

Step back in time to Ozello's 'Pioneer Day' this Saturday

By ESTHER DUNCAN
Chronicle Writer

This Saturday, May 2, a lot of folks will be driving down a winding road in order to step back in time and visit with each other in Ozello, one of Citrus County's oldest communities.

Called "Pioneer Day," the event will honor its pioneers as part of this year's County Centennial. Representatives of the Centennial Committee will be there, including Alex Griffin, chairman of the committee, as well as Charles Allen, David Benton and Marcia Beasley.

Saturday's event will take place on Civic Center grounds, near the water tower. A huge banner out front will proclaim, "Pioneer Day, May 2nd." Festivities will open at 11 a.m. and continue until 4 or 5 p.m.

Ozello was settled in Civil War times and is still a small, quiet community located on the water six miles west of U.S. 19 on S.R. 494.

Its long-time residents take great pride in their community and many old families in the county trace their roots to this area. There are still a number of families with members who attended the famous Ozello school, known as the "School of Knowledge," located on an island which the children reached by boat.

John J. Brown is one such resident who was born in Ozello and has lived there all his life. The road he lives on is named after him. At one time he was in charge of getting the island children to and from the mainland by boat, then busing them into Crystal

River to school.

A previous event honored Brown and Agnes DeBusk, also an Ozello pioneer. Brown and his wife, the former Helen Hough of Crystal River and of a pioneer family herself, plan to attend the occasion. However, Agnes DeBusk, whose presence was anticipated, is now hospitalized and will be missed.

There will be a display of old photographs, newspaper clippings and memorabilia in the Civic Center for all to enjoy. Everyone is urged to bring whatever items they have to share with others.

Old-timers will naturally congregate there and those interested will be able to hear many a fascinating tale of what life in Ozello and on its nearby islands was like in this community's early days.

Races and games will be held and special entertainment provided, including Jack Smith and his "Kitchen Band" from the Multi-Purpose Senior Citizen Center at Lecanto.

A chicken barbecue will be served with tickets available for purchase at the door of the Civic Center. Proceeds from the barbecue will be used for the future installation of a shuffle board court.

"Everyone is welcome. In fact, we're looking forward to meeting first-time visitors as well as old-timers," Thelma Henderson, Committee Chairman, said. "There will be a lot of sunbonnets, so if you have one handy to wear you'll blend in with the crowd."



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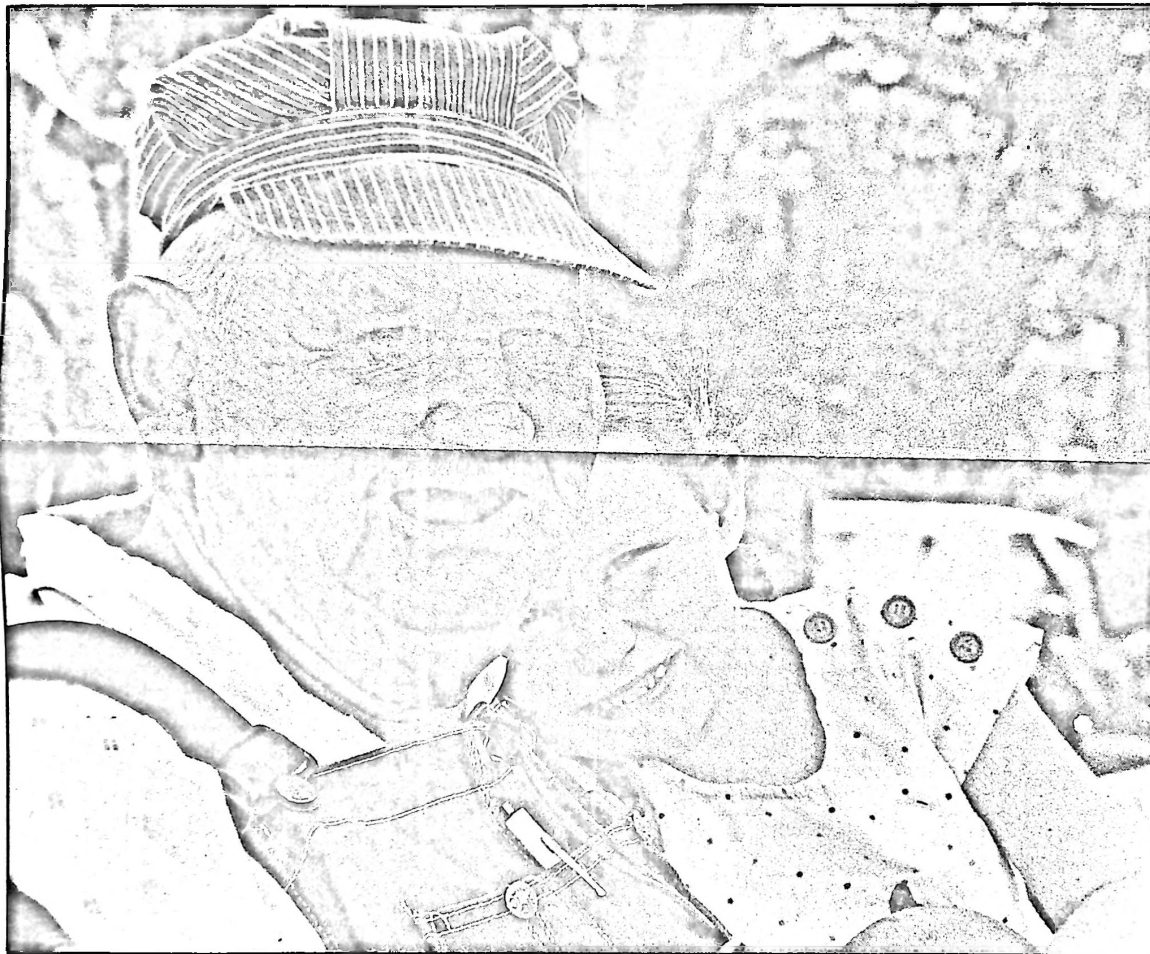


Monday

May 9, 1988

25 Cents

Pioneer Spirit



OZELLO PIONEER DAYS, held Saturday in Ozello, brought together old and young alike. Here Oral Butzer finds a new friend, Amanda Phell, age four. The two had met earlier in the day and took an instant liking to each other. (Photo by Matthew Beck)

Bell's ring brings memories of island school

By ESTHER DUNCAN
Chronicle Writer

An old-fashioned school bell rang out at Ozello Saturday afternoon, calling together former students who had gone to an island school by boat long ago.

Way back in the days of Readin', Writin', 'Rithmetic — and Rowin'.

Seated at old-time wooden desks in deep shade on the Civic Center Grounds, the gray-haired group of nine or 10 listened to their prim, long-skirted teacher read some of the rules of the school.

"Don't tamper with anyone else's boat," she

said, looking around from student to student.

"Remember, no frogs or baby alligators will be allowed in the school room."

She continued, clearing her throat, "If you want a drink out of the water bucket, hold up one finger. If you want to go to the little house out back, hold up two fingers."

The occasion was Ozello's Fourth Annual Pioneer Day celebration. This year's theme was the historic "Isle of Knowledge School" that was featured in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not" column in June 1940.

The scene was a skit of the early days of the old school back in the '20s and '30s.

The woman re-enacting the role of the school's first teacher, Cattie Martin, was Jane Hindman, an Ozello resident who is known as a local historian and who started Pioneer Days four years ago with the celebration of old-timer, John Brown's, birthday.

The students, who had attended the school in its early days were: Agnes and Horace DeBusk, Horace Brown, Carl Stephens, Gertrude Brown, Carey Stanoland, John Brown, Jim Waddington and Leon Watson. Polly Brimmage, Zeke Wells and Leon Head had been expected, but were un-

School

Continued from 1A

le to attend. Sitting nearby and watching with broad smiles were two former teachers: beloved Cattie Martin, who taught in Citrus County many years, and Ann Ashwood Speegle, who came all the way from Florence, Ala. Katy Lashly, one of the best known teachers, was unable to come. Both teachers who attended received special recognition for their contributions to the education of the island children.

The audience, of all ages, sat at tables and benches nearby, watching the re-enactment of the early scene at the famous island school with close attention. Many were the children of early students who had listened to tales of going to school by boat.

The teacher asked Horace Brown to stand.

"Now please spell 'right,'" she said.

Brown, a Crystal River fisherman now in his 70's, looked at the sky and then his feet, shuffling. "R-A-T," he slowly pronounced.

His teacher frowned. "I said, right not rat."

"Teacher, you told us to sound out our words, and that's what I did. R-A-T."

The crowd laughed uproariously, most remembering their own struggles with spelling during school days.

"We'll now have our history class," the teacher announced.

The assembly then enjoyed a brief history of Ozello schools.

According to Mrs. Hindman, the first school Ozello children attended was in Homosassa — on South Island, about two miles down river between Tiger Tail and Hell's Gate. An Indian village at one time, it had been named after Tiger Tail, its chief.

The first Ozello school was on an Indian shell mound on the north side of the river. "Where Mrs. Bennett now lives," Mrs. Hindman pointed out. "Of cedar logs with a pine whingle roof, it was called Bayview School."

The second schoolhouse was built about 1886 by William Henry Harrison Pratt who was given \$75 by the county commissioners for the cost.

Mrs. Hindman talked of the island families' dispute about the island's location. Living on both sides of the river, they finally compromised — by having it built smack in the middle of the river.

"And that's how it came about that Ozello children all had to learn how to handle a boat right along with their ABC's.

No school was held during the

winter, Mrs. Hindman said. The families were busy with fishing. By 1930 the school term had reached five or six months. The school was used for holding church services for some time, she said, by a preacher traveling from Leesburg.

"In those days," Mrs. Hindman said, "the Bible was read aloud every day in school."

The year 1943 saw the ending of an era for the little island school. Gradually, Mrs. Hindman said, the building began to deteriorate until finally all that remained was the roof — as late as 1977. At that time Ozello residents, sentimental about their old school, erected a flagpole there.

The good news that former students, teachers and those who gathered at Ozello shared together was that the old school has been deeded to the Citrus County Historical Society.

"One day, perhaps soon, it will be restored as a National Historical Site," Mrs. Hindman concluded.

The applause rang out — from island old-timers and newcomers to the area alike.

After the program, Mrs. Peebles admitted that she had been "scared to death of water when she started teaching." She said, "I couldn't swim and I was so glad that one of the first graders took charge of rowing for me."

Geneva Stevens, who attended, said that she came because she had enjoyed both her mother's and father's tales of going to the little Ozello school.

Carl Stevens, who started school when just six, remembered that his teacher was Aunt Rosie Campbell.

"I remember that the Heads had five daughters there and the deBusks five boys," he recollected.

He had several of his early report cards, showing that Mrs. J. A. Osteen had been his teacher in 1928-29 and Mary Belle Waring in the following year.

Besides the skit, other entertainment included the Cowboy Junction Band, the "Kool Katz" and dances by the Good-Time Cloggers.

There were lots of games for the children, a chicken dinner and an arts and crafts exhibit by a group of Ozello artists who just recently banded together under the name of Ozello Island Art Group. Bertha Massey is the founding president.

The event was sponsored by the Ozello Pioneers and the Ozello Civic Club.

As a car pulled away, a senior lady was overheard saying, "Next year I hope we come earlier and get to enjoy it all."

Please see **School**, page 5A



CARL STEVENS, a student at the Ozello School many years ago, holds up his fourth thru sixth grade report cards during the Ozello Pioneer Days held this Saturday.

**Photos by
Matthew Beck**



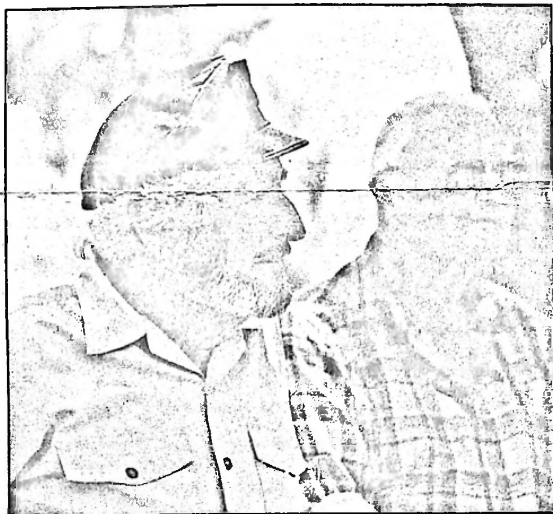
TWO OF THE ORIGINAL teachers of the Ozello School, who were honored earlier in the day, Cattle Priest Martin, right, teacher of grades first thru eight, and Anne Ashworth Speegle, made a special trip all the way from Florence, Alabama to attend the celebration, sit together and talk about old times in Ozello.

Looking
back at

Ozello Pioneer Days

Looking
back at

Ozello Pioneer Days



As the crowd is entertained by the Kool Katz Band, Charlie Peebles, left, known to most Ozello residents as the "Mayor of Ozello," and Carl Eckart, background, keep cool under the trees from the hot sun. At left, the Ozello Pioneer Days also included an art show with local artists being featured. Phyllis Milton, left, an Ozello artist concentrating on island and nature scenes, speaks with art enthusiast Mary Medley, an Ozello resident, about her works of art.

Ocie Vann mixes business with pleasure in Ozello

By Joe Espin
NEWS Staff Writer

Meet Ocie Vann, jolly son of the Sunshine State.

Born near Bartow in Polk County in 1931, this friendly native started life as a farmer, later learned air conditioning and refrigeration, and after a few years went into the automotive industry. In the 1960s he entered the building supply business, working 12 years with Scotty's Hardware in Winter Haven.

A frugal, hard worker, Ocie was looking for an early retirement on the water. He and wife Ruth were exploring the west coast north of Tampa in 1973 when they spotted the Ozello Trail.

"We had been traveling north on S.R. 19 and taking every road that led towards the Gulf." Ocie told THE NEWS.

Captivated by the winding, picturesque trail, the myriad tidal creeks and estuaries of this area between Homosassa and Crystal River, where the St. Martins River meets the Gulf of Mexico, the Vanns decided to make it their home.

"Ruth remembered an old school mate who lived in Ozello and after a little searching, we located them and enlisted their help in finding a waterfront cabin." A cabin in their price range was found, and soon after, the Vanns moved to Ozello to enjoy retirement.

This life of leisure did not last long, however. Rising gasoline prices, and inflation in general, depleted their savings, forcing Ocie to find a new source of income. He decided to try the seafood business. Thus, in 1976, with one ice chest and an old pickup truck, Vann's Seafood was born.

THE NEWS first learned of Vann's Seafood from a friend who said, "Ocie makes the best smoked mullet in the state. Go down the Ozello road about five miles 'til you see the Palm Tavern, make a left on Waterman Drive, go another two blocks and you'll see the sign on the right."

We followed these simple directions and found much more than great smoked mullet. We found Vann's Seafood, Community Center and Fish Story Swamp Club!

into the water. He returned the next night armed with 60-lb. test line and soon caught a 56-lb. catfish. When the catfish was gutted, the still-lit lantern was found inside.

To that, someone said, "Sure, I caught a grouper so big the picture we took weighed 5-lbs."

The fellow who had told the catfish story finally conceded by saying, "Tell you what, if you shave a few pounds off the picture I'll turn off the lantern in the catfish."

And so it goes at Vann's Seafood, Community Center and Fish Story Swap Club.



With Ocie Vann as host, visitors gather to swap fish stories, just a few of which are reported to be lies.

A hand-painted sign outside the rustic, brick-red cabin, owns up only to the seafood business, but don't let that fool you! Sure, you can buy fresh seafood here, wholesale or retail and at excellent prices too.

But the real heart and soul of this business are found in the little cedar grove, behind the cabin. An old picnic table under the cedars serves as the centerpiece for commercial fishermen and other folks to gather, banter, swap stories and very often have cookouts. Customers come and go all day long. Most of them take the time to join in the conversations and banter that are a constant part of Ocie's business. The friendly, gregarious nature of this individual soon has the newcomer feeling he is among old friends.

The day THE NEWS visited, Art Cannon commercial fisherman and the youngest member of the Swap Club was unloading blue crabs from his boat and good naturedly putting up with wisecracks Ronnie Peel and Ocie were making about Art's habit of going down to Tampa to chase girls after getting paid.

Shortly thereafter Spencer Ward, a wholesale customer of Ocie's, showed up to pick up a load of shark fillets and join in the bantering. Spencer supplies the Reefrunner Restaurant and the Gator River Lodge with shark and comes from Wildwood to buy from Vann's.

Spencer told THE NEWS, "Shark fillets are like a drug, once you try them you're hooked."

Charlie Peeples then showed up sporting a new haircut and got his share of kidding. Bob Lynch, Ocie's next door neighbor stopped by to chat and get some ice and he too got his fair share of harassment about how much the ice was going to cost him.

Ocie makes it a practice to have food and places where they can take a nap ready for the commercial fishermen. Sort of a home away from home. "They may come in with a full load, and if the fish are running they'll want to go back out as soon as possible," says Ocie.

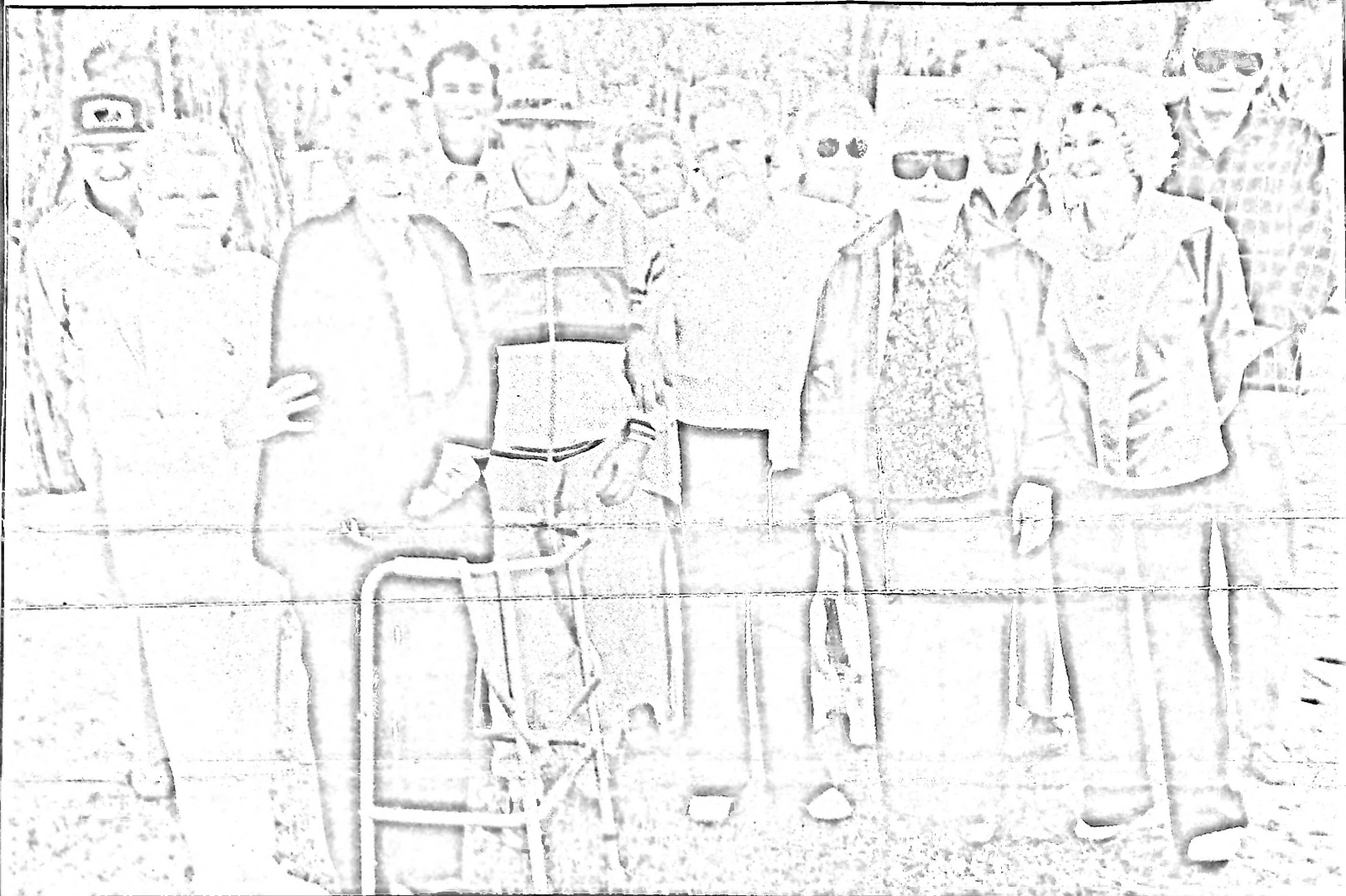
The feeling of camaraderie that prevails is surpassed only by the stories told. There are serious ones, such as the time Art Cannon got caught in a lightning storm out in the Gulf and spent the entire time on his knees, praying. Or the time Ronnie Peel was getting ready to jump overboard and grab a sea turtle that was swimming by, but saw a huge shark under the turtle and quickly changed his mind.

You're likely to hear some real tall ones, too. Like the one about the guy who caught a 45-lb. bream. They say he was using a 5-lb. cricket for bait. Then there's the one about a guy who was night fishing for catfish on the Withlacoochee and his 20-lb. test line was snapped by a fish at the same time knocking his lantern

CCC
Roshelle School



Thirteen former students reunited Saturday near the site of the Roshelle School on the Western Islands. The school's last teacher, Ethel Puckett Winn, right, gets reacquainted former student Harold Waddington.



Students of the Roshelle School recently reminisced over a fresh fish lunch. The school once stood on the Western Islands in the Gulf of Mexico just beyond Ozello. The islands once were a popular fishing and sightseeing area.

Matthew Beck/The Chronicle

By Esther Duncan
Chronicle writer

“Our school is long since gone, but we still have our memories,” Harold Waddington, a former pupil of Roshelle School on Western Islands said at a reunion of 13 of the former students last week.

“Those were golden days,” he added, his voice filled with emotion as his eyes swept over the attentive crowd. “We weren’t just neighbors; we were a family.”

Today, only a few Citrus Countians remember the school or even know where Western Islands is

REUNION

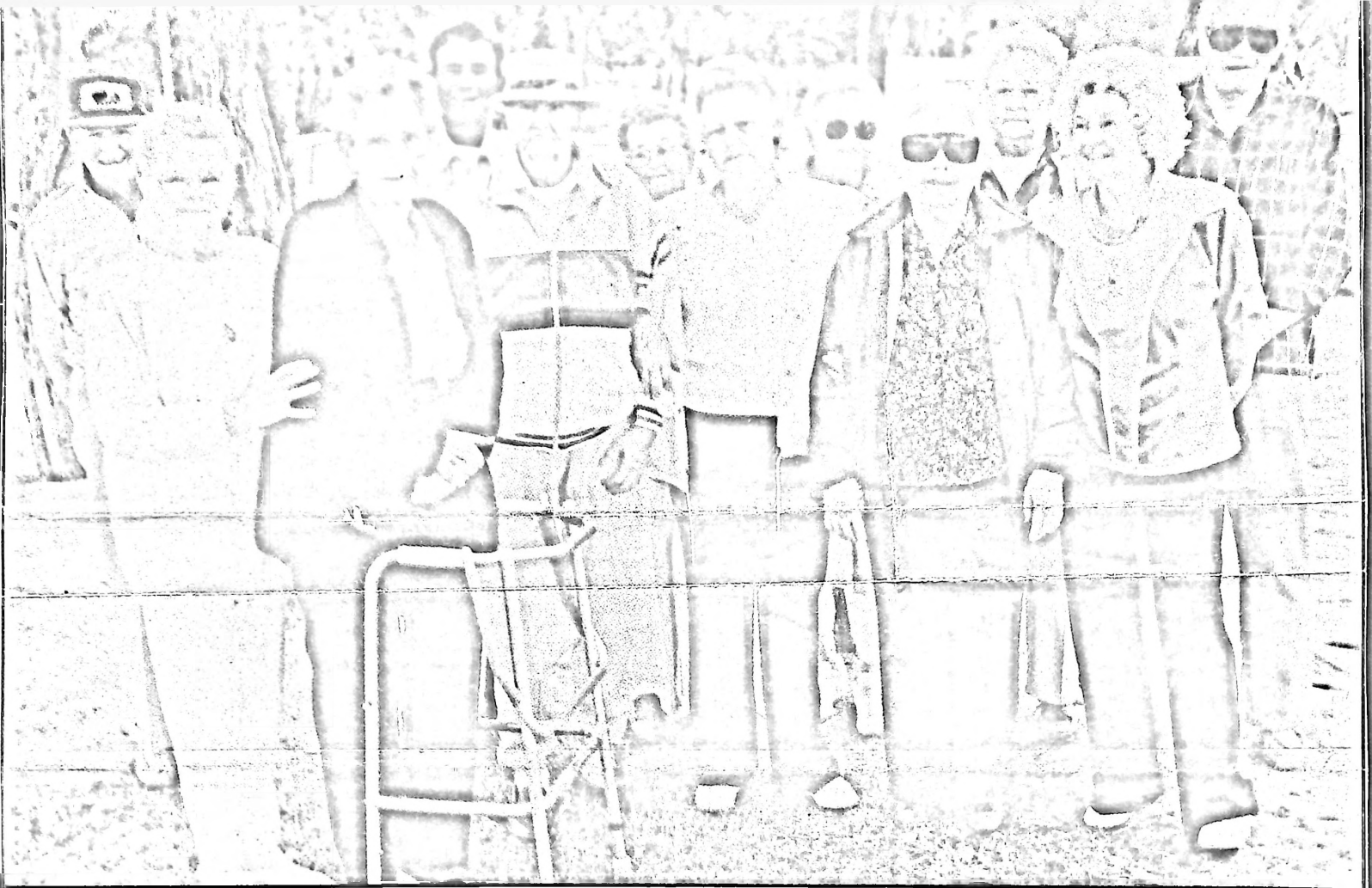
Faded memories of Roshelle School come into focus

Mabel Willis, Jessie Yates, Hampton and Henry, the twins, Oscar (Jim) and Harold, plus Agnes Waddington Brown, a cousin. The oldest Waddington sister, Myrtice Blalock, who lives in Hawaii, couldn’t attend the reunion.

Nell Boswell, a Georgia cousin, has been coming to Florida for years to visit her island relatives. “There’s no place I’d rather be than here,” she said, explaining that every winter her father brought the family to Western Islands for a month.

“I’d go to school here and after the visit I’d take my report card back to my Georgia school,” she said.

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Today, only a few Citrus Countians remember the school or even know where Western Islands is located.

But surviving members of the Waddington, Ellis and Edge families do. These were the three families who lived on islands in the gulf beyond Ozello whose children attended the school for a decade from 1921 to 1932.

Ruby Waddington Johnston planned the reunion, which nearly 50 attended, including 13 former pupils.

Lillian Edge Boswell now of Crystal River said that she was 11 before she even went to school at Western Islands.

“We didn’t have any school to go to back then in the early ‘20s,” she reminded her listeners. “So the three families bought the lumber and built

the school themselves. The county sent us a teacher and some books. We sat on boxes, but had no desks for a time.”

“Nor water,” a sister, Ruth Edge Smith, added. “Remember how we’d set off to school with a lunch bucket in one hand and a bucket of water in the other?”

The teacher’s desk is still around, Mrs. Johnston reminded them, on loan to a Christian school in Crystal River.

When Mrs. Johnston asked who else had a story to tell, Carl Ellis responded, saying he’d never forget the day their old dog followed him to school.

“At morning recess two of us boys decided to go

rabbit hunting without asking teacher,” he related, “but we didn’t get back until afternoon recess.”

The teacher gave them a choice — either take a licking and go home or stay after school. For some reason, he said, they decided to take their licking and go home.

“Of course we got another when we got home,” Carl remembered. “But the bad part of it was that the teacher kept our rabbit!”

Uproarious laughter followed.

At the reunion were Lillian, Ruth and Gertrude Edge, Carl Ellis (his brother, Buck is deceased), The Waddington family members who attended were: Ruby Johnston, Frances Jones,

Mabel Willis, Jessie Yates, Hampton and Henry, the twins, Oscar (Jim) and Harold, plus Agnes Waddington Brown, a cousin. The oldest Waddington sister, Myrtice Blalock, who lives in Hawaii, couldn’t attend the reunion.

Nell Boswell, a Georgia cousin, has been coming to Florida for years to visit her island relatives. “There’s no place I’d rather be than here,” she said, explaining that every winter her father brought the family to Western Islands for a month.

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Speakers included the first and last teacher at Roshelle School, Leona Loennecker Haven and Ethel Puckett Winn.

“I was right out of high school when I made my first boat ride to Western Islands,” Mrs. Winn told her listeners. “It was the first time I watched the sun sink in water. It was quite an experience.”

“I remember the time a heavy wind and rain floated the school off its base,” she said. “All the books got wet. There were 10 children in school then. I was told to stay home while they got the school back in shape and the books dried out.”

The school house was the community house for the three families, one of the ladies pointed out. Even church services were frequently held there.

REUNION

Faded memories of Roshelle School come into focus

SCHOOL

continued from Page 1C

Roshelle School's first teacher only stayed a short time. She was followed by Maude Miley then Nellie Giddens, Mary Rawles, Edith Hewet, Beulah Cochran, Elizabeth Brown, Charlotte Williams and last, Ethel Winn Puckett.

Members of the families spoke glowingly of Saturday night dances they enjoyed, especially at the "Shep" Ellis home where square dancing was a popular pastime.

"We'd order a 10 gallon container of ice cream delivered by train," Carl Ellis recalled, "and take turns going to someone's house for the dance each weekend."

The Waddington sisters remembered that their brother, Harold was too little to go and used to cry about it. That reminded someone else that when he was a student at Crystal River High School, he was such a good dancer that Doc Hudson, then the principal, often said it wouldn't be a dance if Harold wasn't there.

Creola Willis was one of the speakers. Recently retired as supervisor of elementary education, she reminded everyone that her mother, Cattie Martin, who was present, taught at Ozello School.

"I wasn't privileged to attend Western Island's school," she said, "but I did go to the Ozello school one year."

Mrs. Willis told her listeners that she'd discovered the Roshelle School is still on the county records, along with some 33 other rural schools that once were scattered all over the county.

"There's something special about all those schools," she said. "We were privileged to be a part of them. The most beautiful penmanship in the world can be found in those old records."

She compared the vast difference in funds available to schools today to those early rural schools. "For instance, the father of all these girls, John Henry Waddington, supplied the heat for Roshelle School with boatloads of wood at only \$1.50 each.

She reminded her listeners that the first superintendent of the

county's schools, a Mr. Montague had borrowed money from his wife in order to pay teachers' salaries then had finally paid her back.

Those were great days for children with imagination, it seemed. Jessie Waddington told how she was allowed to study outside one day and climbed to the top of a cedar tree. "I've never forgotten my unusual study hall," she said.

Harold Waddington told a tale of inventing his own game. "My Uncle Joe, Agnes' Daddy, had a lot of ducks. I'd take those ducks one at a time, climb the highest tree and pitch that duck out and watch him fly down. He was my model plane."

"Can you imagine climbing a tree with a duck under your arm?" he asked, "then watching him fly down? That's as bad as Jessie doin' her homework in the top of a cedar tree."

Tables were heaped with food, including stacks of freshly cooked fish prepared by Charles Johnston, Mrs. Johnston's son, and his wife, who did much of the preparation for the occasion. Mabel Willis was one of the women who worked in the background.

Ozello-area cabins should not be burned

In the shallow coastal waters of Ozello, among the jagged oyster bars that threaten to cut feet and disable outboards, there lie some of the most ruggedly beautiful islands in the United States.

Here and there on a few of these islands can be found cabins. Many of them are now used only as camping lodges, but once were homes to some of Citrus County's first residents.

At the expense of much blood and sweat, these pioneer homes were built out of the settlers' love for the area and the necessity of a home for their families. Over the years, hurricanes and fires have destroyed some of these homes.

But because of the fierce tradition embedded deep in the hearts of the settlers' descendants, they were repaired or rebuilt, and these homesteads were preserved. For decades these families and their homes went unnoticed, until recently, since Citrus County has suffered from urbanization so rapidly that environmentalists are up in arms.

Because of this environmental tension, state agencies under the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund have stepped into Ozello in an attempt to gain some much needed control over growth in this sensitive wetland area.

Unfortunately for the homestead cabin owners, it appears that these agencies' attempts have been directed toward their cabins. Several months ago a campaign to rid the islands of the settlers' cabins was begun. The islands were posted "no trespassing," and campers were told to stay off the islands and out of the cabins unless to remove

personal belongings.

This came as quite a surprise to the home owners who, because of their long history on the islands, considered the land to be theirs. Now rumor has it, that in their final phase of squatter eradication, these state agencies intend to burn the cabin homes to the ground.

If indeed the cabins are burned, it will be a grave mistake. Burning is an inefficient method of disposal. Open

fires never burn purely or completely, and release a variety of chemical compounds. The burning of a dwelling such as these cabins is likely to release carbons, nitrates, sulfurs, and carcinogens into the local ecosystem.

Aside from these less obvious, many animals will be killed as a direct result of the blazes. The rafters of one cabin that I know of personally are home to a family of owls, and a family of great blue herons has made their nest in a tree near the house.

Ozello's marine life and shellfish population are already wounded, and the destruction caused by these open bonfires would cut that wound even deeper.

A suggested alternative to destroying the cabins is to turn them into historical monuments that all of us could enjoy. Another would be to turn a few of them into field stations for the wildlife officers to use on overnight missions, after all they have been havens to many wind-blown and sun-baked travelers through the years.

As a final suggestion, if it is necessary to destroy the cabins, a method other than burning, such as dismantling them and carting them away, should be used.

Something must be done. These homes are an integral part of Citrus County's heritage, and, for the benefit of all residents, they need to be preserved. With perseverance, I hope that my voice will be heard and my ideas will be considered.

Our state leaders have an extremely large responsibility and in this bureaucratic government they often make mistakes. It is a good leader who will listen when mistakes are pointed out, and an even better one who will take action to correct the situation.

Sincerely,
G. William Bryant
Crystal River

OPINIONS INVITED

The opinions expressed in the Chronicle editorial are the opinions of the editorial board of the newspaper. Editorial board members are Publisher Gerard Mulligan, V.P. for Marketing David Ernest, Editor Jim Hunter, Managing Editor/News John Bowman, Managing Editor/Graphics Tim Hess, Feature Editor Neale Hunter and County Editor Cindy Cokely.

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The Editor
P.O. Box 1899
Inverness, Fl. 32651

Pioneer Day celebration set for May 4 in Ozello

Special to the Chronicle

The community of Ozello will again be observing their annual Pioneer Day, May 4, at the Ozello Civic Club, six miles west of U.S. 19 on County Road 494.

Festivities will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., according to Janice Hayden, president of the civic club. A clubhouse display features many old-time pictures and clippings describing the colorful history of this island community. The theme for this year's celebration is "Ozello Yellow Ribbon Day," added Mrs. Hayden. "To us, that has a double meaning, not only do we want to join the nation in welcom-

ing our troops home safely from foreign countries, but also to bring all scattered members of local pioneer families back 'home' to Ozello for the annual reunion and fun day."

The Ozello Civic Club will again be providing a chicken barbecue dinner for \$4.25 beginning at 11 a.m. and will be served until 5 p.m. There will be country music throughout the day by Buddy Max and his Cowboy Junction Band, and an afternoon program will include dance routines by tots-to-teens from Debbie's Dance Studio and the Suncoast Cloggers. There will be prizes for the customary old-time games and races, and

door prizes.

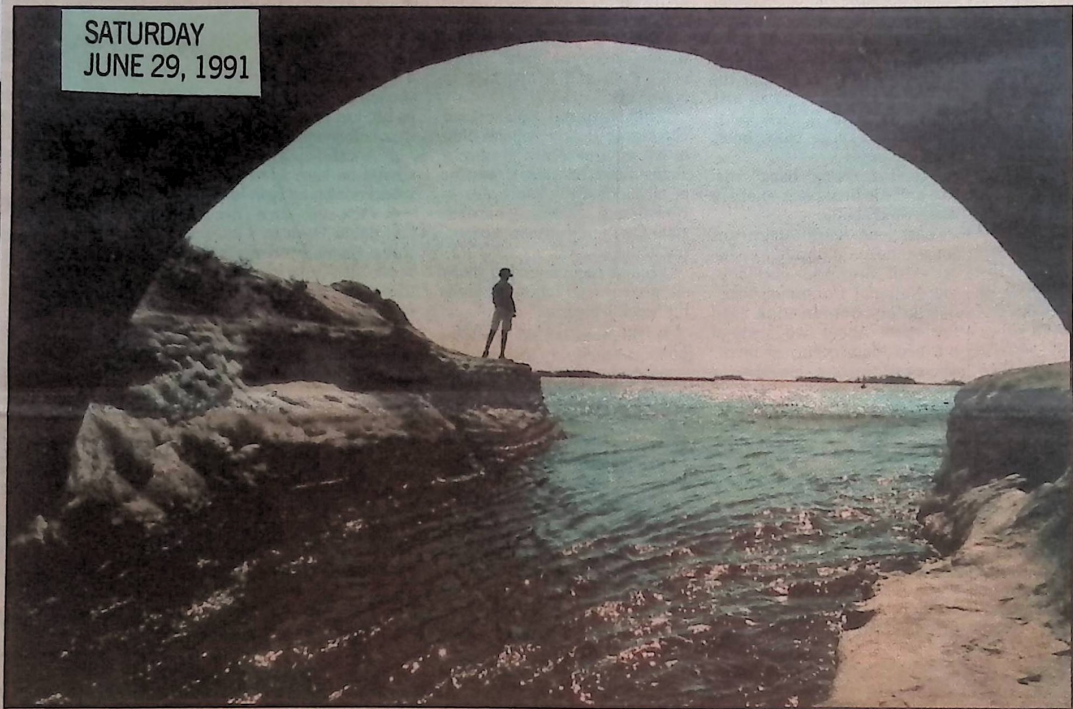
The Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts Association will be participating with an annual Spring Art Fair on the club grounds from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Several local artists will be displaying their paintings, wood carvings, needlework and handicraft items, in addition to the many various other craft displays by visiting crafters participating in the fair, as well as various other food and refreshment stands.

The Citrus County Historical Society is expected to be showing a number of interesting items in their tent display also, and welcomes all to come by and browse.

Dropping a line

CHRONICLE

SATURDAY
JUNE 29, 1991



Alex Johndrow casts his line out from the last bridge along Ozello Trail. Johndrow and his family were visiting from Mannheim, Germany.

Lera Gordon/The Chronicle

CITRUS SCENE

The gulf view is beautiful from the remote community of Ozello and this Saturday you can enjoy an arts and crafts festival as residents celebrate their heritage.



By *Whispering The Chronicle*

Ozello will celebrate their island heritage with the annual Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts and Pioneer Day on Saturday, May 2. Featured artist at the event is Phyllis Milton, who frequently can be found in her studio sketching the gulf view from her Oz Art Studio deck.

A key to arts and crafts

By Nancy Kennedy
Chronicle writer

ONCE UPON A time, down a palm tree and palmetto-lined winding road that follows the St. Martin's and Salt river, past sawgrass and mangrove marshes, there lived two island communities, each with their own school. The Rochelle community on Western Island consisted of five families: the Waddingtons, Heads, Edges, Willises and Lewises. The Ozello community had the Browns, Wellises, Stevenses and DeBus-

ks. Since it seemed silly to have two schools, the Rochelle families told the Ozello families that their kids could row to school on their side of the river. The Ozello families replied by saying the Rochelle kids could row to their school on their side of the river.

Fortunately, this tale has a happy ending. The two communities compromised by building a new school on a separate island and all the students had to row their boats to get to the "Isle of Knowledge."

Reported Thelma Henderson, secretary of the Ozello Civic Club, "At the school, the four Bs were taught: reading, (writing), rhythmic and rowing. There was an old Ozello saying, 'A youngster who couldn't row a boat by school age was considered

It took me awhile to get to know a palm tree. The first year I looked and sketched, then I started painting. I figured no one would find me way out here."

Phyllis Milton

beyond hope of education."

The school, closed in 1943, is no longer standing and the island has since been deeded to the Citrus County Historical Society. However, some of the students (like Zeka Wells, Harvey and Tony DeBusk, Horace Brown and Carl Stevens to name a few) are still around and meet once a year for a reunion of schoolmates, family and neighbors. This reunion's come to be called Pioneer Day.

This year, for the fifth time, the Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts Association has held their Arts and Crafts Show in conjunction with Pioneer Days. Tomorrow, Saturday May 2, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., artists and craftspeople from Citrus County and beyond will be displaying their work.

The featured artist this year is 10-year Ozello resident Phyllis Milton. Mrs. Milton, who recently finished a showing of her paintings at the Citrus Na-

tional Bank in Crystal River, specializes in sea and landscapes, both in acrylics and pen and ink.

Originally from New York, Mrs. Milton took art lessons while raising her six children and then went back to college to study fine arts for two years. After that, she worked as a graphics artist in Yonkers and New York City before returning to fine arts.

Ten years ago she left New York for Florida and discovered Ozello. As she recalled, "I looked around at the islands and thought, what a perfect place for an artist."

Setting up her studio on the Ozello Trail, Mrs. Milton took up her sketch pad and made herself at home. "It took me awhile to get to know a palm tree. The first year I looked and sketched, then I started painting. I figured no one would find me way out here. Now though, I've been featured in a few newspaper articles and I've even been on TV." (Larry Elliston's Down Home Florida)

As the Arts and Crafts Association's featured artist, Mrs. Milton will be on hand to meet the public, answer questions, display her artistry and enjoy the day.

Janice Hayden, president of the Ozello Civic Club, promises a "jammed pack day." Besides the arts and crafts show, there will be a full day's lineup of activities and entertainment. The entertainment list includes bluegrass music from the Cow-

OZELLO

continued from Page 1C

boy Junction Band, dance performances by Tots and Teens from Miss Debbie's Dance in Homosassa Springs, clogging by the Sun-coast Cloggers and harmonica by Frank Recor.

The old-time games and races include: 3-legged and sack races, water balloon tosses and a fish pond for the smaller children. Also, there will be an attic treasure table and from noon until 5 p.m., a chicken barbecue cooked by the men of the Civic Club will

be served. And of course, the Civic Club will have its historic Ozello memorabilia on display.

To get to the Civic Club grounds, follow the Ozello sign off U.S. 19 between Crystal River and Homosassa Springs. Follow the Ozello Trail six miles to the Civic Club, on the right.

According to Mrs. Henderson, Pioneer Day started out as a fami-

ly reunion. However, last year they had over 400 guests in attendance. "This island is a getaway and a hideaway area for people from Plant City, Hudson and Tampa. Word of our event has spread and many people try to be here for the weekend."

History, arts, crafts, entertainment and food — a little something for everyone tomorrow in Ozello.

Arts and crafts, Pioneer Day brings crowd to Ozello

Sunday, May 3, 1992 Citrus County (FL) Chronicle

By Jennifer Grant
Staff writer

Eighteen months ago when he was in the desert of Saudi Arabia serving his country in the Persian Gulf War, Joel Maddeaux never imagined he'd now be making crafts.

But nevertheless, the retired Army veteran is doing just that, making anything and everything from wood.

"I've never done anything like this," the Inverness resident said with a laugh. "I didn't think I could."

Maddeaux was one of a couple dozen crafters at the Ozello Pioneer Day/Arts and Crafts Show on Saturday showing his wares and having a good time.

June Drolet, a resident of Homosassa, was sharing in that fun Saturday afternoon with loves those firemen. He has all their literature and is going back for more."

Many different crafts were displayed at the show from ceramics to wood craft and there was even one unusual craft done by Beverly Hills resident Ethel Zotter.

Mrs. Zotter had a booth covered in wall hangings made by pine needles.

There were crosses, and

*"A lot of times you
just give people a
knife and a piece of
wood and they
go to work
on their own."*

**Dick Brown, a woodcarver
from Homosassa**

wreaths and different country looking hangings that Mrs. Zotter swore were all made from pine needles from Beverly Hills.

"I mass produce them," she said proudly. "A lot of wood, he explained how easy it really is when you get the right teacher."

He showed off several wood-en manatees and fish he had made and said he's taught a lot of people how to do similar work.

But not everyone needs a teacher, he said. "A lot of times you just give people a knife and a piece of wood and they go to work on their own."



Betsy Doswell, 11, and her mom Liz of St. Petersburg look over some manatee statues that woodcarver Dick Brown of Citrus Hills had for sale at the annual Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts and Pioneer Day held on Saturday.

Mary Frank/The Chronicle

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June Drolet, a resident of Homosassa, was sharing in that fun Saturday afternoon with her grandson Jesse Wepner.

It was Jesse's seventh birthday and Mrs. Drolet said she was trying to make it a special day for him.

Jesse said he was enjoying himself and added "She (his grandmother) even gave me 50 cents for this," as he held up his can of soda.

A split second later, Jesse ran off to check out what some local firemen were doing at their booth and Mrs. Drolet said with a laugh, "He just loves those firemen. He has all their literature and is going back for more."

Many different crafts were displayed at the show from ceramics to wood craft and there was even one unusual craft done by Beverly Hills resident Ethel Zotter.

Mrs. Zotter had a booth covered in wall hangings made by pine needles.

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"I mass produce them," she said proudly.

It's a different kind of craft and that's one thing Mrs. Zotter said she likes about making the hangings. After making baskets out of needles, she decided to try something different and came up with this three years ago.

Other crafters, like Dick Brown from Homosassa, not only wanted to display his work, he discussed teaching how to do it.

As he sat carving a panther from a small piece of wood, he explained how easy it really is when you get the right teacher.

He showed off several wooden manatees and fish he had made and said he's taught a lot of people how to do similar work.

But not everyone needs a teacher, he said. "A lot of times you just give people a knife and a piece of wood and they go to work on their own."



Betsy Doswell, 11, and her mom Liz of St. Petersburg look over some manatee statues that woodcarver Dick Brown of Citrus Hills had for sale at the annual Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts and Pioneer Day held on Saturday.

Mary Frank/The Chronicle

Pioneer Day brings back former residents

By Gordon Jackson
Staff writer

Back in the early days of Ozello's history, the Pioneer Day celebration used to honor one of the long-time residents of the small, tight-knit community in western Citrus County.

Pioneer Day eventually became a community-wide celebration, instead of a day of recognition for one person.

"They were afraid if they waited to honor only one person a year, someone would die before getting their turn," Ethel Strange of Ozello said.

The day of celebration eventually died, until eight years ago when some old-time residents decided to revive the community event.

Mrs. Strange now lives in Orlando most of the year, but said

Organizers said the event draws former residents from as far as Kentucky to attend the event.

she still tells people she's from Ozello. She made the trip from Orlando, specifically to attend Pioneer Day Saturday.

Organizers said the event draws former residents from as far as Kentucky to attend the event.

Most of the vendors were local residents who showed off their hand-made crafts and art

Please see OZELLO, Page 2A

OZELLO

continued from Page 1A

to the small crowds. Some residents showed up specifically to sample the home-made barbecue chicken dinner in the community civic center.

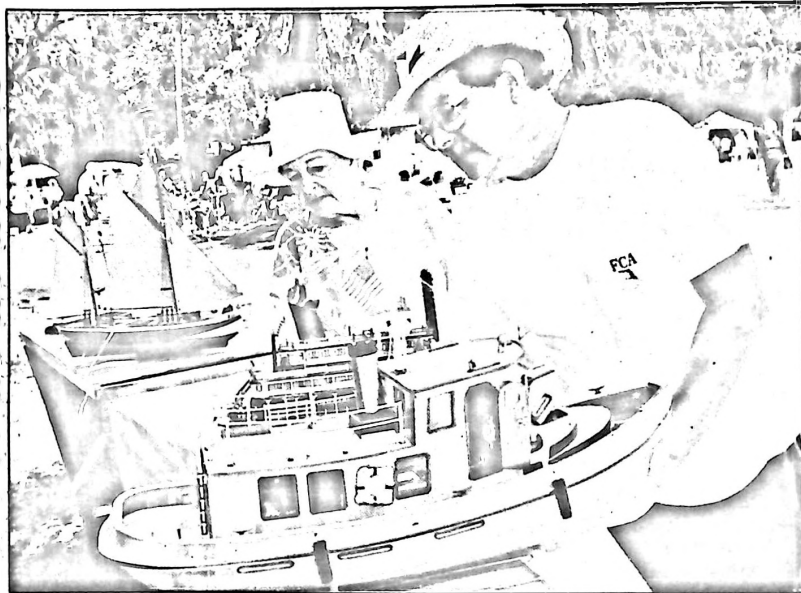
Despite the low turnout,

members staffing the Citrus County Historical Society tent said they were pleased with the number of people who came to the exhibit and ask questions or give information.

Pioneer Days wasn't held last year because Ozello was still recovering from a March 13 storm that devastated the community. Those in atten-

dance Saturday said the small crowd was perfect on a day with high clouds and lots of sunshine.

"I wouldn't want to see it any bigger than this," former Ozello resident Diana Strickland of St. Augustine said. "I've seen lots of friends and relatives here today."



Dave Syles/The Chronicle
Aline Siptak and Erwin Sexton look at model ships built by Larry Schamberger Saturday at the Ozello Pioneer Day Celebration.

Aug 1 - 1994

in this spot



Boats were the primary mode of transportation for the Head family during the early 1900s.

Childhood in Ozello fondly remembered

By Jan Witherspoon
Staff writer

Four young girls, one dressed in a pink organdy dress made by her mother, rowed their boat more than a mile to go school.

Their island home, 70 acres of shell and marsh, was the last one in the St. Martin's River before entering the Gulf of Mexico.

The girl in the organdy dress would often run to the water's edge and watch the fishermen go out to sea.

Her father was a fisherman and she liked to watch the men in their boats coming and going.

The young girl was Viola Head, born in 1907.

Viola and her sisters, Edna Madeline, Bernice, Helen and Lois were all born at home without the help of a doctor. The only doctor was miles

away in Crystal River.

The community now known as Ozello was mostly uninhabited marshland as she remembers. Her grandmothers lived in the country of what is now Ozello.

Mrs. Hensley remembers that when the tide was out they could get to the mainland by horse and wagon to visit family.

Viola's father, Benjamin Lewis Head, and her mother, Allie Wilda Wells, married in Citrus County in 1907. They homesteaded the island where they raised their five daughters until it became necessary for the girls to continue their education in Crystal River.

Viola Head Hensley, 86, recalls her childhood. "Dad was a commercial fisherman and a guide. It was good money then," she said. "We lived almost like rich people."

Their island home was built



Dave Siger/The Chronicle

Viola Hensley remembers the old days in Ozello, when families had to use boats to travel into town and to an island school.

high to protect it from the water; there was a porch across the front and the Gulf side of the house. From the front porch there was a walkway to the edge of the river where boats were docked.

"Out from the back of the

house was a long stairway that led down to the chicken yard, garden, cow pen and a pen for a few pigs," Mrs. Hensley said. "And a bathroom, or, affectionately known as the "closet," set over a tide creek so that each tide that came in flushed it out.

The fisherman father had two stiffs and one large in-board motor boat big enough that two men could stay out fishing for three days. The boat had two net tables and a 1,000-

Please see OZELLO, Page 2A

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pound ice capacity for storage. He was also a guide for the northern tourists who came to stay on one of the islands in the river.

The Ozello fishermen had to take their catch to Homosassa, seven miles away from the Head island home.

Mrs. Hensley said, "Life must have been hard (for many people) in old Ozello, but everyone in the community knew they were friends to everyone else.

"My dad made a good living and my mother could do anything."

Her mother canned food from the garden and the family smoked all their own meat and fish. Their drinking water was rainwater caught in an aluminum tank that was higher than their house.

There were palmetto cabbage palms, peaches, oranges and lemons on the island for the taking. And on Saturday the father went to Homosassa by boat to get groceries.

"Once, when my dad was ill with lumbago for six weeks, my mother fished and trapped just like a man and kept the family together," Mrs. Hensley said. "Even though my mom was a delicate lady, she was also a great lady with her family's welfare at heart."

The Head family was one of several families that inhabited the remote Ozello islands after the turn of the century. There were DeBusks, Browns, Wells, Stevens and another Head family who fished, gardened, sweat, and thrived in the sub-tropical climate of the Gulf of Mexico.

With several families raising children, a school house was built on one of the islands and the teacher was given a place to live with one of the families. The children rowed to school, docked

their boats and attended classes. Mrs. Hensley remembers that at one time there were 42 children attending the island school.

"Sometimes," she said, "we'd be scared to death going across the bay when the wind was bad."

There were also music lessons for the girls from Rosa Campbell, who was also the first post mistress, she said. Island residents rowed their boats to the post office to pick up their mail and the Head girls rowed to their music lessons.

Among the chores and routine of life on the islands there was time for dancing. Square dancing, not round dancing. "My mother loved to dance," Mrs. Hensley recalls.

They had dances in the school house or someone opened their home and the neighbors came together. Someone brought a violin and a guitar, and there was a caller. The dance caller was often Benjamin Head.

There was also time for church at the schoolhouse.

Life continued on for the Head family on their island. But an education for the daughters was a paramount concern.

When Viola turned 16 her family sent her to Homosassa to live with a family where she boarded with three other girls. The girls took the train from Homosassa to Crystal River to attend ninth grade. She would go home on the weekends to the island.

Their father eventually sold the island and moved the family to Crystal River when the youngest daughter, Lois, was 9 months old. Their mother was determined her daughters would receive an education.

"I loved every minute of it," Mrs. Hensley said.

The little girl who watched the fishermen go out to sea would go back to the Ozello she knew 86 years ago.

"I'd live there now if I could."

Monday, March 28, 1994 Citrus County (FL) Chronicle

Ozello's Pioneer Day celebration and barbecue is planned May 7

The Annual Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts Show Pioneer Day Celebration and Barbecue will be May 7 in Ozello.

Due to the March no name storm, all records and mailing lists were destroyed. Those artists and crafters who wish to participate should call 795-6435 or 563-0466 for further information.

OZELLO PIONEER DAYS

Ozello tunes up for yearly festival

Special to The Chronicle

Billed as an old-time reunion, Ozello will transform into a giant day-long festival on Saturday, May 7, at its annual Pioneer Day celebration.

The Ozello Civic Club will provide a chicken barbecue dinner for \$4.50, from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. Children's plates will also be available, at \$3.50 for those under age 12.

Proceeds from the dinner are earmarked for the annual award the Civic Club presents to a senior boy and girl at Crystal River High School who have been selected by the faculty as having shown the most remarked rate of improvement during the four years in high school. The club's intention is to recognize those students who have shown the most effort and initiative to improve their learning skills and attitudes, rather than simply grade averages.

Indoor entertainment will include Frank Recor with his harmonica, also Walter Huffman will present one or more of his "talks" down memory lane, with his illustrations.

The Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts of the Civic Club will participate with its annual Spring Fair on the club grounds from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Several local artists and crafters, together with visiting crafters will display paintings, wood carvings, needlework and other handcraft items for sale. Leonard Marsh of Ozello is the featured crafter for this event.

The Ozello Volunteer Fire Department will have its new fire truck and equipment on hand and will conduct a demonstration.

Outdoor entertainment throughout the afternoon will be provided by the Buddy Max Band and Singers. Also on the program will be the Suncoast Cloggers and the tots-to-teens dancers from Miss Debbie's School of Dance.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Ozello church will observe Pioneer Day

ONE YEAR AFTER the "no-name storm" of March '93, the community of Ozello will again observe its annual Pioneer Day Saturday, May 7.

The theme for this year's celebration is "Thankful in '94," because the community which was so devastated by that storm has been rebuilt and blessed with a newly revived sense of community and harmony.

The day's activities are being shared jointly by the church, the Ozello Volunteer Fire Department and the Ozello Civic Club, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Ozello, six miles west of U.S. 19 on Ozello Trail (County Road, 494).

There will be an old-fashioned ice cream social on the church grounds under the shade trees, with cake and ice cream, cones or sundaes available after 11:30 a.m.

Pastor David Moore has arranged for several Christian musical groups to entertain during the afternoon. Also available will be hot dogs and lemonade.

The Spring Fair of the Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts will be held on the Civic Club grounds adjoining, and there will be a demonstration of equipment and procedures by the volunteer firemen and women, along with country music by the Buddy Max Band during the afternoon.

The Ozello Civic Club will serve barbecue chicken dinners from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., with many other customary attractions and entertainments.

The public is welcome and invited to come share this fun time together with the folks of Ozello.

Ozello to take step back in time

By John Dunbar
Staff writer

Ozello's Pioneer Day celebration will return Saturday after a one-year hiatus.

The event was canceled last year because of damage wreaked by the March 13 storm and flood, which devastated the little waterfront community.

"We are anxious for everyone to come and see how the Ozello citizens have restored and improved our clubhouse, community, and church after the devastation caused by the 'no-name storm,'" said Janice Hayden, past-president of the Ozello Civic Club, sponsor of the event.

The celebration will take place on the Ozello Civic Club grounds, located on County Road 494, six miles west of U.S. 19.

The civic club will be providing a chicken barbecue dinner for \$4.50, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Children's plates will also be available at \$3.50 for those under age 12.

Proceeds from the dinner are earmarked for the civic club award for the most-improved student at Crystal River High School. The club recognizes students who have shown effort and initiative to improve skills and attitudes rather than simply grade averages, Mrs. Hayden said.

Indoor entertainment will include Frank Recor with his harmonica. Walter Huffman will present an illustrated talk down memory lane.

The Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts of the Civic Club will present its annual Spring Fair on the club grounds, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Several local artists and craftsmen, will be displaying paintings, wood carvings, needlework and other handcraft

OZELLO

continued from Page 1A

items for sale. Leonard Marsh of Ozello is to be the featured craftsmen for this event.

The Ozello Volunteer Fire Department will display its newly acquired fire truck and will conduct a demonstration of emergency rescue procedures.

Outdoor entertainment will be provided by the Buddy Max Band and Singers. Also on the program will be the Suncoast Cloggers and the Tots-to-Teens dancers from Miss Debbie's School of Dance.

The Citrus County Historical Society will sponsor a display of historical items. Plans call for Hampton Dunn, well known Florida historian, to add his knowledge and memories of days gone by. Items on display will be from the Crystal River Heritage Museum.

The Ozello Community Church will host its old-fashioned ice cream social on church grounds adjacent to the clubhouse, serving cake along with the ice cream. There will also be hot dogs and lemonade for sale.

"We are looking forward to an exciting musical program in the afternoon," said Pastor David Moore, of Ozello church, "provided by several visiting musicians and singers of Christian music." The usual fish pond and children's games will also be on the church grounds.

"There will be door prize drawings, an old-fashioned costume judging, and races and games for the young and the young-at-heart," said Thelma Henderson, entertainment committee chairman for the event.

"We hope to have our most successful Pioneer Day so far, with all these civic-minded organizations participating."

A former watermelon farmer has found a seaside retirement haven where he can fish and whittle and join in his town's Pioneer Day celebration

FRIDAY
MAY 6, 1994

CHRONICLE



Jan H. Witherspoon/The Chronicle

Woodcarver Leonard Marsh will display his work at the Ozello Pioneer Day festival on May 7. Marsh is the featured artist this year.

Cedar-crafted creatures

Jan H. Witherspoon
Associate editor

L EONARD MARSH'S HANDS pick up the half finished piece of wood and his knife serapes cedar curls from the driftwood.

He is surrounded by his own creations. Wooden manatees, parrots, pelicans and a horse keep him company as he works on a small piece that is taking the shape of a tiny manatee.

The animals are not lifeless wooden creatures, they glow with a life that was within the tree before it became weathered, gray driftwood.

The cedar driftwood harbors rich red and blond wood that Marsh has advantageously used in a unique manner — the small horse is blessed with a blond rump and part of the tail is also blond. The rest is mostly reddish color.

"You don't ever know how it's going to turn out 'til you get started on it," Marsh says.

The 68-year-old retired watermelon farmer looks for driftwood in different shapes and sizes along the creekbanks. In a soft, southern drawl he says, "If you look hard enough you can find anything you're looking for."

With his cap pulled down to shade his eyes from the sun, he looks at his work and reflects that it's not perfect. "Anything you do by hand is not perfect. If you want perfect — go to the store. It would be hard to make two pieces the same," he muses.

The art of woodcarving is something fairly new to the farmer. Since he retired to Ozello and quit growing watermelons he has time to fish and whittle and look for driftwood.

Marsh's work can be seen at the Ozello Pioneer Day Celebration on May 7 where he is the featured

artist. The day-long festival is billed as an old-time reunion.

The Ozello Civic Club will provide a chicken barbecue dinner for \$1.50, beginning at 11 a.m. served until 4 p.m. Children's plates will also be available, at \$3.50 for those under age 12.

Proceeds from the dinner are earmarked for the annual award the Civic Club presents to a senior boy and girl of Crystal River High School who have been selected by the faculty as having shown the highest rate of improvement during the four years in high school.

Indoor entertainment will include Frank Recor with his harmonica, also Walter Huffman will present one or more of his famous "talks" down memory lane along with his illustrations.

The Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts of the Civic Club will participate with its annual Spring Fair on the club grounds, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Several local artists and crafters, together with visiting crafters will display their paintings, wood carvings, needlework and other handicraft items for sale.

The Ozello Volunteer Fire Department will have its new fire truck and equipment on hand and will conduct a demonstration of emergency rescue procedures.

Outdoor entertainment throughout the afternoon will be provided by the Buddy Max Band and Singers, as in previous years. Also on the program will be the Suncoast Cloggers and the Tois-to-Teens dancers from Miss Debbie's School of Dance.

The Citrus County Historical Society will sponsor a display of historical and memorable items and welcome all visitors to come by its tent. Plans are for Hampton Dunn, well known Florida historian, to again be present to add his knowledge



A hand carved parrot sits on a perch.

and memories of days gone by. Items on display will be from the Crystal River Heritage Museum.

The Ozello Community Church will host its old-

CEDAR

continued from Page 1C

fashioned ice cream social on the grounds adjacent to the clubhouse, serving cake along with the ice cream provided by Roy Zachry, made in the Ming Tree tradition. There will also be hot dogs and lemonade for sale.

"We are looking forward to an exciting musical program in the afternoon provided by several visiting musicians and singers of Christian music," said Pastor David Moore of the Ozello church.

"There will be door prize drawings, an old-fashioned costume

judging, and races and games for the young and the young-at-heart," said Thelma Henderson, entertainment committee chairman for this event, "and we hope to have our most successful

Pioneer Day so far, with all these civic-minded organizations participating."

The Ozello Civic Club is on County Road 494, six miles west of U.S. 19.

CEDAR

continued from Page 1C

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No. 16: ONE-ROOM SCHOOL HOUSE - Herman Beville attended this school house in 1916, when one teacher taught all grades - and every pupil learned how to do math, write and read. Read more about the one-room school house era in Florida, and the cowboy's place here in a growing territory inside this Sundial issue.

1/28
1979



at home

CITRUS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 12 Number 5

May/June 1995



The PRESIDENT'S Message by Rev. James C. Hoge

A ROLLER COASTER RIDE!

Just as we are finishing Phase I of the restoration of the 1912 courthouse and basking in the compliments over the exterior appearance of the building, the alarming message came from Tallahassee that the Phase III appropriation expected to be funded by the legislature in July had been cut in half by the House Appropriations Committee. As you recall, the state legislature approved \$200,000 for Phase I, and \$230,460 for Phase II.

The pivotal and critical phase of the restoration is Phase III, the upper floor of the building, including the historic old courtroom. Last September, due to the all-out effort of your Society, the Advisory Council of the State Bureau of Historic Preservation approved and included \$270,000 for this phase.

Next came word the Senate Appropriations committee eliminated historical preservation funding **completely!!!** Phase III money was gone.

Preservationists locally and statewide went to work.

At mid-April the report is that both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have approved full funding of the Bureau of Historic Preservation request. So, after a rollicking roller coaster ride, the money for our Phase III grant is in the budget and will go to the full legislature for approval.

LEARNING THE FOUR R's Readin', Ritin', Rithmetic, Rowin'

Mary C. Dorsey

IN 1880, a school was needed in Ozello. Families on the North and South shores of the St. Martin River argued about the location. As a compromise, the school was built on an island in the middle of the river. At that time, teachers earned about \$25 a month and were expected to find room and board with a local family. In Ozello they also had to learn to swim and row a boat as well as their young pupils.

The boat trip to school took at least one hour. Class began at 8:00 a.m. with a reading from the Bible. The student body averaged about twenty children from first to eighth grades.

Older pupils helped younger ones, often their siblings, with lessons. When called upon to recite, they would go to the front of the room and stand beside the teacher's desk.

The school was a small wooden building with a cistern for rainwater, kerosene lamps and a potbelly stove. Older boys were expected to chop wood and tend the stove. However, during fall and winter school was usually not in session. Then the children were needed to help their farmer and fishermen families earn money.

Behind the school were two out-houses, one for girls and one for boys. If in need, the child would signal the teacher by holding up two fingers.

By the 1930's, the school had been enlarged, acquired an organ and was used on Sundays for church services.

There was a softball diamond. Often a home run would be hit into the river so a rubber ball was used. One of the boys would jump into a rowboat and retrieve the ball.

Fishing and swimming were other popular playtime activities. Sometimes the kids would find enough oysters to take home for supper. They called these treats "coonies" because the raccoons also liked them.

Around 1933 after a bad storm, there was an unexpected but welcome week's vacation. The school had floated off its blocks and had to be repaired.

In June 1940, the Ozello school was featured as the "Isle of Knowledge" in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not" column. by then the average teacher's pay was \$120 per month. From ninth grade, students were taken by the school motorboat and bus to Crystal River High School. Enrollment declined and the

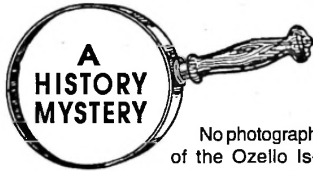


LEARNING THE FOUR R's

Continued from page 1

beloved island school was finally closed in 1943.

However, it remained a popular spot until 1977. Then the building was damaged by a salvager and collapsed. A commemorative flagpole was erected. In 1988, the caring community of Ozello, which had received it from the School Board deeded the island school property to the Citrus County Historical Society to preserve this unique historic site. It was given for all citizens of Citrus County and in this way, it is still an "Isle of Knowledge."



No photograph of the Ozello Island School is known to exist. If you know of a photo which can be copied and returned to owner please call Citrus County Historical Society 637-9928.

Celebrate Florida



Citrus County

**Florida Celebrates Its
150 Years of Statehood**

1845-1995 — it has been 150 years since Florida became one of the states of the union. Observances are happening all over the state and Citrus County will not be left out. Some local events have already occurred and more are scheduled.

To plan and stage all of this a local Sesquicentennial Coordinating Committee was formed with Steve Naas as Chairman. This committee sanctions local events. Contact Mr. Naas at 726-9289 for information.

THE LIBRARY ROUNDUP

In a previous story about the genesis of the county library system and the Inverness library, it was noted that in 1959 the county commission appropriated \$5000 to fund a newly formed Library Board. Other stories in AT HOME have detailed the beginnings of the Crystal River Library. The accompanying story on the Homosassa Library leaves us to later report in detail on the Hernando, Floral City and Beverly Hills libraries which are also a part of the Citrus County Library system.

The Homosassa Library Story

That \$5000 appropriated by the Citrus County Commission in 1959 (see box) was the catalyst for the establishment of the public library in Homosassa. Arrangements were made for a Sunday School room in the Seventh Day Adventist Church to be used for the library. Volunteers built and painted stacks and soon more than 800 books had been donated.

In addition to donated books, almost every need was filled by donations and loans of furniture. In 1960 a Dedication Day service was held in the church sanctuary. But, the library grew so fast that it was soon asked to move elsewhere.

There was available space on the second floor of the Homosassa Elementary School on Yulee Drive. The library was moved to that location, but it proved difficult for the older patrons to climb the stairs. Many were deprived of library use. Later, trustees of the Faith Tabernacle, next door to the elementary school, allowed the use of their building since so many of their members had moved away. The trustees did reserve the right to use the building at their convenience.

This provided access for the older folks, but in 1964 Hurricane Dora arrived and all the books on the lower shelves were lost to intruding water. Despite the loss, the move

to the Faith Tabernacle proved a blessing when the old, elementary school was destroyed by fire in 1969.

Meantime, the Citrus County Commission set aside funds for the construction of new voting precincts, and the Homosassa Civic Club donated land for a precinct building, providing a library room be included. A contract was signed in October of 1968 and the Homosassa Public Library had a home right next door to the Civic Club (sometimes called the community building).

A small addition was made to the library in the early 1980s. Because of a growing population the voting precinct made a short visit to the nearby fire station and has since relocated to the Civic Club building. All of which gives the library the entire, enlarged voting precinct building which is now too small because of the same growing population that once caused the polling place to be moved.

ANNUAL PICNIC -- Y'ALL COME!

On Friday, May 19 your Society will meet for the last time until September.

The occasion is the

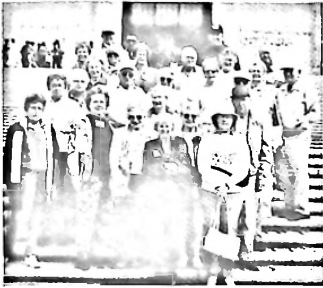
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP PICNIC

Gathering time is 11:00 a.m. with covered dish luncheon at noon. The place is Yulee State Park directly across the road from the Yulee Sugarmill ruins in Homosassa. Paper, plastic products and drinks will be supplied. Instead of a speaker, the program will be a specially arranged tour of the nearby Homosassa Springs State Wildlife Park at 9225 W. Fishbowl Drive. All members are encouraged to come. Reservations are not required.

The Society Page

News and Events of The Citrus County Historical Society

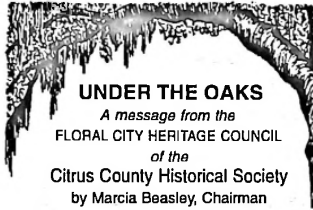
Cajun Country Tour Complete, Okeechobee is Last of Season



These thirty, happy, CCHS members are Cajun Country tourists pictured standing on the steps of the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge. They report a beautiful six day tour that took them to sights tourists do not usually see and always with tour guides that add to the excitement, information, and enjoyment. An exciting three day tour of Lake Okeechobee and Palm Beach that includes two nights directly on Jensen Beach leaves on May 17. A few seats may still be available. Call Peggy Weyl at 637-1666 for information.

Archaeological Council Plans Tentative Meeting May 18

Spokesmen for the Withlacoochee River Archaeological Council of the Citrus County Historical Society are tentatively scheduling a final season meeting for May 18. All WRAC meetings are held at the Crystal River Indian Mounds State Park at 7:30 p.m. To confirm this tentative meeting, call Russell Dorsey at 637-0319.



Good food and entertainment were enjoyed by 124 people at the second annual Heritage Dinner on April first. The Floral City Heritage Council shows a balance on the dinner of \$690.00 after expenses were paid and they extend a thank you to all who made reservations and donations for this fund raiser.

At the dinner, a large framed photo of the annual Victorian Wedding Reenactment was presented to the Floral City United Methodist Church on behalf of sponsor, Judy Bailey owner of Classic Memories Bridal and Formal Wear Boutique. Certificates of Appreciation were given to Council guests for the evening: Tony and Peggy Sparancino of Sparancino's Produce who have sold over \$2,200.00 worth of "Avenue of Oaks" tee shirts for the Council and to Gene Collins and Connie Denney of Antiques and Collectables of Floral City for dedicated service to historic preservation and folklife activities. A certificate to local artist Anita Roy, recognized her contributions in oil and pen and ink for historic preservation in Floral City.

Fourth generation Floral Citian and CCHS life member Flossie Bassett accepted a certificate of appreciation from seven members of the CCHS Board present at the dinner. The certificate was given to "family and friends" for their contributions to the Emma Love Jenrette who were great-granddaughters of early Floral City settler, John Paul Formy-Duval.

SCHEDULED EVENTS

- May 16 ---- CCHS Board of Director's meeting, 9:30 a.m. the Old Courthouse
 May 17 ---- Okeechobee/Palm Beach tour departs
 May 18 ---- Withlacoochee River Archaeological Council. Meeting is tentative. Phone 637-0319 for confirmation.
 May 19 ---- ANNUAL PICNIC, 11:00 a.m., Yulee State Park (across the road from Yulee Sugar Mill ruins)
 May 29 ---- Memorial Day (Monday Holiday Bill)
 June 2 ---- Florida Trust for Historic Preservation membership meeting, the Old Courthouse
 June 20 ---- CCHS Board of Director's meeting, 9:30 a.m. the Old Courthouse
 July 1 ---- July/August edition of AT HOME to be mailed



From the Heritage Museum

by Molly Johnston

All attention is focused on the second Freedom Festival in Crystal River on July 4th. With the help of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, military uniform and homefront memorabilia will be on display.

Reactivation of the Photo Lab is going on under the direction of David Benton. Watch for announcement.

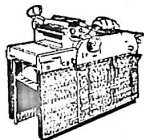
Thanks to Aline Stem and Jean Wongrey for assistance with displays. Their creativity and knowledge of archival materials is greatly appreciated.

Acquisitions

Things People Give to the Historical Society Museum

It's time for Spring housecleaning and a time to remember the Historical Museums of Citrus County. Your cast-offs may well be our treasure. Here are some recent donations to the museum collection:

A small cannon ball circa Seminole Indian Wars/watercolor print signed by Joseph C. Newton/early 1900's canning jars/book: "Church of the Living God"/collection of 40's and 50's costume jewelry/1800's pin cushions/old wooden spools for thread/a spring hat with all the colors of the rainbow in it/collection of post cards from 1909.



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CITRUS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
 The Old Courthouse / 1 Courthouse Square
 Inverness, Florida 34450-4802
 Phone 637-9927

**Florida Trust Membership Meeting
 June 2nd in Old Courthouse**

Invitations have gone out to the community inviting membership in the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation. Anyone who would like to become a member of the Florida Trust should attend a special membership meeting set for the Old Courthouse on June 2nd. George Percy, Director of Historic Resources for the State of Florida will be present to view the progress of our Old Courthouse restoration and to speak about the Trust and how it influences historic preservation in Florida.

A special guest will be Joan Jennewein, Trustee Emeritus of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Founding President of the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation. The Friday, June 2nd meeting is scheduled for 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Reservations can be made by calling Deborah Scott at 637-9929.

**Every Member's Help Needed
 With Grant Support Letters**

A Phase IV, State of Florida grant request for the restoration of the Old Courthouse

must be entered late in May. CCHS members are asked to write brief handwritten letters in support of the grant.

Letters should tell why you think the Old Courthouse should be restored, and addressed to: Advisory Council, Bureau of Historic Preservation, Tallahassee, FL. Then send or deliver them to Room 105, the Old Courthouse, Inverness, FL 34450. They will be packaged and sent with the grant application.

* * *



During J.C. Penney's 93rd Anniversary observance in April, Society member Thelma Henderson demonstrated how the

family washing was done in the "good old days." All of which was part of an old time laundry day display set up in the Crystal River Penney's store using artifacts from the Coastal Heritage Museum.

**"A Walk on the Wild Side"
 Being Filmed in Citrus County**

In production is a 60-minute video docudrama featuring the nature coast of Citrus County. Titled "A Walk on the Wild Side," the video is being filmed by movie producers and CCHS members Ferd and Beverly Sebastian, and is scheduled for introduction this fall. It is a sanctioned event of Citrus County's Sesquicentennial Committee honoring the 150th year of Florida statehood.

The Sebastions came here from Los Angeles a few years ago to make a movie and became so enchanted with the area they purchased a home on the Homosassa River and moved their operation here. According to Beverly Sebastian, "this present undertaking is partly a commercial venture and partly a labor of love." It will be promoted in trade magazines, trade shows, on broadcast media and will be available nationwide.

Thursday, May 4, 1995 *Citrus County (FL) Chronicle*

Citrus County (FL) Chronicle Friday, May 5, 1995

BEST BET

Ozello's Pioneer Day is planned for Saturday

The community of Ozello will present the annual Pioneer Day celebration on May 6, on the grounds of the Ozello Civic Club and the Ozello Community Baptist Church.

"We think we have something for everyone," said George Holliday, president of the Civic Club; "entertainment, chicken barbecue dinner, craft fair, demonstration by the Ozello Fire Department, old-fashioned ice cream social at the church, historic displays, old-time games and races with prizes — a regular old fashioned family reunion kind of fun day."

Many of the usual visitors to the Pioneer Day celebration are former residents and students of the once well-known school on the island in the St. Margin's River, called the "Isle of Knowledge" by Ripley years ago. Friends and relatives of the pioneering families gather to greet one another and remember and retell the experiences and stories of days gone by.

Festivities will begin at 9 a.m. at the Club, six miles west of U.S. 19 on County Road 494, and last until 4:30 p.m. Music will be by Cowboy Junction Band, dancing by Suncoast Cloggers, and there will be many other attractions of interest. Bring a lawn chair and relax in the shade and enjoy the day.

Ozello Civic Club celebrates 30 years

Special to the Chronicle

"Pioneer Day" on May 6 is one of highlight of the year-long celebration of the 30th year for the Ozello Civic Club, located on County Road 494 west of U.S. 19.

The Pioneer Day theme recognizes members and relatives of the original pioneering families who settled these islands in the 1880s, and will feature a collection of pictures, clippings, and other memorabilia showing the growth of this beautiful island community.

The civic club will again provide a chicken barbecue dinner for \$4.50, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Children's plates, for those under 12, will also be available. Indoor entertainment will include Frank Recor with his harmonica and old-time country singers.

The Ozello Volunteer Fire Department will again have its equipment on hand and will conduct a demonstration of fire prevention and emergency rescue procedures, in the early afternoon.

The Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts of the Civic Club will participate with its annual Spring Fair on the club grounds, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Several local artists and crafters, together with visiting crafters will display their handicraft items for sale. Myrtle Marsh is to be the featured crafter for this event.

The Ozello Community Baptist Church will host its old-fashioned ice cream social on the church grounds next to the clubhouse, serving cones, cake and ice cream. The church's youth group will have cold drinks, hot dogs, lemonade and tea for sale.

Ozello's face changes little over time

Stories abound in area known for its outdoor relaxation, old school

OZELLO

Ruth M. Christ

Ozello, fishing village and resort, has an interesting and colorful history.

Ozello, since the latter part of the 19th Century, has been a place where the main trade has been fishing, and the few stores in Ozello have carried only some of the necessities of daily living — drinks, bread, a few groceries and supplies used by Ozello fishermen to repair their nets and operate their boats.

There are only a few public buildings in Ozello, a Baptist Church, the water department, a few bars, a couple of restaurants and a gas station. In recent years, a large motel and campground at the end of the long curving drive from U.S. Highway 19 to the gulf, has been refurbished and reopened.

Outdoor relaxation

Ozello is a good place to go for outdoor relaxation. Citrus County residents have always found it so, and back in the early years of the century, the whole community of farming people in Lecanto celebrated Thanksgiving in Ozello.

The story told is that young men of the community, such as cousins, **Austin** and **Morrison Allen**, went a day ahead of the families and cut swamp cabbage, collected oysters and other seafood and prepared the area for camping so that when the rest of the community arrived with wagonloads of children, tents, bedding and Thanksgiving food — sweet potato pie, greens, pounds cake — the seafood and campground would be ready for a Thanksgiving feast, an evening of visiting and a night of sleep beneath the stars.

The feature of Ozello, which has been most often commented on by

natives and visitors alike, has been Ozello's one-teacher island schoolhouse.

The schoolhouse was closed as a school in the 1940s, but it was used for some time after that as a church.

Isle of Knowledge

It is no longer there, but guides point out Schoolhouse Island to visitors and tell the story of the one-room school, which was built there in 1880, and the story of Robert Ripley's dubbing the island, "The Isle of Knowledge."

The story is that in 1880, when the time had come to erect a school building for the community, which was divided by the St. Martin River, the people on each side of the river wanted the school built on their side of the river.

The quarrel was adamant, so a decision was made to build the schoolhouse on an island in the middle of the river, then it would be an equal distance to the school from either side of the river.

Now, more than 100 years later, the idea of children rowing to school on the choppy waters of the river would be unheard of and frightening to most parents.

But in 1880, the age of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, people seemed to have been more casual than they are today about placing the responsibility of rowing a boat to school and back each day on young people who had grown up on the river.

Of course those youngsters thought the experience great fun and the public, once aware of the situation, was fascinated with the idea of kids going to school in a row boat.

Fifty years later, after the one-teacher island schoolhouse had been in use, cartoonist Robert L. Ripley told the story to the world in the 1930s in his syndicated newspa-

per feature, "Believe it or Not!" where he dubbed Ozello's schoolhouse island "The Isle of Knowledge." The schoolhouse in The Isle of Knowledge housed, supposedly, the only school in the United States, which was completely surrounded by water.

The old school

Fortunately **Epie Bullard**, one of the students who attended the Ozello school just prior to its closing in the 1940s, wrote a joyous story about the history of the school and her experience as a student there.

The paper has not been published, although its significance is mentioned and its story summarized in **Hampton Dunn's** book, "Back Home: A History of Citrus County, Florida," which was published in 1976.

The paper itself is available in a vertical file in the reference department of the Coastal Region Library in Crystal River.

Bullard wrote that the most fascinating thing about attending the school was that all the students in grades one through eight had to row themselves to school each day.

When the weather was rough, the students had to start an hour earlier than usual because they would be washed ashore at times no matter how hard they rowed.

"The bay in front of the school could have waves two or three feet high. When this happened, we would be late. The teacher could see us from the school and knew we would get there eventually.

"Sometimes the passing fishermen would rescue us.

"At lunch time or recess, we'd swim or wade around the edges of the island, which consisted of mostly oyster shells.

"I can't ever remember anyone being cut from them; we knew to step lightly, as the Indians had done, long before us."

Bullard wrote about fiddler crabs and how they would attach themselves to the toes of the kids, playing games at recess.

High waves and oyster shells, along with fiddler crabs, were characteristics of the Ozello school which were not shared by other rural Citrus County school students of the day 50 years ago.

Privies out back

But the privy "out back" and the "black potbellied stove" were features of other rural schools.

Bullard's school days on Schoolhouse Island seemed almost as colorful and exciting as Tom's, Huck's and Jim's days on Jackson Island.

And like Tom and Huck, stowaways on a Mississippi raft who listening to tall tales, Bullard and her friends listened to the stories of mullet fishermen:

"The fishhouse was the hub of Ozello," she wrote, where fishermen gathered to sell their fish and exchange news of the "hauls of mullet," caught the night before.

"They would spread their nets to dry and to mend; sometimes this was a family affair with the women and children helping.

"The mending needle they used was "hand whittled" from hickory wood, filled with twine. They would trim the uneven holes to a neat square or rectangle, tie the twine to the upper left corner and proceed to rebuild the net.

"They worked and told tales of the river of the sea.

"We loved to listen."

■ ■ ■

Send news of Beverly Hills and Lecanto to Ruth M. Christ, P.O. Box 491, Lecanto 34461. Telephone: 746-2252.

Horse Racing: Thunder Gulch steals the show at the 121st Kentucky Derby running/1B

SUNDAY
MAY 7, 1995

VOL. 107, NO. 127
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Chronicle

CRYSTAL RIVER
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INVERNESS
FLORIDA 34452



Yasser Arafat
Tough times for
self rule/13A

Ethical standards: Local pastor
on why they must be addressed/1C



Ozello Pioneer Days



Sheri Mayben, left, and her cousin Angela Pheil made a special trip from Gainesville just to be a part of Ozello Pioneer Days and to show their great-grandmother Mayben's 6-week-old daughter, Taylor. Coordinator of the event Thelma Henderson, right, finds some ancestors of the cousins in the Ozello Civic Club scrapbook.

Ozello celebrates island's past, future



Betty Bault chats with neighbors while watching over the Ozello Civic Club's table of attic treasures on sale.

By Greg Erbstoesser
Staff writer

It looked like everyone in Ozello was having a good time Saturday.

A half-dozen Ozello youngsters frolicked in the hot afternoon sun in a makeshift swimming pool — really a Ozello Fire Department plastic-lined portable water reservoir that firefighters use in emergencies.

Nearby, festivalgoers perused some two dozen crafts tables, while a small group listened to a seemingly never-ending medley of country-western melodies from the seven-member Cowboy Junction band.

There were hot dogs and barbecue chicken, a day full of music, and a wide variety of games such as potato sack and three-legged races for ... children.

Saturday Ozello celebrated its 10th annual Pioneer Day. "It's really nice," festival organizer Thelma Henderson said.

"We didn't have one in 1993 when he had the March, 'no-name' storm," she said. "But we had our first one in 1985."

The annual community celebration is sponsored by the Ozello Civic Club

which is 30 years old this year.

"This is my second year here," said Herb Lehman of Homosassa Springs, one of the small troop of crafters who set up camp under the trees in front of the civic club and the Ozello Community Baptist Church.

Lehman sat quietly as his handmade novelty windmill lawn ornaments — fish, birds and other animals — spun in the light breeze.

"I like it here," Lehman said. "I am surprised at the number of people who come here."

Inside the Ozello Civic Club community building, Louis Witte of Hudson had come home to Ozello for the day to look for old friends.

Witte said he is one of the first "modern-day" families to move in Ozello in 1935, and he was one of the founding members of the civic club. Witte said he was disappointed he did not find anyone he knew from years ago.

"I helped build this civic club, Witte said as he listened to vocalist Frank Sellers serenade the small group of people inside the community room.

OZELLO

continued from Page 1A

Witte said he planned to be back this November when the Civic Club hosts its first "founder's day" celebration.

Witte later wandered outside to listen to Buddy Max Pastuch and his musical companions, known

as Cowboy Junction, entertain the small crowd.

The musicians in the seven-member country music band ranged in age with the youngest being Buddy's wife, Freda, who is 50 and who played the "spoons."

Meanwhile, Leo Vargason who plays the fiddle and sings, is 79. "We've played here from the first time they had the festival," Pastuch said with a smile and a nod.



Robin Cornet/The Chronicle

Sheri Mayben, left, and her cousin Angela Pheil made a special trip from Gainesville just to be a part of Ozello Pioneer Days and to show their great-grandmother Mayben's 6-week-old daughter, Taylor. Coordinator of the event Thelma Henderson, right, finds some ancestors of the cousins in the Ozello Civic Club scrapbook.

Ozello celebrates island's past, future

By Greg Erbstoesser
Staff writer



Robin Cornet/The Chronicle

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Community fetes spirit of pioneers

By KEITH MORELLI
Tribune Staff Writer

OZELLO — Tales of when the children of Ozello's first families used to ride boats to school will highlight annual Pioneer Day festivities in this coastal community Saturday.

Activities will take place at the Ozello Civic

out & about

Club and the Ozello Community Baptist Church beginning at 9 a.m. and ending at 4:30 p.m.

Organizers this year will honor descendants of the pioneering families who settled the islands in the 1880s. Old photographs, pictures, newspaper clippings and other memorabilia will be on display.

The celebration of the spirit that made people travel to where the marshlands meets the Gulf of Mexico will include entertainment, storytelling, historic displays, old-time games, and plenty of lip-smacking barbecue.

An ice-cream social will be held at the church.

See OZELLO, Page 2



ANDY JONES/Tribune photo

Ozello doll-maker Myrtle Marsh, shown with granny and grandpa, will be the featured artist at Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts Show and Pioneer Day barbecue celebration this weekend at the town's civic club and Ozello Community Baptist Church beginning at 9 a.m.

Ozello celebrates pioneer days

■ From Page 1

An arts and crafts show will feature Ozello artist Myrtle Marsh.

Former students will share experiences attending the school on the "Isle of Knowledge" in the St. Martin's River.

Elsewhere in Citrus County this weekend, Inverness Mayor Joyce Rogers will begin what she says will become a regular event: a neighborhood walk.

Saturday, Rogers will take a walk with residents through the neighborhood near Zephyr and Ella streets. That's the corner where she will meet with promenaders at 9 a.m. Saturday.

Rogers says she will walk through any city neighborhood with citizens. Anyone wanting to arrange a walk through their neighborhood may call city hall at 721-2611.

Citrus Movies

■ **DOLORES CLAIBORNE** — ★★★ (R: violence, profanity, sexual situations). Psychological suspense yarn, based on a Stephen King story. Kathy Bates and Jennifer Jason Leigh top a superb cast.

■ **FRENCH KISS** — ★★ (PG-13: profanity, adult references). Meg Ryan's cute and Kevin Kline's not in this inconsistent romantic comedy.

■ **A GOOFY MOVIE** — ★★ (G) The Goof family goes on vacation.

■ **JURY DUTY** — (PG-13: profanity, adult references) (not reviewed). Pauly Shore stars as a shiftless wastrel who thinks that being sequestered is better than paying rent. It's supposed to be a comedy.

■ **MAJOR PAYNE** — ★ (PG-13: profanity, adult references). Damon Wayans stars as a former drill sergeant who takes a job training unruly cadets. Lame jokes, annoying characters.

■ **ROB ROY** — ★★½ (R: sex, violence). Liam Neeson plays the Scottish swashbuckler in this scenic, serious adventure yarn.

■ **WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING** — ★★½ (PG) Cute romantic comedy with Sandra Bullock.

Reviews are by Tampa Tribune film critic Bob Ross.

Pioneer Day to spotlight Ozello's uniqueness

By Stefanie Hoglund
Staff writer

Pioneer Day 1996 in Ozello promises something different from years past.

It's more than a celebration of heritage, said Ozello Civic Club member Eileen Rippey. It's a time to learn about the community — past, present and future. Residents and visitors will gather on the adjoining grounds of the Ozello Community Baptist Church and the Ozello Civic Club to celebrate the annual Pioneer Day from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on May 4.

The theme this year will center on the St. Martin's Marsh Aquatic

FUN AND INFORMATIVE

Pioneer Day in Ozello will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 4 on the adjoining grounds of the Ozello Community Baptist Church and the Ozello Civic Club. Ozello is 6 miles west of U.S. 19 on County Road 494. For information call Eileen or Don Rippey at 795-1547.

Preserve, 23,000 acres of submerged land surrounding and including Ozello. The land, which is one of the few pristine areas remaining in Florida, is mostly government protected mangrove forests, grass beds, marshes and algae beds. In 1968, the preserve was established to protect the ma-

For many years, on a spring date, friends and founding families would gather on the island to enjoy a pot-luck picnic reunion, to renew friendships and family ties, and to share memories and re-tell the experiences and stories of days gone by.

Many of those tales focused on the

famous "schoolhouse on an island," in the St. Martin's River, which Rippey wrote about as the "Isle of Knowledge," where pupils and teachers arrived each school day by boat, no matter the weather.

The reunions faded for a few years as younger families grew, but the practice was re-established on the birthday in 1985 of one who was born on the island, and the day was named John Brown Day.

The agenda this year, though slightly different, includes many of the same favorites.

Please see **OZELLO**, Page 2A

Citrus County (FL) Chronicle Sunday, May 5, 1996

Ozello celebrates its heritage

By Greg Erbstoesser
Staff writer

Country music singer Maxine Griffis and the eight-piece Cowboy Junction band serenaded the two dozen people who set up their lawn chairs in the yard alongside the Ozello Civic Club.

Earlier, local folk singers Tom and Ingrid Ellis entertained the small crowd with their renditions of popular and folk tunes at Ozello's annual Pioneer Day celebration.

While people roamed the arts and crafts booths, the

Please see **OZELLO**, Page 2A



Dave Siger/The Chronicle

Lorraine Lech arranges her bird feeders during Pioneer Day. She paints the feeders while her husband Joseph Lech crafts them to look like cottages.

OZELLO

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kids enjoyed the games and a makeshift swimming pool. There was a little something for everyone: arts and crafts, food, fun and even historic displays.

Among the tables, two long-time Ozello residents Betty Bault and Hattie Shoots sold raffle tickets for a handmade shawl and a \$30 gift certificate.

Shoots said even though she moved to Lecanto after the 1993 no-name storm, she still considers Ozello her home.

The two women were among the dozens of arts and crafts vendors that set up camp between the civic club and the neighboring Ozello Community Baptist Church.

At the church, volunteers served up

hot dogs, ice cream and lemonade.

Bault and Shoots urged everyone who passed by to sign their names in the civic club's register, serving as informal greeters welcoming everyone to the fair.

Dressed in a long, red-gingham dress and straw hat to befit the theme of the annual community celebration, the two women reminisced about the Ozello of years ago.

"Do you remember 'Happy Helen?'" Bault asked Shoots.

While neither could recall Happy Helen's last name nor when she died, the two chuckled as the exchanged stories about the colorful resident. "Time gets away from you," Shoots said. "But it's been a couple years now that she has been dead."

"She was a Ziegfeld Follies girl," Bault chimed in.

"Remember when she wore a gold lame pants suit to church? She looked good in them."

"Do you remember when Peck's (Old Port Cove restaurant) used to sell groceries?" Shoots asked Bault, explaining how she and her husband first visited the area each winter while living in Indiana.

"It's the one time all of Ozello gets together for socializing," said Ozello Fire Chief Doug Elvers, who with his wife, Barbara, has lived in the rural and remote Gulf Coast hamlet for only four years.

"We love it here," said Elvers, who moved to Ozello from coastal Louisiana when he retired. "I always said I wanted to live near the marshes."

As for the volunteer fire department's involvement with the one-day community "block party," Elvers said: "Yes, it is important. We try to be involved as much as we can."

Pointing to the half-dozen youngsters who frolicked in a makeshift swimming pool, "These are the future fire department volunteers, you see there," Elvers

said.

Sitting in the shade and enjoying the remnants of a fast-melting ice cream cone was 94-year-old Edna Hussey, who with her son, the Rev. Jerry Hussey, made it a day trip to enjoy the festival.

"It's a wonderful time here, today," Hussey said, noting that her son's great-grandfather, settled in Citrus County in the backwaters of the Withlacoochee River in the year following the end of the Civil War.

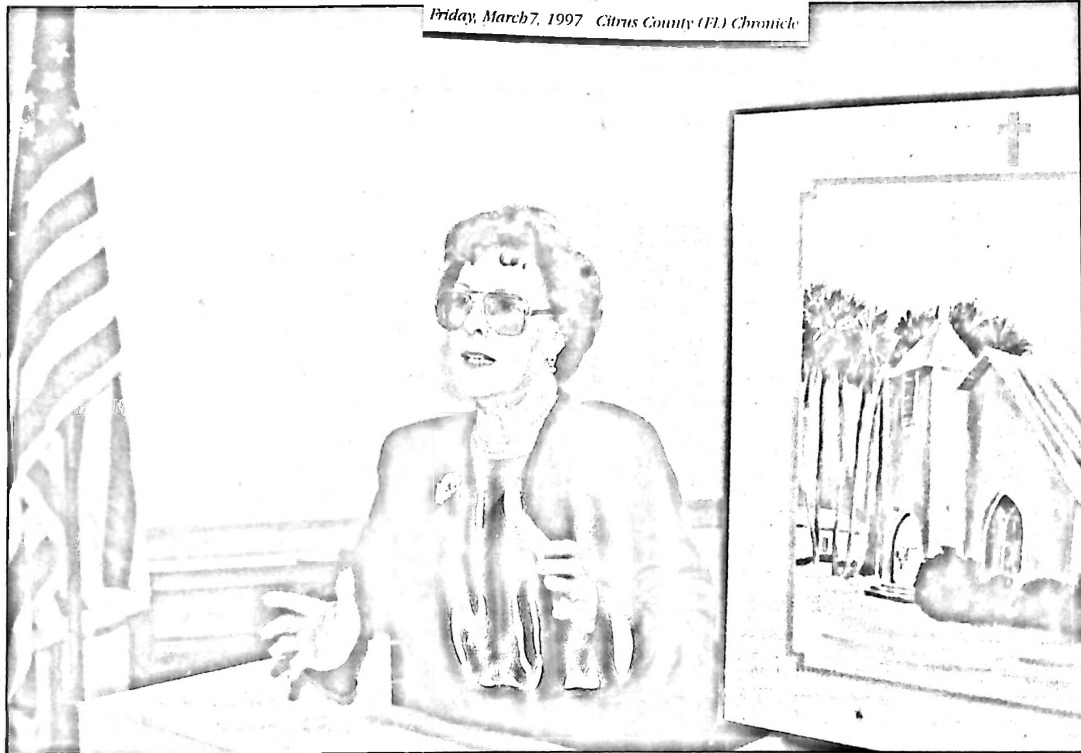
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Among the crowd that country music singer Maxine Griffis sang to were O.L. and Margaret Lashley of Homosassa who were celebrating their 55th wedding anniversary.

"It has been a wonderful day," Mrs. Lashley said. "It's just been great."

Fond memories

Friday, March 7, 1997 *Citrus County (FL) Chronicle*



Dave Sigler/The Chronicle

Epie Boatright tells the Historical Society members about growing up in Ozello, before Ozello Road existed and the only way they could get to school or the mainland was by boat. Boatright talked to the society recently at the Coastal Regional Library.



Dave Sigler/The Chronicle

Barbara Jean Wilson rehearses the national anthem for the opening ceremony of the Ozello Pioneer Day.

Ozello Day offerings range from barbecue to tales of the past

By Ken Dougherty
Staff writer

Ozello, a quiet little hamlet on the coast of Citrus County that historians say once found fame in Ripley's Believe It or Not, celebrates its origins with a festival today.

Reproduced in "Back Home," the history book by Hampton Dunn, it is mentioned that Ozello was a place where boats were used by both students and teacher to get to the school house on an island. In the early 1950s, boats were also used to get to and from the community, Dunn notes.

The community was settled by folks who didn't feel the lack of a road should discourage a settlement, and residents of the community will share experiences during Pioneer Day.

Dave Moore, pastor of Ozello Baptist Church, said a group of folks will tell tales of Ozello at the church from 10 a.m. until noon. The session is open to anyone who took part in the development of the settlement or was raised in the historic town. Visitors are welcome to listen.

Although the town was "lost" by state officials around 1954 for a short spell, Ozello Trail now exists for visitors to travel to the community. Ozello Trail intersects with U.S. 19 south of Crystal River and north of Homosassa. Use St. Benedict's Catholic Church for a landmark, it is directly across from Ozello Trail. To get to Ozello, follow the road to the village sign.

Dunn published a reproduction of a 1954 state map that located Ozello north of Red Level, which is definitely not the location of the hamlet.

Saturday, May 3, 1997 Citrus County (FL) Chronicle

Lunch will be served by the Ozello Civic Association from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. inside the civic center, and a choice of barbecue chicken or ribs will be offered. Take-outs will be available.

A homemade ice cream social is being sponsored by the Ozello Baptist Church with lemonade and hot dogs available.

Refreshments will be available at the Ozello Bar under the oak trees throughout the day.

According to Betz Whittle, artists and craftsmen have reserved 36 booths from which to show and sell their creations, and more are expected by today.

A variety of organizations will have displays set up, including Nature World Wildlife Rescue, St. Martins Marsh Preserve, Crystal River State Buffer Preserve and the Ozello Volunteer Fire Department.

Seating will be in short supply, so visitors are encouraged to bring lawn chairs for comfort.

Ozello celebrates its heritage

By Greg Erbstoesser

Staff writer Citrus County (FL) Chronicle Sunday, May 5, 1996

Country music singer Maxine Griffis and the eight-piece Cowboy Junction band serenaded the two dozen people who set up their lawn chairs in the yard alongside the Ozello Civic Club.

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Please see OZELLO, Page 2A



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OZELLO

continued from Page 1A

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By John Dunbar
Staff writer

After seven days, dozens of long-distance phone calls and hundreds of miles of driving, the Sandvick family still hasn't found their missing horses.

The Floral City clan awoke Aug. 21 to find their back fence neatly snipped and their pony and two horses missing. As time goes by, it appears more and more likely the horses were taken by

"I hate to give up, and in my heart I know I won't, but it's like a dead end."

Sandra Sandvick

thieves.

"It's depressing," said a dejected Sandra Sandvick Sunday. "I hate to give up, and in my heart I know I won't, but it's

like a dead end."

The family has enlisted in the aid of the state Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement, a division of police officers

that investigates theft of livestock and other crimes. But, so far, there have been no leads.

Working against them is the fact that the horses weren't branded, making them easier to resell.

Missing are:

"Promise," a registered palomino quarter horse, 11 years old, about 15 hands high. The horse has a white star

Please see **SEARCH, Page 2A**

Looking back

C.C.C.
August 29, 1994



Boats were the primary mode of transportation for the Head family during the early 1900s.

Childhood in Ozello fondly remembered

By Jan Witherspoon
Staff writer

Four young girls, one dressed in a pink organdy dress made by her mother, rowed their boat more than a mile to go school.

Their island home, 70 acres of shell and marsh, was the last one in the St. Martin's River before entering the Gulf of Mexico.

The girl in the organdy dress would often run to the water's edge and watch the fishermen go out to sea.

Her father was a fisherman and she liked to watch the men in their boats coming and going.

The young girl was Viola Head, born in 1907.

Viola and her sisters, Edna Madeline, Bernice, Helen and Lois were all born at home without the help of a doctor. The only doctor was miles

away in Crystal River.

The community now known as Ozello was mostly uninhabited marshland as she remembers. Her grandmothers lived in the country of what is now Ozello.

Mrs. Hensley remembers that when the tide was out they could get to the mainland by horse and wagon to visit family.

Viola's father, Benjamin Lewis Head, and her mother, Allie Wilda Wells, married in Citrus County in 1907. They homesteaded the island where they raised their five daughters until it became necessary for the girls to continue their education in Crystal River.

Viola Head Hensley, 86, recalls her childhood. "Dad was a commercial fisherman and a guide. It was good money then," she said. "We lived almost like rich people."

Their island home was built



Dave Sigler/The Chronicle

Viola Hensley remembers the old days in Ozello, when families had to use boats to travel into town and to an island school.

high to protect it from the water; there was a porch across the front and the Gulf side of the house. From the front porch there was a walkway to the edge of the river where boats were docked.

"Out from the back of the

house was a long stairway that led down to the chicken yard, garden, cow pen and a pen for a few pigs," Mrs. Hensley said. "And a bathroom, or, affectionately known as the 'closet,' set over a tide creek so that each tide that came in flushed it out.

The fisherman father had two skiffs and one large in-board motor boat big enough that two men could stay out fishing for three days. The boat had two net tables and a 1,000-

Please see **OZELLO, Page 2A**
(OVER)

Marina complex plans run aground

By Mike Wright
News editor

Jim Eyster's plans for a marina complex on the former Cross Florida Barge Canal, dealt one blow after another in the recent year, now sit as dormant as a shipwreck on the ocean floor.

Once a \$32 million development that included a hotel, restaurant and condominiums, Nature Coast Landings appears as far away from a reality today than ever before, Eyster admits.

Eyster, president of an investment group called Citrus Recreational Marina Inc., believes the marina will someday grace the shores of what is now known as the Florida Greenway

Canal.

Last week representatives of one of three family estates that own the proposed marina property asked the state Department of Environmental Protection to purchase the 141 acres in the state's Conservation and Recreational Lands, or CARL, program.

The letter to DEP from trustees with the Joe C. Middleton estate says that Eyster's investors no longer have an option to purchase the property and they would like the state to consider it.

Judith M. Clark, one of those



Jim Eyster

trustees, declined to comment. She instead referred comment to the trust's attorney, Kevin Crowley of Tallahassee, who did not return phone calls on Friday.

Eyster acknowledged Friday he no longer has an option to buy the property. He said he defaulted on the option agreement last July, after an agreed-upon deadline to secure the necessary permitting for the marina passed.

He also said the investors stopped making periodic pay-

Please see **MARINA**, Page 2A

Plotting the course of the proposed marina

By Mike Wright
News editor

Nature Coast Landings, a planned marina complex on the former Cross Florida Barge Canal, has been in the works for nine years by developer Jim Eyster, president of Citrus Recreational Marina. Here is some history of the project:

1988 — Eyster begins developing plans for Nature Coast Landings, a \$32 million

resort/marina on the Cross Florida Barge Canal. Eyster lines up investors and plans the project on a 141-acre property owned by three separate family trusts.

December 1991 — Citrus County Commission agrees to work in partnership with Eyster for Nature Coast Landings. The plans include more than 500 boat slips, a 140-

Please see **HISTORY**, Page 2A

Ozello's rich heritage revisited

Citrus County (FL) Chronicle Sunday, May 4, 1997



Jana Pittson/The Chronicle

Danny and Virginia Woods of Crystal River, center, talk with Sandy Goodall, a former Ozello resident, at the "reminiscing table," stacked with old photo albums and scrapbooks on the history of Ozello during Ozello Pioneer Day on Saturday afternoon. Nelda Baxley, a part-time Ozello resident, sits to the left.



Remembering the past

By Greg Erbstoesser
Staff writer

OZELLO CELEBRATED HOMECOMING Saturday with many of the tiny island's prominent families returning for the coastal community's annual Pioneer Day celebration.

A handful of residents representing some of Ozello longtime families — DeBusk, Pfeil, Waddington and Witte — were among the hundreds

Jana Pittson/The Chronicle

Sue Mardis of Ozello, right, looks over handmade pillows sewn by Darlene Highstreet of Crystal River. Several craft booths were on hand to tempt festival goers.

who turned out Saturday to remember the old days living and growing up on the quaint island just south of Crystal River.

Rebecca DeBusk Alt and Louis Witte traded stories, remembering names and recalling different events that brought nods and laughs at a special table set up under the moss-covered oak trees outside the Ozello Baptist Church.

The two reminisced as others wandered the festival as Ozello celebrated its annual Pioneer Day observance, a day-long arts and crafts show, outdoor barbecue and down home music festival.

"There's my daddy," Steve Pfeil of DeFassa, pointing to an old newspaper photograph of his father,

Please see **OZELLO**, Page 2A

OZELLO

continued from Page 1A

Walter Pfeil Jr. who ran the small "school boat" that shuttled Ozello students from home to school each day.

"See those boys, they're my cousins; this would be about 30 years ago," said Pfeil who grew up in Ozello with his family.

The photograph prompted everyone to recall the other boat captains that operated the school boat.

"There was Grannie Thomas, and John Brown," Pfeil said. But he could not remember Mrs. Thomas's first name.

"We always called her Grannie Thomas," he said with a shrug.

"Her name was Fern, Fern Thomas," said Wilma Wiles, Pfeil's aunt who sat alongside.

Louis Witte, 82, of Hudson, lived in Ozello for more than 12 years back in the late 1950s.

"I bought my property from Mr. Waterman, \$10 down, \$10 a month. That's how he did it," he said.

Witte, like the others, recalled fondly and listened carefully to each other's stories, each adding a tidbit of their own. The stories stretched from local events to recollections of Crystal River and Citrus County from years ago.

Witte remembered the Crystal River ice house and the local hardware store, where he said, "You could buy a Ford Model A axle or a transmission there."

And there was the old "humpback" bridge that linked the island with the mainland. Witte also remembered the white mouths of the moccasin snakes that curled up on the warm asphalt of West Ozello Trail at night.

"Back then, we called it Moccasin Drive," he said with a laugh.

Throughout the grounds between the Ozello Civic Association and the neighboring Ozello Baptist Church, some 41 arts and crafts booths tempted festival-goers, while the Rev. David Moore and his congregation were kept busy serving up hot dogs, ice cream and lemonade.

"It's a great day," Moore said as he took a brief break from dishing out another cup of ice cream.

"This really brings people together," he said, adding that the special day brings long-time residents together with newcomers to enjoy the day and the quiet pleasures of Ozello.

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Cabin removal will protect area

In reference to Mr. G. William Bryant's letter to the editor concerning the Ozello-area cabins, I would like to address some of his concerns.

The cabin removal is just a small step of our efforts to protect the beleaguered environmentally sensitive coastal area and waters of St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve, and to restore the area to its natural state.

As part of our protection efforts we have established law enforcement capabilities, been involved in the local government comprehensive plan review process through which we have gained significant protection for the coastal area, established both recreation and education programs, and cleaned up 135 tons of illegally dumped debris.

These cabins are located on public lands in Township 18 South, Range 16 East, Section 28, 34, and 35. These lands are now managed as part of the Crystal River State Reserve.

While the cabin sites undoubtedly have a long and interesting history, they have been continually rebuilt and modified such that the structures themselves no longer have any historical significance in terms of architectural style or construction.

Few, if any, come close to meeting any building codes and none have adequate sewage treatment. Waste disposal is in the form of straight pipes to the water or out-houses situated over fractured limestone. All this in an area open to oystering.

As far as the removal process itself, before anything is done, a complete site survey will be made at each structure to determine the best method of removal.

The survey includes construction materials, vinyls and plastics, hazardous materials, listed and non-listed species, nesting activity, plant community make-up, fire tolerance, cultural resource value, and location of oyster bars and grassbeds. No work will be done during the nesting season.

Four options are being considered on a site by site basis. These are preserve, dismantle and remove, dismantle and burn, burn on site.

If the data indicates burning to be the preferred option, they will not be uncontrolled "blazes." Arrangements have been made to use the sites for firefighter training and fireboats will be on the

It should be noted that landfilling in the Withlacoochee State Forest (Citrus County's landfill) is not particularly efficient or environmentally sensitive. As the structures are removed from each location, restoration projects will begin. These include monitoring of plant community succession, exotic species removal, and revegetation.

Prior to any work being done, the cabin owners will be notified through legal ads in local papers running four consecutive Sundays in July. Additional notices will be posted on each individual cabin. Ample time will be given to remove anything from the site including the structure itself.

None of this should preclude public use of the properties. Day use will be permitted on most sites once they are restored and primitive camping by permit may be allowed once we have dealt with the problem of efficient and environmentally sound waste management. There is no reason that the enjoyment of this beautiful area must be tied to buildings.

I hope this letter clears up any concerns as to our intent and environmental responsibility. Should anyone like further information, please contact the Crystal River State Reserve 563-1136. We will be more than happy to listen to any suggestions and assist in any way possible.

Matt Clemons, Environmental Specialist II
Crystal River State Reserve and
St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve



Far from the noise and bustle of U.S. 19, there can be found a group of islands where time seems to have been forgotten, or just put aside for a bit. This is a place that delights the eye of visitors of all ages who return again and again for the...

Odyssey of

OZELLO

Winding, two-laned, looking as if it must have been laid out by a drunk on a mule, the road to Ozello has undergone many changes in its lifetime.

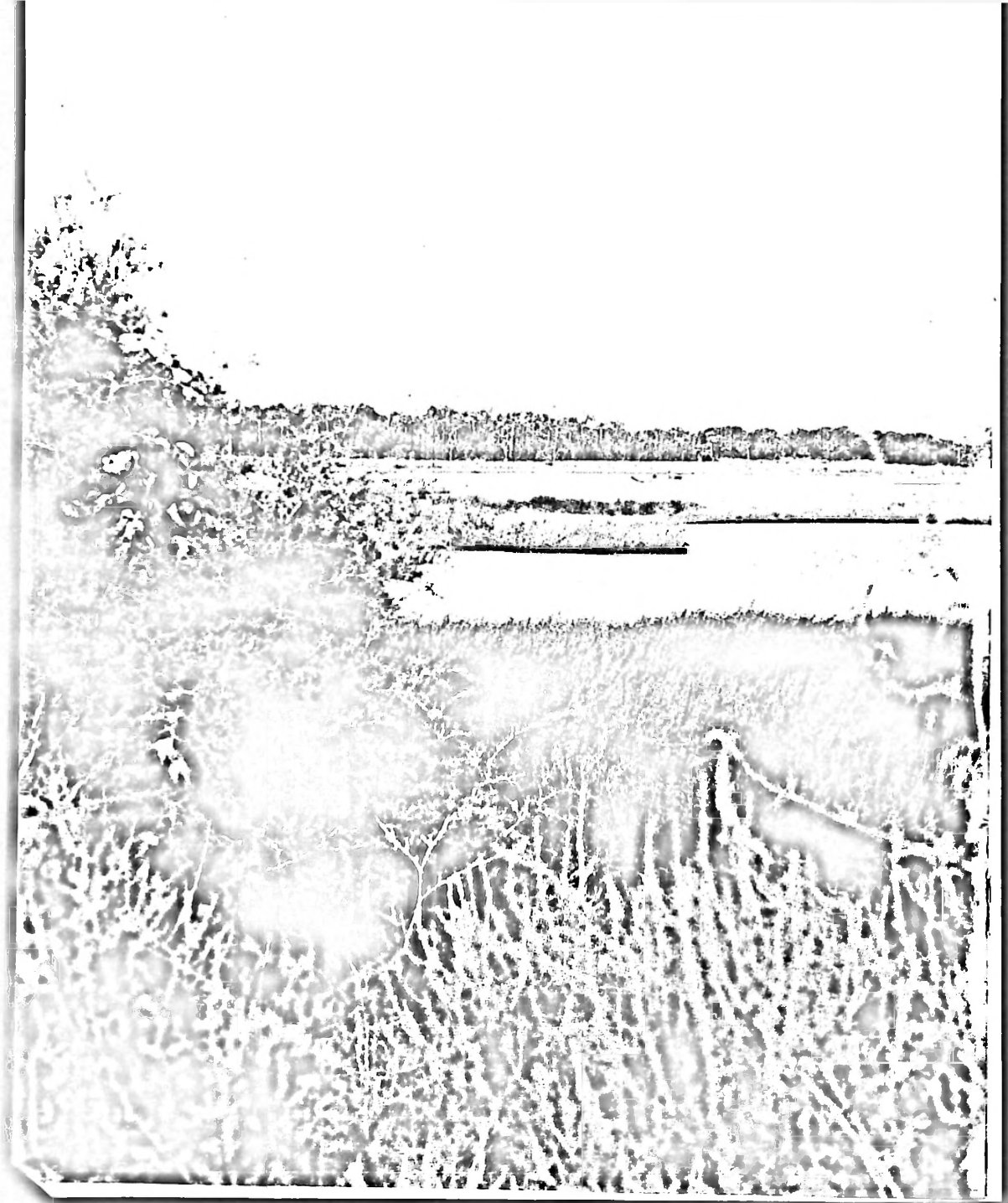
Once the rumble of automobile tires on loose wooden planks warned the few inhabitants of Citrus County's island community of approaching visitors over the two wooden bridges. Those were replaced by modern concrete bridges in the 1980s but their passing hasn't lessened the charm of the islands for the people who live there or those who come on a Sunday afternoon drive.

Vast vistas of sawgrass dotted by pine and palm islands stretch off to the west. In the distance, to the northwest, stand the towers of Florida Power's Energy Center, the lone concession to civilization in this primitive scene.

Wildlife, from birds to delicate plants and flowers, can be found in abundance along the watery roadsides that take motorists to the far end and vivid sunsets over the water of the Gulf of Mexico.

Some people come just for an afternoon, others come and stay for a lifetime. Ozello is the type of place that can have a brief, or lasting impact on you.





Ozello residents take sides

5-4-02
MIKE WRIGHT

mwright@chronicleonline.com
Chronicle

Inside the Island Outpost store, a table offers visitors brochures, notices and, for a donation, community calendars.

This is an Ozello store, situated on Ozello Trail, patronized by folks who live, work or fish in Ozello.

Owner John Hackney said Ozello is a tight community, but also one where neighbors don't get too excited when another neighbor does something bothersome.

And that's why, he said, about 110 of the locals signed a petition he created urging the Citrus County Commission to side with beekeepers Randall and Deborah Foti.

"It's a little bit live-and-let-live here," he said.

Ozello residents, he said, believe Shields and Jackie Gay do not share that principle. The Gays, who live next door to the Fotis, say the Fotis' beekeeping operation violates county codes. The case is in court and was featured this week on the CBS news program "48 Hours."

"Effectively, the Gays are not a part of this community," Hackney said.

The Fotis, who have lived in Ozello since 1991, are regular customers in the store and have a solid reputation in the community, he said.

"They are an established and appreciated part of this community," Hackney said.

At Peck's Old Port Cove near the end of Ozello Trail, waitress Charlyne Roberger said

Please see **OZELLO**/Page 4A

OZELLO

Continued from Page 1A

she signed Hackney's petition.

"If they don't like it, they can move out," Roberger, 39, said of the Gays.

Customer Ed Sparks, who said his grandfather helped build the first Ozello water line years ago, agreed.

"These people aren't bother-

ing anybody," Sparks, 39, said of the Fotis. "I don't like putting somebody out of business."

Hackney, 46, is more than just a casual observer. On the tables of his small restaurant inside the store sit plastic bottles of Foti's honey.

"Her voice has been heard," he said of Mrs. Gay. "This community's voice has not. This is such an extreme thing. There's an injustice being done."

The 9 mile stretch of road from U.S. 19 to Ozello called Ozello Trail, or County Road 494, has more than two dozen twists and turns through wilderness with tides sometimes lapping right up to the roadside. The county started building the road in the 1940s and recently added a causeway for fishing at the west end. Many of those who travel the road daily say they are always discovering something new there.



except Saturday," she said. "There's just too many people towing boats on it."

On my travels along Ozello Trail during the past 24 years, there have been numerous wildlife encounters, but the most vivid is a fish tale beyond belief, except that it's true.

Fishing off the causeway on a wintry afternoon, I saw a school of large amberjacks chase down and then attack a massive pod of pinfish. The jacks, muscular and aggressive fish, chased the pinfish in from the gulf and trapped them against the causeway. The feeding frenzy was spectacular.

The jacks, rushed in by the dozen, slapping the water with powerful tails, each smack producing a concussion that killed many pinfish. The blasts were so powerful that the black pinfish flew out

Please see **TRAIL** Page 11

11-8-02

Ozello Trail offers a ride on nature's wild side

■ The winding road that leads to Ozello with its roadside water, crabs and leaping fish is a delightful stress reliever.

By JORGE SANCHEZ
Arts and Entertainment editor

Twisting and winding its way through hardwood hammocks, past grassy salt marshes and finally toward its namesake, Ozello Trail is full of scenery and wonder.

The serpentine highway is unlike any other road in the county. Its challenging curves demand respect. This isn't a Sunday drive on a back road past the hay fields. This path coils, curves and dips, slicing through a place where a road was probably never meant to be.

Most roads are a means to an end. Ozello Trail, a two-lane winding path stretching between U.S. 19 and the getaway community of Ozello, is a destination in and of itself.

After a few minutes, a driver is but a speck in a wilderness that is re-formed daily by the tides that lap right up to the roadway. This is a road less traveled, a drive-through eco-tour, a stress reliever.

You'll want to roll down the windows and smell the salt air and hear the sounds of birds circling above. As the land gives way to more areas of water, turtles, crabs, leaping fish and dolphins become your companions.

Old-timers remember the ear-



JORGE SANCHEZ

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

paved about halfway down.

"The rest of it was limerock, and it was laid out just as it is today, except the bridges were wooden," said Luther Willis, who recalls first driving the road in the 1960s. Willis, now a detective with the Citrus County Sheriff's Office, said his grandmother taught at Ozello School and his mother was a student.

The county started building the road in the 1940s, according to County Commission records. Recent additions have added an extra reward at the west end: a causeway for fishing and watching the sun as it backs out of the horizon.

For those who drive the road often, the changing scenery keeps their sense of wonder fresh.

Mail carrier Jeanie Riley, for example, rides the trail six days a week. Her route takes her on the main road and the less-developed side roads.

"I love seeing all the wildlife, the birds and the mullet," she said.

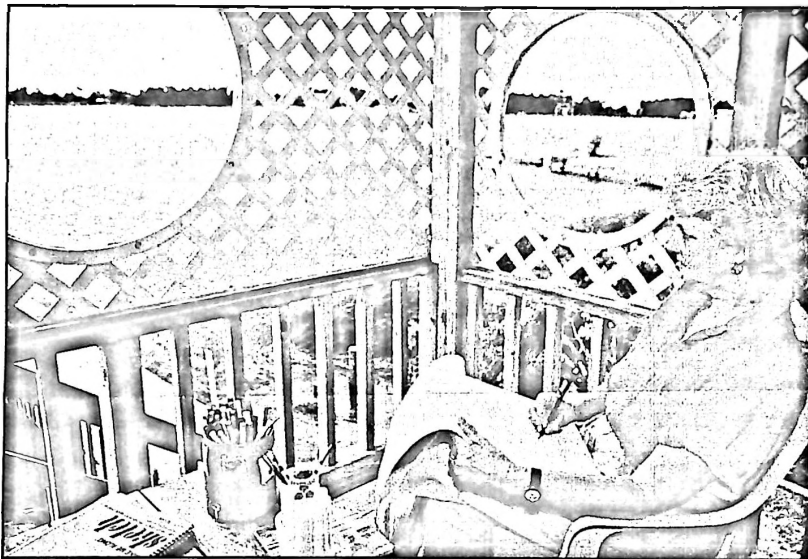
Riley said she's also learned to appreciate the rugged beauty of the landscape, covered and then revealed by the daily tides.

TREASURES



Times photos — RON THOMPSON

The gulf view is beautiful from the remote community of Ozello and this Saturday you can enjoy an arts and crafts festival as residents celebrate their heritage.



Ozello will celebrate their island heritage with the annual Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts and Pioneer Day on Saturday, May 2. Featured artist at the event is Phyllis Milton, who frequently can be found in her studio sketching the gulf view from her Oz Art Studio deck.

A key to arts and crafts

By Nancy Kennedy
Chronicle writer

ONCE UPON A time, down a palm tree and palmetto-lined winding road that follows the St. Martin's and Salt river, past sawgrass and mangrove marshes, there lived two island communities, each with their own school. The Rochelle community on Western Island consisted of five families: the Waddingtons, Heads, Edges, Willis and Lewises. The Ozello community had the Browns, Welises, Stevens and DeBusks.

Since it seemed silly to have two schools, the Rochelle families told the Ozello families that their kids could row to school on their side of the river. The Ozello families replied by saying the Rochelle kids could row to their school on their side of the river.

Fortunately, this tale has a happy ending. The two communities compromised by building a new school on a separate island and all the students had to row their boats to get to the "Isle of Knowledge."

Reported Thelma Henderson, secretary of the Ozello Civic Club, "At the school, the four Rs were taught: reading, writing, rhythmic and rowing. There was an old Ozello saying, 'A youngster who couldn't row a boat by school age was considered

It took me awhile to get to know a palm tree. The first year I looked and sketched, then I started painting. I figured no one would find me way out here!!

Phyllis Milton

beyond hope of education."

The school, closed in 1943, is no longer standing and the island has since been deeded to the Citrus County Historical Society. However, some of the students (like Zeke Wells, Harvey and Renny DeBusk, Horace Brown and Carl Stevens to name a few) are still around and meet once a year for a reunion of schoolmates, family and neighbors. This reunion's come to be called Pioneer Day.

This year, for the fifth time, the Ozello Keys Arts and Crafts Association has held their Arts and Crafts Show in conjunction with Pioneer Days. Tomorrow, Saturday May 2, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., artists and craftspeople from Citrus County and beyond will be displaying their work.

The featured artist this year is 10-year Ozello resident Phyllis Milton. Mrs. Milton, who recently finished a showing of her paintings at the Citrus Na-

tional Bank in Crystal River, specializes in sea air landscapes, both in acrylics and pen and ink.

Originally from New York, Mrs. Milton took a lessons while raising her six children and she went back to college to study fine arts for two years. After that, she worked as a graphics artist in Yonkers and New York City before returning to fine arts.

Ten years ago she left New York for Florida and discovered Ozello. As she recalled, "I looked around at the islands and thought, what a perfect place for an artist."

Setting up her studio on the Ozello Trail, Mr. Milton took up her sketch pad and made herself at home. "It took me awhile to get to know a palm tree. The first year I looked and sketched, then started painting. I figured no one would find me way out here. Now though, I've been featured in few newspaper articles and I've even been on TV. (Larry Eliotson's Down Home Florida)

As the Arts and Crafts Association's featured artist, Mrs. Milton will be on hand to meet the public and answer questions, display her artistry and enjoy the day.

Janice Hayden, president of the Ozello Civic Club, promises a "jammed pack day." Besides the arts and crafts show, there will be a full day's line up of activities and entertainment. The entertainment list includes blugrass music from the Cow

Ozello celebrates its heritage

By Greg Erbstoesser

Staff writer Citrus County (FL) Chronicle Sunday, May 5, 1996

Country music singer Maxine Griffiths and the eight-piece Cowboy Junction band serenaded the two dozen people who set up their lawn chairs in the yard alongside the Ozello Civic Club.

Earlier, local folk singers Tom and Ingrid Ellis entertained the small crowd with their renditions of popular and folk tunes at Ozello's annual Pioneer Day celebration.

While people roamed the arts and crafts booths, the

Please see OZELLO, Page 2A



Dave Sider/The Chronicle

Lorraine Lech arranges her bird feeders during Pioneer Day. She paints the feeders while her husband Joseph Lech crafts them to look like cottages.

OZELLO

continued from Page 1A

kids enjoyed the games and a makeshift swimming pool. There was a little something for everyone: arts and crafts, food, fun and even historic displays.

Among the tables, two long-time Ozello residents Betty Bault and Hattie Shoots sold raffle tickets for a hand-made shawl and a \$30 gift certificate.

Shoots said even though she moved to Leesville after the 1993 no-nap storm, she still considers Ozello home.

The two women were among the dozens of arts and crafts vendors that set up camp between the civic club and the neighboring Ozello Community Baptist Church.

At the church, volunteers served up

hot dogs, ice cream and lemonade.

Bault and Shoots urged everyone who passed by to sign their names in the civic club's register, serving as informal greeters welcoming everyone to the fair.

Dressed in a long, red-gingham dress and straw hat to befit the theme of the annual community celebration, the two women reminisced about the Ozello of years ago.

"Do you remember 'Happy Helen?'" Bault asked Shoots.

While neither could recall Happy Helen's last name nor when she died, the two chuckled as they exchanged stories about the colorful resident. "Time gets away from you," Shoots said. "But it's been a couple years now that she has been dead."

"She was a Ziegfeld Follies girl," Bault chimed in.

"Remember when she wore a gold lame pants suit to church? She looked good in them."

"Do you remember when Peck's (Old Port Cove restaurant) used to sell groceries?" Shoots asked Bault, explaining how she and her husband first visited the area each winter while living in Indiana.

"It's the one time all of Ozello gets together for socializing," said Ozello Fire Chief Doug Elvers, who with his wife, Barbara, has lived in the rural and remote Gulf Coast hamlet for only four years.

"We love it here," said Elvers, who moved to Ozello from coastal Louisiana when he retired. "I always said I wanted to live near the marshes."

As for the volunteer fire department's involvement with the one-day community "block party," Elvers said: "Yes, it is important. We try to be involved as much as we can."

Pointing to the half-dozen youngsters who frolicked in a makeshift swimming pool, "These are the future fire department volunteers, you see there," Elvers

said.

Sitting in the shade and enjoying the remnants of a fast-melting ice cream cone was 94-year-old Edna Hussey, who with her son, the Rev. Jerry Hussey, made it a day trip to enjoy the festival.

"It's a wonderful time here, today," Hussey said, noting that her son's great-grandfather, settled in Citrus County in the backwaters of the Withlacoochee River in the year following the end of the Civil War.

"It's a chance for the old-timers to renew acquaintances and friendships," Hussey said, "and it's a time when newcomers can find out about the past and the history of the region."

Among the crowd that country music singer Maxine Griffiths sang to were O.L. and Margaret Lashley of Homosassa who were celebrating their 55th wedding anniversary.

"It has been a wonderful day," Mrs. Lashley said. "It's just been great."

ARTIST

continued from Page 1A

Her work depicts such well-known scenes as "the Sugar Shack," in the Chassahowitzka River, for example, and many other Cracker houses and fishing sites.

She won't stop painting, but a mild stroke about a year and a half ago dictated that she slow her pace. That's the reason that present home and studio is up for sale, she said.

She and her husband, Bob Workman, were married three years ago on the patio of Ernest Hemingway's home in Key West.

They moved to their present house shortly after the 1993 no-name storm extensively damaged the Oz Studio at the end of Ozello Trail on Salt Bay.

The couple revamped the present property, purchased from Lucy Decidue, who once used the home as a yoga and meditation retreat.

She said they participated in several small digs for Indian artifacts in a nearby midden, finding some pottery shards archaeologists dated to 200 B.C.

Her sketches of Florida historical artifacts led to a commission from the State Parks Service to design postcards for sale at the Crystal River State Archaeological Site north of Crystal River.

But the flora and fauna and waterways of the Ozello Keys is her first love.

"I would say that sunsets are my spe-

cialty," Milton said. She refers to them as "Ozello gold" in her brochures.

"Deciding what to paint has never been a concern for me because I am surrounded by more than I will ever be able to use," she says of her mode of operation. "I feel that my subjects choose me rather than my choosing them."

Some of those subjects she views from what she calls her "think tanks," a wooden Adirondack chair on a sun-drenched bluff, a tapestry draped hammock on the wrap-around veranda of her home, and island-hopping in her canoe.

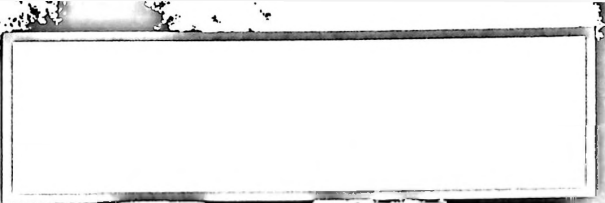

Especially when focusing on marine birds, she quickly sketches and then finishes the works in her studio to avoid the hot Florida sun and array of dive-bombing insects.

The artist moved to Ozello after a trip to the Keys to visit cousins in Chassahowitzka and a daughter in Fort Lauderdale.

"In high school I always wanted to paint, but I got married instead," said Milton, the mother of six children. She said she later worked in a silk screening studio to earn money for art supplies.

A native of Bradley Beach, N.J., Milton eventually parlayed her talent into doing free-lance art work for casinos in Atlantic City and then graphic art for a corporation in New York.

She has an associates in arts degree, courses at Parson's School of Design in New York, and studied with artist Elaine Sinnard in New York.



NEWSLETTER - Sept - Oct 2013

Jim Obedzinski, President
Cecelia, Treat, Vice President
Don Whitehead, Treasurer
Jeanne Obedzinski, Secretary



Editor - Don Whitehead 352-563-6557

"Summer "postcards"

We spent a week in Seattle Washington visiting family
August.

We went to Seattle Seafair and San Juan Islands.
It was a beautiful trip!

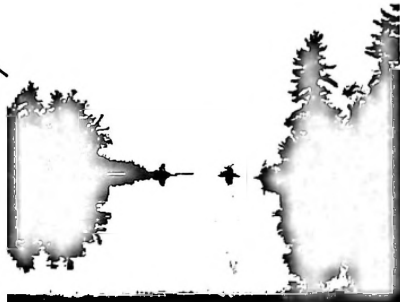
Sherry & Phil Goodman

We have been sailing during the summer on our
wonderful **Georgian Bay**, (a large beautiful bay which
is part of **Lake Huron**.)

The weather has been wonderful here and it has been
perfect for sailing.

We have been camping on the Hook which is always a
challenge in this area, but the scenery is sooooo worth
it.

The Canadians - Brenda & Dave Richards



Next OCA meeting - Saturday, October 12 at 9:30am

Neighborhood Association

The Ozello Civic Association, a small set back building on the trail has been a place for the members to gather since November, 1965. It was originally called the Ozello Civic Club. After it was built, it was utilized as a place for the Baptists to hold their church services until the church was built on the property next door. It is also told that the residents of Ozello also got their supply of fresh water from this building prior to having the water lines installed. Voting occurred in this building as it was designated Precinct #4. Pioneer Days was a successful event held in May to bring back the families and friends of those living in Ozello in the early days.

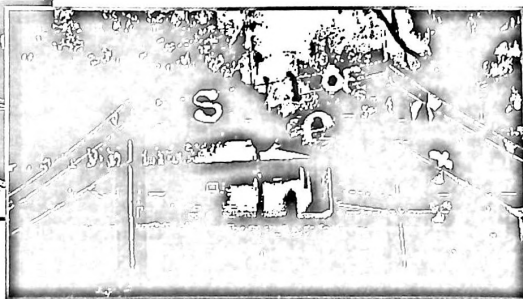
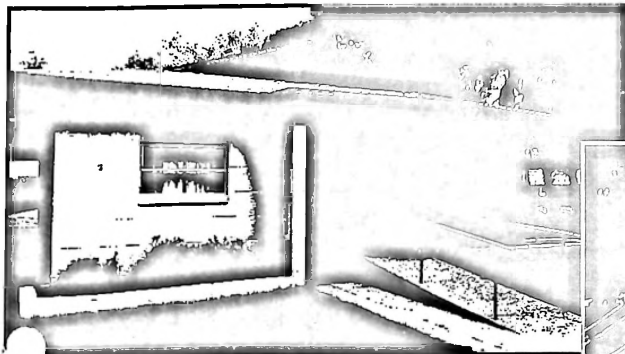
On May 22, 1985 the Ozello Civic Club had an official proclamation to designate June 1 as John Brown's Day to commemorate long time resident John Brown. There was a group called Sew and So that met during the week and Bingo was played on Saturday nights. Past Presidents were Paul Waterman Sr. Francis and Janice Hagden. When I became a member of the OCA in 1991 it was run by a small tight knit group. Carl and Sarah Benson became officers after moving here in 1996. To bring in funds they hosted a pancake breakfast for free on Saturday mornings. They did have a basket out if you wanted to make a small donation but there was no pressure to do so. They also had yard sales and instituted the auto tag sale. Sara had her own highway litter control project cleaning up tossed bottles and cans twice a week on a 5 mile route. A group of women used the building to play cards on a weekly basis.

The OCA continued to host Pioneer Days in May to focus on the history of the area. Families and friends that lived on the islands of Ozello in the past were encouraged to come for "story telling" time. Of course, arts and craft, plus grilled food were offered for sale. Betsy Griffin became the President in the 90's. She continued the outdoor yard sales. If you paid the organization \$5.00 you could put up a table and try to sell your personal "treasures." Again the grill was brought out to cook hamburgers and hotdogs in order to make a profit. The St Patrick Day's feast, free for all comers continued under the presidency of Barbara Elvers. Curt Pace, Wilbur Bates, and Clarke Moore have been in the organization during the last few years. More people have joined.

Two festivals are put on each year, The Art and Fine Craft Festival and the Chili Cook Off Festival. Monthly meetings provide a chance to visit with neighbors and get all of the news sorted out. The outdoor pavilion has been recently repaired and a new septic system was installed. The roof is new in 2012 and the exterior was painted in 2013. The purpose of the organization remains the same: to preserve the community's welfare and its resources.

Donations to charities, an annual educational scholarship and social gatherings keep the mission intact.

Jane Vandenberg - Historian



FALL FORWARD

As each summer wanes, I often find myself assessing how the season went. Was Jeanne's tomato crop a success? For the sake of preserving a marriage, I will say it was better than last year's. However, her eggplant harvest was amazing! On the brighter side, this year's scallop harvest was nothing short of spectacular. Crystal River made a splash in the August edition of US Airways In-Flight Magazine called "Diving for Dinner". The story, by Alison Clark (teaches journalism at UF), details the scallop experience from boarding the boat to eating her catch.

Another notable item is the progression of development taking place on the old "Pirates Cove" site. Jeanne and I attended a Citrus County Planning and Development Commission meeting on August 15th in Lecanto. George Decker, site owner, requested the removal of an unconstructed right of way in an unrecorded subdivision in Ozello as part of redeveloping the former "Pirate Cove" property. The County approved the request allowing Mr. Decker clear title to the property. The County basically vacated the easement since it was never maintained. Going forward, Mr. Decker plans to bring his development application to Land Planning. There is sure to be more on this in our upcoming meetings.

To me, the best part of the arrival of fall is the renewed acquaintances of dearly missed friends from afar. Another highlight will be partnering with the many others to bring more deserved kudos to Jane Beller as she continues to plan for the upcoming Arts Festival.

My fall plan is to continue to cry every time the Buc's play and since Snook season opened 9-1-13, I hope to hunt this elusive fish with the same passion I had asking my wife to marry me 39 years ago. So that's my plan, what is yours? Autumn is the ideal time to join the fun at the Ozello Civic Center.

I hope to see you there!Saturday October 12, 9:00 am.

Jim Obedzinski

Garden Club

The first meeting of the OCA Garden Club for the season will be **Tuesday, October 15th at 1:30 pm** at Doris Durante's home at 1635 S. Wallace Pt.

Plans for upcoming meetings will be discussed as well as any other topics members wish to bring up. We always enjoy show and tell. Anyone interested in gardening is invited to attend.

Welcome to Ozello: Josh and Jennifer Holland and their children Joanna and "little" Josh who recently located here from Hawaii where Josh was in the military. The Holland family will be living on Fishcreek with Josh's mother Debi Sullivan. We appreciate the service given to our country, especially Josh's three tours in Iraq.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: Abby Morrison & Wayne Spaulding

14728 W. Black Creek Dr. Ozello, 352-949-8032 – email redandabi@aol.com

"In the Grass Flats" by Jane Vandenberg

Racing to the west where the sun does set,
many boats on the horizon will soon be met.
What is on the water?

Sea crafts filled with parents and their sons and daughters.

A red flag signals that swimmers are snorkeling,
an undersea adventure, what are they discovering?

In the grass flats, out near St Martin's Keys,
life abounds under the sea.

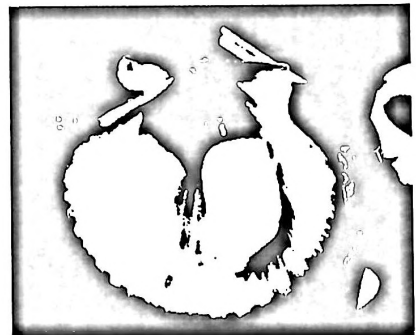
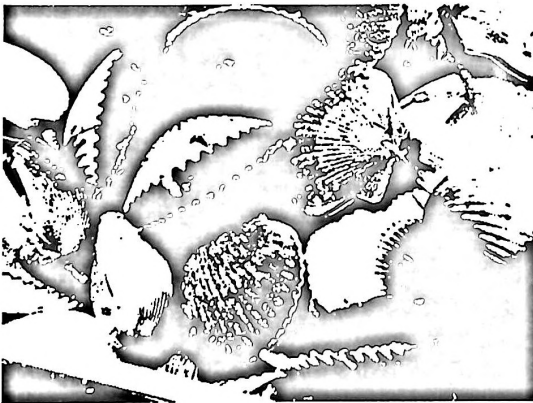
Patiently hunt, look and seek,
Find star fish, sponges and, of course, scallops, oh so sweet.

The mollusks are easy to grab when the water is not so deep,
Take them home to clean, cook and eventually eat.

Racing to the west where the sun does set,
gives a summer pleasure you won't soon forget.



Photos by Don Whitehead and Jeanne Obedzinski



Ladies Lunch News

The Ozello Ladies Lunch group had their new season planning coffee meeting on Friday September 20th at the OCA.

Lunch dates are: Friday, October 25th, 2013 – Wednesday, November 13th 2013
Monday, January 13th, 2014 – Thursday, February 13th, 2014 – Tuesday, March 11th, 2014
Friday, April 11th, 2014

In October we will be going to Chefs of Napoli in Inverness.

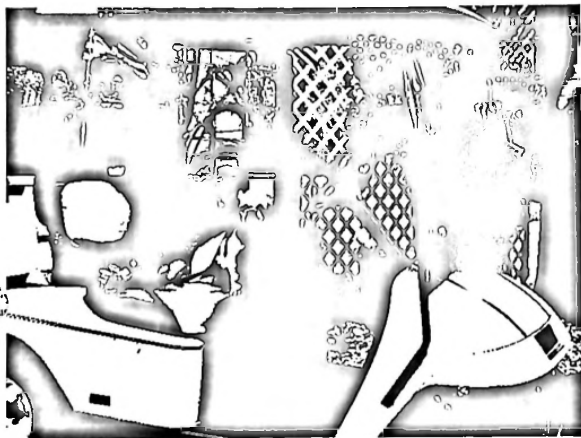
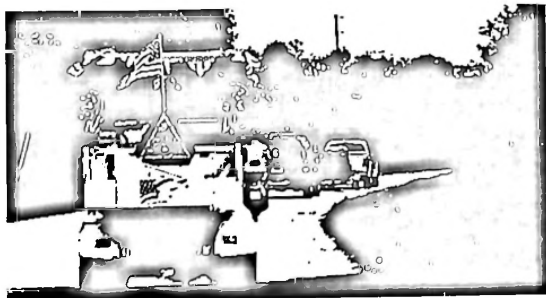
For information contact Mary Whitehead 352-563-6557

There is NO outing in December.

Gary Thompkins' Ozello 4th of July Parade

The parade was a lot of fun.

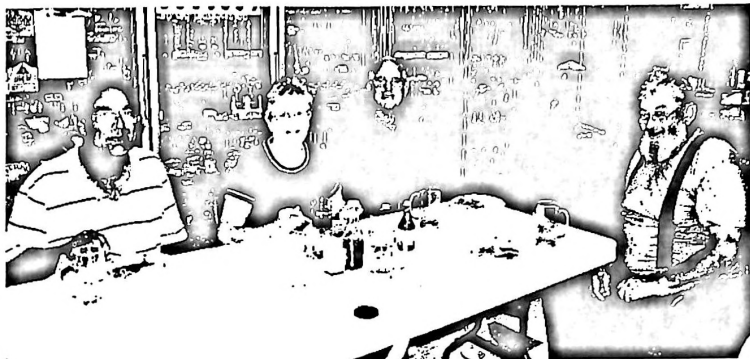
This was followed by lunch featuring Gary's smoked brisket and a wonderful cake recipe shared by one member to another, which was used as a birthday party "up north" and was a definite hit!!!! Thanks Irma. Thanks also to the Island Outpost.



Snowy Delfino - Shih tzu parade dog



Our Jane Vandenberg



Great cake Irma !!

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School Children Crowd Around Driver Fern Thomas

for boat expenses in addition to her regular bus driver's salary.

The few youngsters waiting to ride the bus were residents of tiny Ocello whose voting list has risen from 16 to 27 this year. "And we all vote," a bystander said.

"My children" were waiting for Mrs. Thomas all along her 25 mile route. With the greatest of ease she piloted the lumbering bus swiftly over a hard dirt road as winding as an uncoiled spring.

THE BUS jacked and rolled and ricocheted from Ocello, to Tropical Terrace, Aero Estates Paradise Trailer Park, Putter Place, Woodward Park, and Dead End. Here Fern Thomas maneuvered the bus into a right-about-face with the help of shouted directions from the children. "You have to get out of here just right, or you get either the fence or the telephone pole." Then on to Palm Springs and Crystal River.

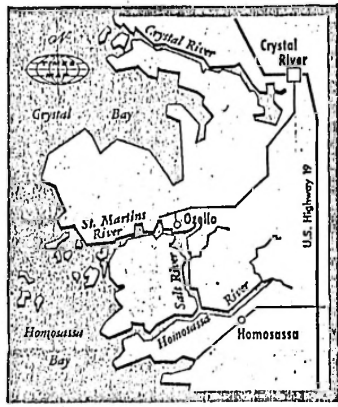
At each stop it was "Hi, Granny" and "Good morning, babies." When all the greetings were over, Mrs. Thomas glanced into the rear view mirror at the chattering, laughing brood of 60-plus.

AS THE YOUNG people — kindergarten to high school seniors — piled out of the bus and trooped into school, vivacious Fern Thomas called out cheerfully to a fellow bus driver. "I'm running late — In the doghouse with 'em today."

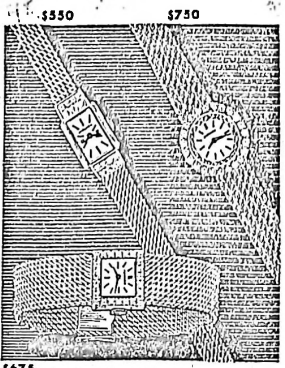
Five minutes later, at 8:30 a.m., she stood at attention while two boys raised the flag and the Pleiades of Allegiance rang through the school's open windows.

Then she parked her bus on a side road, climbed into her 25-year-old Jeep and drove home to help her husband in their truck garden.

At 2:30 p.m. she'd be back to redistribute her charges by bus and boat and finish her long working day by 5 p.m.



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also 14-Kt Bracelet Watches from \$100
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Here's A Bus Driver Who Loves Her Job

What of this woman who works from dawn to dusk, taking children to school by boat and bus?

Fern Thomas is a Texan, who's "never happy unless I'm on a truck or a bus."

In Warn, she drove a bus for the Texas Electric Railway. "I've driven cattle trucks — every kind you can think of."

IN McFERRON, Tex., she drove a lift truck for the government. "That was where TNT was loaded into bombs before they were shipped overseas. I took empty shells off railroad box cars and reloaded them after they were filled . . . to think of the danger."

In 1926 Fern came to Florida, a divorcee with two young daughters, to live near her brother George Piegler is a Hillsborough County deputy sheriff. She was married to John L. Thomas, "born and reared in Pasco County," 12 years ago.

"They've lived in the St. Martin's River area about a year.

"We moved for a change and to meet new people. When you stay in one place too long, your luck runs out."

THE THOMASES obtained an option to buy the "old Berry place" and its 20 acres of land. The old house, some three miles from Ocello, had not been lived in for 10 years. "We fixed it up enough to live in. I never was much for keeping house . . . We haven't been able to find a clear title to the place, so we may build a new house on our three waterfront lots . . . And we're going to build a new dock with a shelter. Won't anybody have to get out of the boat in the rain."

Meanwhile they add to their income by selling vegetables from their jointly tended truck garden. When the weather is frigid, John Thomas takes the school boat run for his wife.

This gives her an opportunity to warm up the bus for the children."

THIS red-haired blue-eyed woman with the hearty laugh is rearing two grandsons. They're two of three sons of her elder daughter, Barbara, the wife of Cliff Brewer of Tampa. "They're with the Royal American Sine Pale aren't home enough to keep the boys in school. Anyway, they'd rather be with me."

Mrs. Thomas' younger daughter Betty, is Mrs. Arnold Patch of Clearwater. The Patchses have four children.

Fern Thomas has tremendous enthusiasm for the "very interesting work I'll do as long as they'll have me. I love to boat run," the boat-bus driver said. "You're so wide awake and feel so good from the salty air. But the most important part is, I love my young uns."

Shop of Original Modes


Sherman's

432 First Avenue, North
St. Petersburg, Fla.

Evening Spectacular!

She is in an exaltation of glory at the ball. Her brilliant silk brocade gown, ablaze with crystals and paillettes.

She selected her gown at Sherman's . . . where the most fashionable clothes.



By NANCY OSGOOD
Of The Times Staff

Gray clouds hung low over the salt marsh country between Homosassa Springs and Crystal River.

In the misty dampness a woman wrapped herself in a big coat, then clambered from a makeshift dock into a small boat.

With many determined tugs at the starter rope, she browbeat the stubborn little outboard motor into action.

A sudden roar and she was off in the half-light—a vigorous motherly figure with wind-tossed red hair, standing tall in the stern of a pink and gray streak.

Twisting, winding, slewing around islands of marsh grass, churning the water into whipped cream peaks, went this woman-with-a-purpose.

This scene is repeated each school day — promptly at 6:45 a.m. — at Ozele, where St. Martin's River widens into the Gulf of Mexico.

Its central figure is Mrs. Fern (John L.) Thomas, who in September, became one of Florida's last remaining drivers of a boat-bus school route.

Her job is to pick up by boat children who live on the isolated islands of the area. Then by bus, she takes them to Crystal River School together with their mainland fellows.

"Granny" Thomas, as the youngsters fondly call her, owns the boat she runs. She bought the little 16-footer complete with kicker and lifejackets for \$160 from her predecessor, Walter Pheil.

"My kids (her passengers)

chose the colors," she smirks with a chuckle. The hull is green and white. The girls' choice of pink was used to paint the cabin under which the kids sleep on stormy days.

For fair weather or foul, the boat runs on a regular schedule as surely as there are class periods. At the moment, only three islanders are on their way to school by boat.

First to be picked up is Billy, a tictular day, were the Del White. While their parents wait at the doorway of their home, 15 and Barry, 9, ran down the dock chased after by a dog.

Then with Billy run the boat — by special permission of Granny Thomas — the boat off to another island.

(Please see OZELE)

photo
mah

Local artist finds her inspiration in scenery

By **Julianne Munn**
Staff writer

Graceful palms ... softly waving sawgrass ... stately blue herons and snowy egrets ... they all come alive on canvas from the tip of Phyllis Milton's paintbrush.

There is no dearth of inspiration for this noted Citrus County artist, situated in a stilt home atop an Indian midden on the St. Martin's River overlooking Ozello's natural wonders.

Working with acrylics and pen and ink, Milton has sold more than 400 of her paintings and

Her paintings and sketches mark the preservation of historical landmarks in the coastal area - what the natives call "old Florida."

drawings during her 15 years and around the Gulf Coast fish-

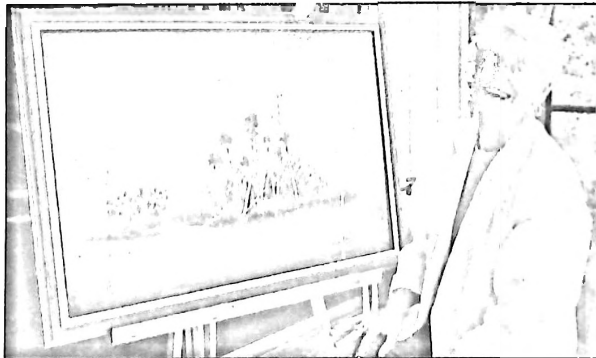
ing village. Many of the paintings sold had been on commission.

But now it's time to ease up, she said, and that is the reason for her "100 Prints" exposition March 23, 24, 30 and 31 at the Ozello Civic Center.

The retrospective of her work at the Oz Art Studio is more than a show of artistic talent. Her paintings and sketches marks the preservation of historic landmarks in the coastal area — what the natives call "old Florida."

Please see **ARTIST**, Page 2A

Matthew Beck/*The Chronicle*
This original acrylic on canvas painting is of one of the thousands of islands in the St. Martin's area of Ozello. Phyllis Milton-Workman calls the work "Pink West."



Matthew Beck/*The Chronicle*

Phyllis Milton-Workman of Ozello uses her "Quiet Chair" to sketch many pieces of her artwork. Milton-Workman is gazing upon St. Martins Bay.

Ozello |

by Mae Witte

PIONEER DAYS

"Happy Birthday" to an old time pioneer of Ozello, Mr. John Gould Pratt (now a resident of Homosassa) will be 80 years old on May 31.

Mr. Pratt also recalls another hunting trip when he was an Ozello lad of ten years old. This particular day he accompanied his two brothers William Lee and Oswell and one of the Arkebauer boys. John shot and killed a wild turkey with his 16 gauge Remington shotgun. It was one of the largest wild turkeys he had ever seen and it weighed 42 pounds. His brothers wanted to help him carry it the two miles home, but he said, "I shot it and I'll carry it." He did carry it home but what a job as the turkey was nearly as large as he was and it really became quite a struggle. First he would drag it by the neck, then swing it over his shoulder for awhile. He then tried pulling it by one leg and finally hung it over his back putting a leg on each side of his neck leaving the head drag on the ground as he walked. The boys kept offering to help carry it but still he refused and they finally arrived home, with an exhausted but very proud boy.



GETTING READY – Looking across the fallen Ozello school building, on School House Island, above picture shows Ozello citizens preparing to install American and Bicentennial flagpoles, prior to starting project to restore the ancient school.

Easy-going residents have mixed feelings as change creeps up on sleepy Ozello

By ROY MAYE
Citrus-Hernando Times Staff Writer

OZELLO — West of the rolling pine and oak studded hills of mainland Citrus County, within rowing distance of the blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico, lies a place a world apart.

It's a beer and fried fish world.

A place where sitting on the dock with a fishing pole in one hand and a dog's head yawning sleepily under the other is a sign of contentment, not laziness.

Everyone's your backslapping, hand shaking friend at the weekly fish fry at Pirate's Cove bar or you can keep pretty much to yourself. People are like that here.

It's off the beaten path. A place the tourists haven't discovered.

AND ONLY A small road department sign on U.S. 19 marks the way to Ozello.

Ozello is where city dwellers from St. Petersburg, Tampa and Ocala escape on weekends to unwind in lavish still houses, seagull cottages and molding trailers tucked away from the casual eye and hidden by gnarled cedar and ageless palms.

There are few natives among the 400 or so families in Ozello. This is where people come to from someplace else.

As a spot on the map, Ozello is one of those places the mappers seem wary of trying to locate exactly. They seem to just drop the Ozello anywhere the type fits.

And who can blame them? No town square; there's not really a town.

THERE IS A volunteer fire department in a new building, a water board with its own water tank right behind the Ozello Community Baptist Church and a meeting hall.

But from that point on, any structured form of government is strictly self imposed.

Ozellans tend to like it that way.

Tucked away in the sawgrass plains, cedar hammocks and palm islands along SR 494, Ozello is a water place.

People fish, catch crabs and shrimp, collect oysters and shells, pick up weathered cedar driftwood that floats in with the tide and generally live a life that most of the rest of Florida passed by 20 years ago.

THERE'S A GROWING artist colony here, says Jim Stirner, an artist himself



Darrel Lilly throws a horseshoe as his friend Ron Perry doffs his shirt to take the challenge. Both are from West Virginia.



Citrus-Hernando Times — BOB MORELAND

Justina Havlak of Homosassa Springs goes fishing on the far side of a bright field of yellow flowers.

and somewhat of a symbol of the laid-back lifestyle of Ozello with his salt and pepper beard and red bandana tying back a tatch of curly hair.

Stirner walks the eight-or-so-mile length of the two-lane blacktopped road each day with his pit bulldog Tiger. When Tiger takes a notion, he dives right in one of the roadside waterholes for a swim while his master picks wild flowers.

"Here is business going on in Ozello. People here work for a living. This is not a community of the idle rich.

Bill Thomas clamps a cigarette between his lips and begins talking about his crab business.

"**WE'RE JUST** starting up for an eight month season," Thomas says above the sound of salt water splashing from plastic pipes into shallow tubes.

Six or eight fishermen bring these in, he says holding a fierce looking blue crab out of the water. "We'll keep them here until they shed."

See OZELLO, Page 3

Step back in time to Ozello's 'Pioneer Day' this Saturday

By ESTHER DUNCAN
Chronicle Writer

This Saturday, May 2, a lot of folks will be driving down a winding road in order to step back in time and visit with each other in Ozello, one of Citrus County's oldest communities.

Called "Pioneer Day," the event will honor its pioneers as part of this year's County Centennial. Representatives of the Centennial Committee will be there, including Alex Griffin, chairman of the committee, as well as Charles Allen, David Benton and Marcia Beasley.

Saturday's event will take place on Civic Center grounds, near the water tower. A huge banner out front will proclaim, "Pioneer Day, May 2nd." Festivities will open at 11 a.m. and continue until 4 or 5 p.m.

Ozello was settled in Civil War times and is still a small, quiet community located on the water six miles west of U.S. 19 on S.R. 494.

Its long-time residents take great pride in their community and many old families in the county trace their roots in this area. There are still a number of families with members who attended the famous Ozello school, known as the "School of Knowledge," located on an island which the children reached by boat.

John J. Brown is one such resident who was born in Ozello and has lived there all his life. The road he lives on is named after him. At one time he was in charge of getting the island children to and from the mainland by boat, then busing them into Crystal

River to school.

A previous event honored Brown and Agnes DeBusk, also an Ozello pioneer. Brown and his wife, the former Helen Hough of Crystal River and of a pioneer family herself, plan to attend the occasion. However, Agnes DeBusk, whose presence was anticipated, is now hospitalized and will be missed.

There will be a display of old photographs, newspaper clippings and memorabilia in the Civic Center for all to enjoy. Everyone is urged to bring whatever items they have to share with others.

Old-timers will naturally congregate there and those interested will be able to hear many a fascinating tale of what life in Ozello and on its nearby islands was like in this community's early days.

Races and games will be held and special entertainment provided, including Jack Smith and his "Kitchen Band" from the Multi-Purpose Senior Citizen Center at Lecanto.

A chicken barbecue will be served with tickets available for purchase at the door of the Civic Center. Proceeds from the barbecue will be used for the future installation of a shuffle board court.

"Everyone is welcome. In fact, we're looking forward to meeting first-time visitors as well as old-timers," Thelma Henderson, Committee Chairman, said. "There will be a lot of sunbonnets, so if you have one handy to wear you'll blend in with the crowd.

June 15 Ozello News

by Mae Witte
PIONEER DAYS

Around 1880, a group of settlers, bent on making a go of fruit growing, established themselves along the north and south banks of the St. Martin's River. At that time there was no road and the only access to civilization was by boat up the coast to Cedar Key, then metropolis of the Florida west coast.

One of those settlers was William Henry Harrison Pratt, a 1st. Lieutenant in the Confederate Army, entering the service at the age of 16-- fought the Indians and Northerners. He and his family of six, (3 girls and 3 boys) settled on an island in a bay they named Platt's Bay (later named Greenleaf Bay).

They built a four room house, covering the sides and roof with palmetto. Later they built a much larger home from pine lumber. The lumber was transported by train to Homosassa, then hauled by boat to the island.

There were some nice citrus groves in the making around Ozello and Mr. Pratt planted a large grove on his property from seed. His son-in-law Bryant Moody owned a 5 acre grove where the Civic Club is now located, and many acres of groves across the road from it, extending to the Kirkwoods property and the "Old Trading Post". Numerous citrus groves were scattered around the Ozello area. Most folks planned on getting rich from the citrus business and then the "Big Freeze" of 1895-96 fixed their dreams by killing the trees. Unlike most of the other Florida areas, citrus growing was aban-

Springs but missed Ozello so much, they moved back.

The Ozello Sew and So Club met Thurs. June 8, and the day was spent with each one working to finish their own project.

Mrs. Rose Cortazzo was welcomed as a new member into the club and brought a pine needle purse she already had started, as her project.

We also enjoyed a visit from Mrs. May Vincent of Lake City.

Miss Barbara Caulk, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jay Caulk has returned to her home in Kokomo, Ind. Barbara has really enjoyed her two weeks stay with her family.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Cournoyer spent several days vacation at Daytona Beach.

Mrs. Monnie Brown has now moved and taken up residence in Brooksville. She will sure be missed.

Miss Janet A. Evers in the WAF, formerly stationed at Carsmell Air Force Base at Fort Worth, Tex. will enter Bay Pines Hospital in St. Petersburg for a knee operation.

Ozello

Miss Sandra Mae Witte spent the weekend with a friend Miss Barbara Butler, of St. Pete and attended Barbara's graduation.

Mrs. Mae Vincent from Lake City has been enjoying a two weeks vacation at her cottage on Sunset Isles.

"Happy Birthday" to the following for the month of June: Mr. Fred Rothermel, Danny Sharp, Richard Lambert, Mrs. Mary Kirkwood and Elizabeth Cox.

June 15 67

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Mr. Pratt sold his home and citrus grove to Greenleaf Crosby from Jacksonville just before the "Big Freeze" for \$5,000.00; that was a fortune at that time. He and his family moved to High

Springs but missed Ozello so much, they moved back.

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June 15 67

BEVERLY HILLS
Big Beverly Hills Project
Beverly Hills--A hospital, shopping center, condominium apartment

structure and light industrial plant are to be built here starting in the spring, Sam Kellner, the developer, announced.

"HOT DIGGITY"



"I GO FOR THESE

OK

JYS"

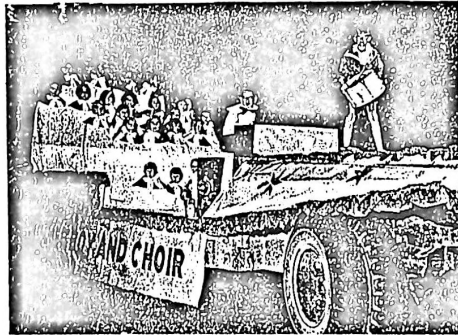
- 66 Caprice Custom Cpe. V/8, A/T, P/B, P/S, turbo-hydrbmatic trans., 396 - 325 HP Engine, tinted glass, simulated wood steering wheel, 4S air cond., head rest bench seat, radio, rear seat speaker, rear antenna, 825x14 white wall tires, 14" sheet EQ, beautiful dambie blue/beige vinyl roof cover with blue cloth interior. \$3495.00
- 66 Caprice 4D HT, P/D, P/S, 327-275 HP Engine, radio, power glide trans., tinted windshield, 14" wheel EQ, rear antenna, rear seat speaker, 4S air cond., white wall tires, mist blue/black vinyl roof with black interior. \$3295.00
- 66 Impala Spt. Cpe. 327-275 HP Engine, power glide trans., P/B, P/S, radio, rear antenna, rear seat speaker, sp. suspension, tinted glass, 4S air cond., large wheel covers, 14" wheel EQ, 825x14 WSW Beige with fawn interior. \$3143.00
- 66 Chevy II Nova 4D Sedan, 283-V/8 engine, A/T, P/S, tinted windshield, radio, heater, back-up lights, seat belts, large wheel covers, Tutone turquoise and white with aqua interior. \$2995.00
- 65 Chevrolet Impala 4D Sedan V/8, A/T, P/B, P/S, radio, heater, tinted glass, factory air, WSW tires, Beautiful maroon finish with black interior. Extra Clean \$2395.00
- 65 Chevrolet Impala 4D Sedan, 6 cyl., A/T, radio, heater, back-up lights, seat belts, air cond., WSW tires, very low miles. \$2195.00
- 65 Chevy II 4D Sedan, 6 cyl., A/T, radio, heater, tinted windshield, Clean \$1595.00
- 64 Chevrolet Malibu 4D Sedan, V/8, A/T, radio, heater, power steering, factory air, WSW tires, bright metal wheel covers. One owner. Clean \$1795.00
- 63 Ford Galaxy 4D Sedan V/8, A/T, heater, tinted windshield, WSW tires. Clean, one owner car. \$1395.00
- 62 Ford Falcon station wagon 6 cyl. A/T, radio, heater. Local car. \$695.00
- 61 Rambler 2D 6 cyl. standard trans. This car has only 44,000 actual miles. Traded in on new car by retired gentleman in Beverly Hills. One owner \$695.00
- 61 Dodge 4D 6 cyl. standard trans., radio, heater, WSW tires. Very clean \$595.00
- 61 Ford Station Wagon, 4D Country Sedan V/8, A/T, radio, heater, WSW tires \$595.00
- 61 Studebaker 2D Sedan radio, heater, A good buy at. . . . \$395.00
- 65 Chevrolet truck Long wheel base, V/8, A/T, radio, heater, rear bumper, West Coast mirrors, heavy rear springs. We sold this truck new, 19,000 actual miles. \$1695.00
- 65 Chevy Custom Sportsvan Automatic trans., radio, heater, passenger seat plus middle seat. One owner, 15,000 actual miles, like new Only \$1995.00

Adkins Chevrolet
Sales Inc.

First Place Floats At Crystal River



FIRST Baptist Church: "Christmas Package and Choir"



Tropic Terrace: "The Little Drummer Boy."



SECOND year winner, Ray Davison, commercial entry

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds

Mr. Pratt's old home and citrus grove
in Decatur, Ga. from 1875-1878 for
\$5000 that was a fortune at that time. He
moved back to High Springs but later

May 27-67

Mr. Wm Pratt's son John age 10 at the time went
hunting with his two brothers William Lee and Cass
and one of the Arkebauer boys. John shot and killed a
wild turkey with his 16 gauge Remington shot gun. It
weighed 42 lbs. His brothers wanted to help him carry
the two miles home but he said "I shot it and I'll carry".
Well he said he'd try but what a job as the turkey was
nearly as large as he was and it really became a struggle
first he would drag it by the neck, then swing it
over his shoulder for a while, he then tried pulling
it by one leg and finally hung it over his back
putting a leg on each side of his neck leaving
the head drag on the ground. The boys
kept offering to help carry it home but still
he refused and they finally arrived home.
John said, "I was so proud of that turkey
but a very tired boy" with an exhausted but very
del bet that was a picture to behold.

They held square dances, parties
and oyster roasts at the school.
Two of John's school teachers ^{not a} Mr. Lee
Walker and Mrs. Lee Priest ^{friend} Jessie Cameron

William Henry Harrison was a general in the army, and the name of the city with ⁱⁿ Washington
John Gould Pratt

John W. Pratt, No. 80 May 31 - 1967
Father William Pratt
He was a 1st Lieut. in the Confederate Army. He fought the Indians and the Northerners.

The Pratts settled in Ozello in on an island on a bay they named Pla Bay. (later called Greenleaf Bay.)

They built a four room house covering the sides roof with palm trees. Later they built a large home from pine lumber (which came by train to Homosassa, then hauled by boat to island). They planted a citrus grove from seed.

Mr. Wm Pratt wanted his 6 children to go to school in Ozello instead of Crystal River, so he got permission for the county commission to build a school and they furnished the ^{lumber} and he built the school received \$25.00 for his labor.

The men ^{back in the 1880's} made ^{logs and} rafts from cedar. ^{loaded with cedar logs} they moved ^{to Cedar Key} the rafts ^{to Cedar Key} into the Gulf of Mexico a distance of 27 miles from their home.

Cedar Key was the nearest rail road and harbor business and trade center. They sold their cedar logs for \$1.00 per log. Mr. Pratt told his son John, "I wish I had to I ever worked in my life."

The men brought back to sell their wicker which were usually miscellaneous. The only thing they raised everything else, even the tobacco they smoked. Mr. Pratt's land would produce anything. They raised sugar cane and made syrup and sugar. Had fig, pear, peach, guava and plum. Also raised strawberries, grapes and

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received 25 ^{cents} for his laboring.

The men ^{took on the 12th 1850} made ^{logs} ~~logs~~ from cedar
logs and ^{loaded with cedar} ~~logs~~ the rafts ^{for} ~~for~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{rafts} ~~rafts~~ ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{island} ~~island~~
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Cedar Key was the nearest rail road
and largest business and trade center
They sold their cedar logs for \$1.00

Mr. Pratt told his son John "that is the
hardest I ever worked in my life."

The men brought back the supplies they needed
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sugar cane and made syrup and sugar.
Plant fig, pear, peach, guava and plum etc.
Also raised strawberries, grapes and as
their vegetables they used brackish well water to water ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{gardens} ~~gardens~~.

Mr. Pratt's old home and city of 1845-1896
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They also bear, peach, guava and tobacco.

