenue in Inverness for the last eight years. He says it would be tough living on his social security, so the extra income helps. The stand is only open on Saturday but he spends the day before preparing. "It's two hard days," said Croft.

What started 'just for fun' has grown into delicious repast for county residents

NANCY KENNEDY
nkennedy@chronicleonline.com
Chronicle

Beginning early on most Saturday mornings, if you drive down Croft Road in Inverness, you can smell tradition. For nearly a decade, David Croft has fed folks his "almost famous" barbecue from the edge of the farm where he was born.

Even if most aren't familiar with his food, those who live in Citrus County quickly become familiar with his name. The Crofts are among the founding families of the county.

"This isn't the original Croft farm, but it is to me," said David Croft as he stoked the fire in one of his three handmade cookers. He burns only blackjack oak. That's the aroma you smell driving down the road that bears his family name.

"My daddy was born over in Hernando, but I was born right here, right down there," he said. "Only time I ever left Citrus County was when I was in the Army. I never lived anywhere else."

Croft grew up around here

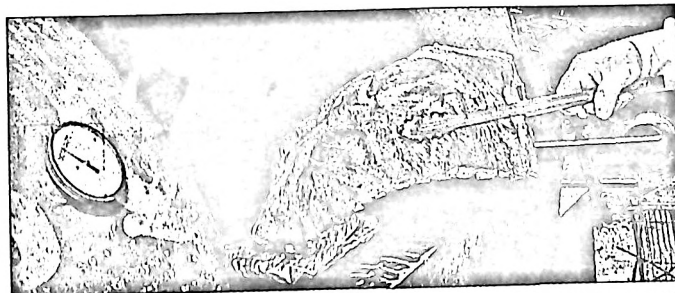
before Wal-Mart and Applebee's, before McDonald's or Burger King — even before the Roller Barn. This was farm country, and he recalls going door to door, from Inverness to Hernando, selling vegetables with his father for a living.

"He'd sell boiled peanuts and we'd sit on the back of the truck and eat them," he said. "When we'd sit down in Inverness on Main Street, we would get a nickel and go in and get an ice cream from Hall's Drugstore.

"The Croft family founded

Hernando, and my daddy moved out here (to the farm in Inverness) in 1933 and started farming this land. I used to live here, but now I live in 'greater Lecanto' on land that belonged to my mama's daddy."

Even so, almost every Saturday you can find him back at the farm, tending pork ribs, pork butt and chicken. "Beef ain't no big barbecue item out here; that's mostly out in the southwest," he said. "We sell a lot of chopped pork; we have beans and slaw. My wife, Ruth Mary, has her own bean recipe and she makes the barbecue sauce,



David Croft says he sells between 75 to 100 slabs of ribs every Saturday. He cooks them in homemade barbecue ovens made from old water tanks, one of which is more than 100 years old.

about 10 gallons at a time.

"I can't tell you what's in it, though. She keeps it a secret — she won't even tell me. People ask about it, but they ask about her beans mostly. There's something in there that tastes familiar, but they can't put

their finger on it and she won't tell them."

She will say, however, that she starts with canned beans.

Croft laughed as he recalled how that bit of information once cost him a customer. "One customer quit buying from me because they thought she made them totally from scratch."

He and Ruth Mary start cooking on Friday night. The meat cookers,

constructed out of old water tanks, use indirect heat from a wood fire that burns all night. Croft calls it "the lazy man's" barbecue. The pork butts cook all night; the ribs and chicken start cooking in the morning.

"We used to cook on a bed spring over a pit," he said. "We'd put some tin roofing around it to hold in the heat; that's the old-time barbecue way. Every Fourth of July, my grandfather cooked a goat that way. My daddy never cooked because Mama was such a good cook, but that's what he told me his daddy did."

Croft said he started cooking "just for fun" when he worked on construction sites. Someone would kill a wild hog and everyone would bring a dish to share. Selling barbecue as a business started out as

STICK TO YOUR RIBS

- Croft's Custom Smokin' and BBQ is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. most every Saturday on Croft Road in Inverness.
- For information, call 746-1337.

Please see BEEF/Page 8D

BEEF

Continued from Page 1D

3 something to do on a Saturday, which has turned into a tradition for himself and for his many regular customers.

18 "You don't really know how many to prepare for, but we sell about the same amount every week, even though it's different customers," he said.

4 "We have a lot of the same

ones, too. We've had some who eat with us every week since I've been open.

"Some come and get a whole armload full of dinners to go. They get real upset when I close."

He said there isn't much money in it; he does it for the people who stop by or honk as drive past his stand.

"I never hardly get a complaint," he said. "I can count all my complaints on one hand. That's not too bad."

ROBERT W. CROFT
413 CORREY PLACE
CLAYTON, NORTH CAROLINA 27520

DECEMBER 12, 1997

Citrus County Historical Society
1 Courthouse Square
Inverness, FL 34450

Dear Sir:

I received a one-page piece of "family history" entitled THE ALABAMA CLAN from my cousin Elizabeth Johns Eastman of Chiefland, FL. She mentioned getting it from the Citrus County Historical Society. It does not have the name of the person who compiled it. I would be very interested in knowing who did this work as the compiler would have research references which would more fully describe the sources of the information than is contained on this one-page sheet.

I am the son of John E. Croft, Sr. and his wife Lucy Mae Johns and was raised Citrus County. I have a strong interest in researching the early settlers into the Citrus County area as I am linked to several families there.

Your assistance in locating the compiler of this document will be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,


Robert W. Croft

Historic Preservation
and Archaeology



Archives and
Special Collections

Citrus County

HISTORICAL RESOURCES OFFICE

ROOM 105 • THE OLD COURTHOUSE • 1 COURTHOUSE SQUARE • INVERNESS, FLORIDA 34450 • TELEPHONE 904/637-9929

December 17, 1997

Robert W. Croft
413 Correy Place
Clayton, North Carolina 27520



Citrus County HISTORICAL RESOURCES OFFICE
ROOM 105 • THE OLD COURTHOUSE • 1 COURTHOUSE SQUARE
INVERNESS, FLORIDA 34450 • TELEPHONE 904/637-9929

(352)

Kathy Turner Thompson

Dear Mr. Croft:

I have been forwarded your e-mail request from the Citrus County Genealogical Society and I am in receipt of your correspondence by mail to Citrus County Historical Society.

Since we here at the CCHS and CC/HRO do have a copy of your book *The House of Croft* and use it often for research and reference, I hope I can be of some assistance.

As far as actual divorce information on Joseph Anthony Johns and Carrie Reading Johns the only information that I can provide is as follows:

- 1) Index page 19 from CC marriage Book #1 which shows first marriage to be, 4 Sept 1896 and second marriage to be 19 Aug 1900.
- 2) Magnolia Cemetery survey Page 9.
- 3) Probate Information of J. A. Johns.

The ^{from} one-page piece of "family history" entitled THE ALABAMA CLAN was obtained Ruth Mitchell Christ of Lecanto, whose great-grandfather was John Pike Morrison. Her mother was Clara Douglas. She obtained the document from a James Allen of Washington, D. C. She believes there are errors in the document and that maybe it should read the Georgia Clan. Anyway, she said, "I'll try and locate his address for you."

We are always looking for information/memorabilia, including copies of photographs on early Citrus County pioneer families. We will soon begin design work for the Old Courthouse museum exhibits and will focus one gallery on early pioneer families. Anything that you feel may add to that collection we would be greatly appreciative of.

Also, the last thing I would like to mention is, that in reading your book I noticed that I touched on the Van Ness family. On page 264, the Mary Cato that married Walter Hassan Van Ness is my husband's second cousin. Tom Cato, her grandfather, was my husband's great-grandfather. Tom Cato's daughter Irene married Robert Lee Thompson of Homosassa. My husband is Brian Thompson.

I hope to hear from you soon and have a great holiday season.

Sincerely,

Kathy Turner Thompson

P.S. Do you have a phone menu?

HISTORICAL INFORMATION REQUEST

original inquiry filed in inquiry Log #40

TO: Office of Historical Resources

INQUIRY #:

INQUIRER

NAME:

Robert Croft

GROUP/ORGANIZATION:

ADDRESS:

40 Gene Rudd - CCG-5 - see header

CITY, STATE & ZIP:

PHONE:

() - - -

INFORMATION REQUESTED

<i>Wants divorce info on Joseph Anthony Johns</i>	
<i>Carrie Reading Johns about 1899-1900</i>	
<i>married about 5-8 yrs. he d: 16 Oct. 1943 - Leconte</i>	
<i>Joe Johns later m: Velie Savannah Mountain</i>	
<i>19/8/1900 - Floral City</i>	REQUEST RECEIVED BY: Name: <i>NR</i> Date: <i>10.21.97</i>
<i>He has collection of Croft memorabilia</i>	
<i>wants to donate - to us - ?</i>	

INFORMATION PROVIDED and SOURCE (complete all that apply)

Back Home ()	Photo ID #: _____	FMSF #: _____
Cemetery Survey (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>)	Cemetery Name: <i>Magnolia</i>	
Public Records (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>)	OR BK <i>Probate</i> PG <i>43</i>	Date: <i>9/4/1896</i>
	OR BK <i>Marriage</i> PG <i>157</i> <i>283</i>	Date: <i>8/19/1900</i>
CC Chronicle () Date: ___/___/___ Which Page(s)?: _____		
Other: _____		REQUEST FILLED BY: Name: <i>KAR</i> Date: <i>12/17/97</i>

Information provided by: phone ()

photocopied for mailing ()

of pages: _____

postage used: \$ _____

MAGNOLIA CEMETERY (FMSF 8Ci 320)

SECTION 2 Row 10 South to North continued
 BAXLEY, William T. 29 Apr 1873 29 Dec 1931
 BAXLEY, Pearl Payne 20 Dec 1875 3 May 1960
 BAXLEY, Walter Preston 28 June 1912 29 June 1936
 BAXLEY, William Harrison 28 Aug 1906 20 July 1907S/o W.E. & M.P. Baxley
 BAXLEY, Mamie E. 15 Dec 1895 3 Mar 1897 D/O W.E. & M.P.
 BAXLEY, Vince 1899-1899
 BAXLEY, Walter C. 28 Aug 1906 20 July 1907
 HORN, Sarah E. 1859-1936
 HORN Columbus 1850-1929

SECTION 2 Row 11 North to South
 BAKER, Reece L. 6 Mar 1856 18 Jan 1928
 BAKER, Ida Fern 1864- 1933
 EASTMAN, Ruth E. 1915-####
 EASTMAN, George 1901-1984
 PENDLETON, Leslie Wert 25 Mar 1889 25 Feb 1992
 PENDLETON, Myrtle Johns 4 Oct 1909 married 28 Dec 1936
 QUINN, Herbert F. 1919-1967
 QUINN, Alva Allen 1889-1980
 QUINN, Vergil 1885-1945

SECTION 2 Row 12 South to North
 JOHNS, Sumner Ralph Jr. 1 Mar 1961 10 Oct 1980 "Sonny"
 JOHNS, Twins S/o Tony & Jeanie 1971
 GREEN, Edith Marie Johns 10 Dec 1918 7 Sep 1979
 CROFT, John Edward Sr. 15 May 1911 ####
 CROFT, Lucy Mae Johns 17 July 1915 26 Jan 1993 married 10 June 1933
 BEVILLE, Vyarl D. 1924-1981 Florida cracker Family
 BEVILLE, Leonard S. 13 Mar 1914 24 June 1990
 BEVILLE, Maggie L. 25 Dec 1908 6 Mar 1991

SECTION 2 Row 13 North to South
 FORTNER, Elizabeth Betty 13 Jun 1922 18 May 1991
 KEARNEY, Helen 1900-####
 KEARNEY, Alpheus 31 May 1890 23 Oct 1966
 MYERS, Anna Belle 1913- 1966
 PUTNAM, Carolyn Ann 1940-1980
 McSWAIN, Marcilius 1894-1980
 BEVILLE, Irene Leola 1892-1949
 BEVILLE, Sumner G. 1885-1968 Father
 JOHNS, Oritha 1917-1991
 JOHNS, Haywood B. 1907-1955
 JOHNS, Paul Wayne 11 Feb 1945 14 Feb 1945
 JOHNS, Woodrow Buster ~~23 May 1921~~ 5 Oct 1889 23 MAY 1921
 JOHNS, Joseph Louis 1913-1964
 JOHNS, Velie Savannah 3 Aug 1886 10 Apr 1949
 JOHNS, Joseph Anthony 19 Dec 1878 16 Oct 1943
 MYERS, Beulah S. Johns 13 Nov 1902 16 Feb 1974
 DEAS, William Charles 9 Jan 1904 20 Jan 1970
 DEAS, Betty Annette 26 Aug 1930 10 Jan 1931

SECTION 3 Row 1 South to North
 BARCO, Joseph 16 July 1865 15 Aug 1928
 BARCO, Emma 7 Mar 1871 13 Aug 1928

JACKSON, Simon of Hernando to Rachel Purson of Hernando
5 Jan 1906 by Geo. W. de Muro, County Judge Page 516

Jackson, Soloman to Annie MOrgan 25 Oct 1903 by Rev. James Goff
Page 390 (colored)

JACKSON, Thomas to Bell Heatty i Feb 1892 by Monroe P. Willis
J.P. Page 59

JACKSON, Tuff of Floral to Mrs Jane Timmons(no date) Page 262
(colored) (appilied 5 Feb 1900

JACKSON, Walter Lee to Mattie Lee Philyau 14 Jun 1894 by William
J. Baker N.P. Page 106 (colored)

JACKSON, William of Hartshorn to Amelia Mathews of Hartshorn
10 Jun 1897 by J.W. White, M.G. Page 175 (colored)

JAMES, Jim of Floral City to Ella Smallwood of Floral City
20 Aug 1906 by W.W. Hamilton Page 562

JAMES, Jimmie of Etna to Ella Patterson of Etna 11 Oct 1905
Page 500

JAMES, Richard C. of Chatterton, Fl. to Lula M. Fletcher of
Chatterton 2 Sep 1895 by Walter Turner J.P. Page 133

JENKINS, Joe of Holder to Ida Hanshaw of Holder 5 Nov 1901 by
Rev. W.E. Edwards, M.G. Page 323 (colored)

JENKINS, Jonathan of Crystal River to Freda Margarette Adams of
Crystal River 10 May 1906 by O.B. Brown M.G. Page 551

JENKINS, Robert of Crystal River to Rebecca Mays of Crystal
River 5 Apr 1905 by Rev. J.B. Gamble Page 461

JERRY, Joseph of Citronelle to Ella Hadley of Citronelle 24
Apr 1904 by Rev. E. Thompson Page 412

JOHNS, David G. to Martha P. Hodge 3 Sep 1893 by Chas. E. Allen
N.P. Page 86

JOHNS, Joseph A. of Lecanto to Caroline S. Redding of Lecanto
4 Sep 1896 by J.B. Haralson M.G. Page 157

JOHNS, Joseph A. of Floral City to ~~Viola~~ S. Mountain of Citrus
County 19 Aug 1900 by J.W. Knight N.P. Page 283

JOHNSON, A.C. of Floral City to Namie Clements of Floral City
30 Sep 1896 by C.S. Claridy M.G. Page 158

JOHNSON, Aaron of Floral City to Rebecca M. Fagins 2 Jun 1904
by Rev. Geo. W. Archie Page 420

JOHNSON, Andrews of Holder to Bertha Jenkins of Holder 23 May 1904
by Rev. G.W. McClain Page 418

JOHNSON, David to Claude Ivians 12 Feb 1903 by N. Barco, N.P.
Page 364

JOHNSON, G.J. to May F. Bates 8 Sep 1897 by Rev. B.F. Peacher
Page 179 (colored)

JOHNSON, Henry of Stage Pond to Lilly Johnson of Stage Pond
9 July 1906 by Rev. A.J. Jones Page 557

JOHNSON, Henry of Lecanto to Lucy Adams of Lecanto 9 Sep 1906
by R.B. Black M.G. Page 567

JOHNSON, J.E. to Jessie Atkinson of Citrus County 8 Jan 1902
by Geo. D. Adamsom M.G. Page 329

JOHNSON, J.H. of Dunnellon to Maria Taylor of Dunnellon
7 Dec 1897 by M.Brown, Min. Page 188 (colored)

JOHNSON, James E. to Linnie Murry 3 Jan 1904 by W.H. Slemmyer
Pastor Meth. Ch Page 397

JOHNSON, James K. to Mrs M.E. Williams 17 Jan 1892 by Preston
Wood, M.G. Page 58

ESTATE OF

J.A. Johns

Deceased Reg 7/9/45

1944	PROGRESS	No. WORDS WRITTEN OR RECORDED	RECORDED	
			BOOK	NO.
1	Apr 10 by Cash and Casto			
2	Apr 10 Hill			
3				
4	July 27 3 certified Copies of Letters \$15.00			
5	July 21 notice to Creditors			
6	July 21 affidavit of Public Administrator			
7				
8	July 21 by cash to Braden			
1952				
	Feb 25 Annual Return		Will	7
	Feb 25 Paid by check	✓		
1962				
	July 2 Petition for Order Authorizing Lease of Land		O.R.	8
	Order Authorizing Leasing of Estate Land		O.R.	8
	Certified Copy of Order			
1963				
	May 8 Paid by Check			
1972				
	Feb. 8 Annual Return		O.R.	42
	Pd. by Ex - R# 209650A			

COURT Extra

COUNTY, FLORIDA

REPRESENTATIVE NAME Larry Mae Pratt ADDRESS Hernando Fla

ATTORNEY Thomas L. Long James P. Williams ADDRESS Hernando Fla

PAGE	CHECK No.	FILED BY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE				FILED BY OTHERS			
		DR.	CR.	DR. BALANCE	CR. BALANCE	DR.	CR.	DR. BALANCE	CR. BALANCE
		16	2000						
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ESTATE OF

Joseph A. Johns,
 aka J. A. Johns, Dec.

19 72

PROGRESS

NO WORDS WRITTEN OR RECORDED

RE

BOOK

1	Apr. 17	Petition for Confirmation of Sale	O.R.
2		Order Confirming Sale	O.R.
3	18	Ord. by Mrs. Craft, Sr., K7209955A	
4	20	Petition for Order Directing	
5		Partial Distribution	O.R.
6		Order Directing Partial Distribution	O.R.
7	May 3	Receipt of Distributee	O.R.
8	"	" "	O.R.
9	"	" "	O.R.
10	"	" "	O.R.
11	"	" "	O.R.
12	"	" "	O.R.
13	"	" "	O.R.
14	"	" "	O.R.

15
 16
 17
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21	1974 Jan. 30	Annual Return	O.R. 5
		Receipts 16 -	O.R. 5
22	Apr. 25	Petition for Order Directing Partial Dist.	O.R. 5
23		Order Directing Partial Distribution	O.R. 5
24	1975 Jan. 13	Annual Return	O.R. 5
25	13	Receipts (15)	O.R. 5

