



The Historical Quarterly

of The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

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Summer 2021

Civil War disrupted this area's families, friendships Daring blockade runners eluded Union vessels

By Jean Ellen Wilson

First of two parts.

The violence of the Civil War which lasted from 1861 to 1865 reached even into the sparsely settled land along the Indian River. There were ten families counted in the census of 1860 living in the wilderness surrounding St. Lucie Village. They were without roads, without stores, without a school or a doctor yet these pioneers chose sides and neighbors became enemies as the house divided against itself.

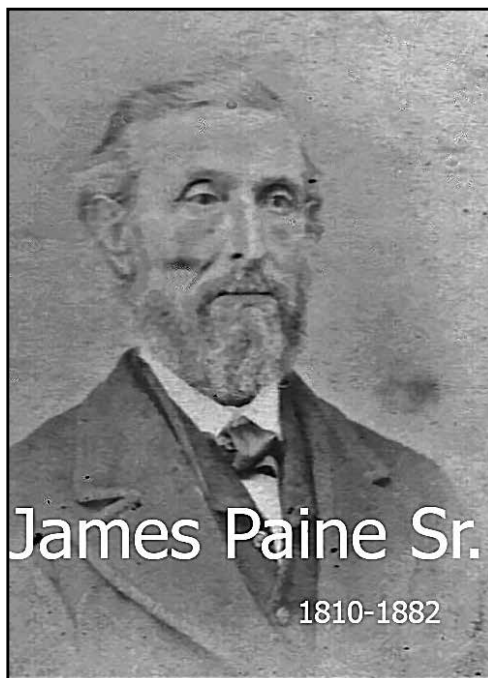
The first act of war in the southern portion of the Florida peninsula was the attack on federal property at Jupiter. **James Paine**, who lived at Old St. Lucie opposite the Indian River Inlet, and a trio of friends, coaxed the federal lighthouse keeper to open the door and the saboteurs proceeded to take away the essential equipment that kept the light going. The feeling was that darkness favored the Confederate blockade runners.

The blockade had been ordered by President **Abraham Lincoln** to isolate the South from all trade with the outside world. Instructions to the blockading fleet were to "stop, visit, and search any suspicious vessels." Any ship with forbidden cargo was taken to Key West as a prize.

By 1862, the Union gunboat *Sagamore* was often patrolling in the vicinity of Indian River Inlet. She was one of a class built especially for blockade duty with shallow draft for sailing close to shore but also designed to be fully ocean-going. She could not navigate Florida's shallow waterways so launched her thirty-foot cutter for riverine operations.

Pitted against the armed Union ships were the blockade runners built for speed and low visibility. Bales of cotton were hidden along the Indian River shore to be picked up by the rebels and taken to Nassau to be

exchanged for materiel needed by the Confederate armies. If the captains succeeded in evading Yankee ships between the Bahamas and Florida, their cargo was offloaded at some concealed depot on the river. Another vessel would ply the river, pick up the hidden goods and transport the cargo to Titusville or New Smyrna where wagons waited to haul the merchandise overland into Alabama and Georgia.



James Paine Sr., who raided the Jupiter lighthouse

Salt was an important home-produced cargo. Salt became precious because it was necessary for preserving food destined for the Army. Blockaders sent cutter crews ashore to destroy the sites all along the Florida shoreline where Confederates were producing salt by boiling water. Crews also targeted places along the Indian River where sacks of salt were hidden to be picked up by blockade runners. When they found them, sacks of the precious preservative would be destroyed.

So, while all this blockader versus blockade runner was going on – who was on the ground here and what side did the various settlers choose?

The Russells came to the river in 1845, claiming land under the Armed Occupation Act. The family was temporarily uprooted when a band of

Seminoles killed a kinsman in 1849. **William Russell** was the beef contractor for troops at Fort Capron established to protect the settlers. During the Civil War, he also supplied beef to the Yankees but involuntarily as his cattle were confiscated. The bluecoats had little use for "sesech" like the Russells whom they harassed, raided, and pilfered.

One-armed Capt. Russell and his wife, **Susan**, abandoned their home at St. Lucie and retreated to Madison County to sit out the war. Son **Jim Russell** joined the Confederate Army, survived the war to become a

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Welcome - New Members

Sue Favorite, Membership Chairman

New (or returned) members include:

Jann & Don Widmayer, Ed Killer, June Saine Level,
Susan & Rick Dixon, Julia Hornsby, John & Maura Stanko,
Jarret & Jessica Romanello (The St. Lucie Post),
Don Zimmerman

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The President's Message

by Nancy Bennett

We hope everyone is enjoying good health and a relaxing summer. This past year has been difficult in some ways, but overall our historical society had a successful year. We're thankful for increasing attendance at dinner meetings in recent months, featuring some entertaining and informative speakers.

A recent highlight was the centennial celebration for the Fort Pierce Inlet. The month-long series of observances during May highlighted the inlet's importance since its creation in 1921. Many local people enjoyed the festivities and learned things they never knew before. **Jean Ellen Wilson** provided a wealth of historical information to the various groups that organized events.

Efforts continue toward upgrading our redesigned web site. In addition, **Norma McGuire** and **Robyn Hutchinson** have taken on the project of improving our historical society's Facebook page.

Soon it will be time to start another season, with our next dinner meeting set for Sept. 16 at the Elks Lodge in Fort Pierce. We expect the turnout will continue to increase and we hope to see all of you there.

Enjoy the summer. Δ

Bulletin Boosters

Help support a lively and useful SLHS Historical Quarterly. A \$10 donation will add your name to the Bulletin Boosters roster for a full year of Quarterly editions. Please give your \$10 donation to Treasurer Bob Burdge. Many thanks. Names of current bulletin Boosters are listed below (with expiration month and year).

Ann Cali	4/23	Noah & Bonnie Ludlum	4/22	Charlie Hayek	10/21	J. Michael & Elaine Brennan	10/21
Barbara Secor	4/22	Terry Sisson	7/21	Carl & Kathryn Hensley	10/21	Tom & Kathy Gladwin	10/22
Jean Ellen Wilson	4/22	Elizabeth Trachtman	7/21	Jeanie & Dick Lattner	10/21	Rhonda Hilson Realty	10/22
Harold & Mae Holtsberg	10/21	Beth Stafford	7/21	Lindsay McClenny	10/21	Carrie Sue Ray	1/22
Cynthia Putnam	10/22	Roger Miller	10/22	Norma McGuire	10/21	Jean Dunn Spivey	1/22
Lynn Norvell	10/21	Adele Lowe	10/22	Laura & Hoyt C. Murphy	10/21	Kenneth Roberts	1/22
Floyd & Gail Hope-Henschel	7/21	Matt & Crystal Samuel	10/23	Jeff Priest	10/21	John Honea	1/22
Michelle Franklin	7/21	Thomas Bailey	10/21	Ronald & Maggie Waites	10/21	Peggy Monahan	1/23
Mr. & Mrs. Robert J. Essay	7/31	Claude & Cindy Baker	10/21	Peggy & Robert Allen	10/21	Herbert A. Bopp	1/22
Deborah & Stephen Billis	4/23	Leonard & Peggy Berg	10/21	Linda Hudson & John Bailey	10/21	Adrian Strickland	1/22
Ernie & Judy Merrill	1/22	Frank H. & LeVan Fee	10/21	Tracy Curtis	10/21	Charlene & R.N. "Koby" Koblegard	1/22
Bob Burdge	1/22	Bill & Letha Fowler	10/21	Pat Modine	10/21	The Koblegard Girls	1/22
Robyn Hutchinson	1/22	Richard & Priscilla Goff	10/21	Rick & Lisa Modine	10/21	Carolyn Dodge	7/22
Bob Davis	1/22	Vern & Marie Gosney	10/21	Tyler Modine & Kristi Cardona	10/21	Grace Scott	7/22
Ted Burrows	1/22	Nels & Suzanne Hallstrom	10/21	Robert & Louise Summerhays	10/21	Teri Horn	7/22
Pommie Hardie	4/22	Larry Hardie	10/21	Pam & Larry Blandford	10/21	Jarret & Jessica Romanello	7/22



A U.S. Navy blockade squadron at anchor. Gunboat Sagamore is indicated by arrow.

Civil War... continued from page 1

storied hunting and fishing guide to the adventurous outdoorsmen who came to the famous river during the Gilded Age. What was the Russell house still exists -- the oldest house on the Treasure Coast.

Near the Russells in Old St. Lucie lived the Paine family. The 1860 census lists **James Paine Sr.**, his wife, **Johanna**, sons **John, James** and **Thomas**, all born in South Carolina, along with daughter **Gertrude** and son **Trueman**, born in Florida. Trueman did not survive and is probably buried in one of the unmarked graves in the Old St. Lucie School cemetery where the senior Paines are buried.

After Paine hit the Jupiter Lighthouse, he wrote a letter to the governor of Florida assuring him that he had hidden the purloined parts necessary to the operation of the light where they could not be found. Alas, he was wrong about that.

Sales drive continues for Rights' popular book

Ernie Merrill and **Rick Modine** have worked diligently in recent months to sell more of **Lucille Rights'** much-admired book, *A Portrait of St. Lucie County, Florida*.

The book, first published in 1994, remains a popular reference work and enjoyable reading for anyone interested in local history. However, the second (expanded) edition,

Son **John C. Paine** enlisted in Co. H, 2nd Florida Infantry, Confederate States of America on July 5, 1861 at a camp near Jacksonville. He survived numerous battles across Virginia and Pennsylvania only to be killed on May 6, 1864 in the Wilderness engagement.

The Union Navy had Paine in its sights. Paine reported: "They stole and destroyed nearly everything belonging to me. I was then compelled to accept the hospitality of a neighbor for my wife and children." The bluecoats "made three attempts to capture me by coming to the house with an armed force of 30 or 40 men." He was forced to live rough in the woods and then, in 1863, he wrote: "I have concluded to go with my family to Charleston until the troubles are over."

The once thriving little village of St. Lucie was deserted.

This is the first of two parts. The second part, coming in the fall edition, contains details about this area's Union sympathizers, and concludes with the war's aftermath. Δ

published in 2006, was printed in such a large quantity that storage of the overstock has become a challenge.

Ernie and Rick have placed books with a variety of businesses and civic groups, and several cases recently have been sold. They make fine gifts for friends or business clients. The books are available at the museum, at \$10 per copy. Δ

Museum adds antique skiff to exhibit on local fishing



A recent addition to displays at the St. Lucie County Regional History Center is an antique home-built skiff used by the late **Johnny Jones**. He and his wife **Carolyn Jones**, a past president of our historical society, resided in St. Lucie Village. Theirs was a commercial fishing family whose members plied local waterways for many years.

The vessel is about 11 feet long and four feet across at its widest point. The hull is of canvas fitted over a handmade lattice framework. The Jones family reports the craft is at least a century old – used by Johnny Jones, his father and grandfather. It could be rowed or paddled, or propelled with a small sail. Family members routinely used it for fishing and hunting in the Indian River and other waterways, or through the savannas as far south as Jensen Beach.

The skiff has been securely suspended overhead in the museum's section devoted to life along the Indian River. Until recently it had been kept at the Jones family home in St. Lucie Village. Δ

Summerlins donate funds from inlet fish fry event

Our historical society was pleased to receive a \$500 donation from the **Summerlin** family, following their successful fish fry on May 22 in the park adjacent to the St. Lucie County Regional History Center. The donation represented the remainder of funds after expenses for food and supplies were paid.

The Summerlins are locally famous for their fish fries in support of worthy civic projects. This one was part of a month-long series of celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Fort Pierce Inlet in 1921. Δ

Redesigned SLHS web site now available to everyone

Our historical society's recently redesigned and improved internet web site is now available -- stluciehistoricalsociety.net

Last fall the board of directors decided to upgrade the site and assigned a small committee, **Bob Davis** and **Ted Burrows**, to oversee the project. They contacted **Steve Jones**, whose business, Art Attack Graphic Design, is based in White City. Jones, a descendant of a pioneer St. Lucie County family, also is a historical society member. He was enthusiastic about the project.

Jones redesigned the web site to be more colorful and user-friendly. It also includes more features and will serve as an additional way to update SLHS members and the public about upcoming dinner meetings, guest speakers and other items of historical interest. We already have added several of **Jean Ellen Wilson's** videotaped interviews with longtime local residents, and plan to add more in the near future.

All SLHS members are urged to access stluciehistoricalsociety.net regularly and watch for more items of interest. Δ

Florida Facts

On Jan. 25, 1957, the first part of what was originally called the Sunshine State Parkway (later Florida's Turnpike) opened. It extended from the Okeechobee Road interchange at Fort Pierce to the Golden Glades interchange in North Miami.

On April 15, 1958 a tornado touched down in Fort Pierce, damaging buildings along Orange Avenue through the downtown area. The tornado toppled the WIRA radio station tower into the Indian River. WIRA then was located in what is now the parking lot adjacent to St. Andrews' Church.

Remembrances

James E. Alderman

Retired Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice **James E. Alderman**, whose family is depicted among those in our museum's pioneer gallery, died June 10. He was born Nov. 1, 1936 to **B.E. Alderman Jr.** and **Frances Allen Alderman**, prominent ranchers in this area.

Jim Alderman was a graduate of Dan McCarty High School and the University of Florida. He practiced law in Fort Pierce, then was a county judge, circuit judge, appellate court judge and ultimately chief justice of Florida's highest court. In later years he managed his family's ranch in Okeechobee County and served as president of the Florida Cattlemen's Association.

He was predeceased by his wife **Jennie**, and is survived by a son, **James A. Alderman**.

Gerald Scott James

St. Lucie Historical Society member **Gerald "Jerry" Scott James** died March 29. The North Carolina native was born Dec. 10, 1937. He was a graduate of Wake Forest University and the Stetson University Law School. He practiced law in Fort Pierce and eventually retired from the law to focus on varied businesses.

His interests included real estate development, retail businesses and a storage facility. He also was a breeder and exhibitor of Paso Fino horses. He is survived by his wife **Kristi James** and five children.

Mary Esther Rice

Smithsonian Senior Research Scientist Emeritus **Mary Esther Rice** died on April 29 at age 94. She was director of the Smithsonian Marine Station in Fort Pierce for 30 years and helped to develop the popular Smithsonian Marine Ecosystems Exhibit at the county's aquarium. After her retirement in 2002, Dr. Rice remained active in research and is much admired by this area's science and conservation leaders.

She was born Aug. 3, 1926 in Temple hills, Md. and studied at Drew University, Oberlin College and the University of Washington. She joined the Smithsonian Institution's museum of natural History in 1966. She is survived by a sister, two nieces and two nephews. Δ

Feedback

Here are some recent visitors' comments about the St. Lucie County Regional History Center, compiled from the guest book:

Rich & Meg Sabulsky, Allentown, PA: "Great homage to the area's history."

Terry Horn, Bridgeport, AL: "Great! The hosts were very helpful!"

Mason & Bea Atkinson, West Chester, PA: "Interesting & fun."

Theodocia Hooey, Homosassa: "Love the family room."

Travis Purvis, Vero Beach: "Great history exhibit."

Diana Bolton, Sebastian: "Awesome! Highly recommend."

Dane L. Mark, Hutchinson Island: "What a surprise... Fantastic."

Silas Nhimba, Fort Pierce: "The kids had fun with the treasure hunt."

Vicki Pennington, Okeechobee: "We loved all the information & photos!"

Jimmy & Lottie Kirkwood, Stone Mountain, GA: "Very interesting, great memories."

Brennan honored for 50-year career in law

St. Lucie Historical Society member **J. Michael Brennan** has been honored for his half-century of dedication to the legal profession. He was among Florida Bar members whose 50 years of service was recognized during the group's recent convention in Orlando.

Brennan, a Dan McCarty High School graduate and former U.S. Army officer, earned his law degree from Stetson University. He has practiced in a variety of specialties including personal injury, workers compensation, and as a public defender. He also served as a federal magistrate in Fort Pierce for 20 years. He is a past president of the St. Lucie County Bar Association.

He volunteers regularly at the St. Lucie County Regional History Center. Δ

St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.
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Please join us in preserving our local heritage for future generations.

Name _____

Spouse's Name _____

Names and ages of minor children:

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Telephone _____

Business Telephone _____

Cell _____

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I/We wish to join the Society at the level indicated below.
Membership is from September through August.

New Renewal Individual (\$20.00)

Family (\$25.00) Business (\$50.00)

Please make checks payable to:

St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc
P O Box 578

Fort Pierce, Florida 34954-0578

For Information telephone: (772) 461-8020

General Meeting are held at:

The Elks Lodge

635 South 5th Street

Fort Pierce, Florida 34950

Society General Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month, from September through May. A meal is provided before the meeting at the price of \$12.00 per person. Reservations must be made for these meals no later than two days in advance of the meeting. To make reservations telephone (772) 461-8020 and leave a message. Reservations and your RSVP information by e-mail to: dinner@stluciehistoricalsociety.net. Dinner begins at 5:30 P.M. and the General Meeting Starts at 6:00 P.M.

Volunteers are Needed

If you have 3 1/2 hours that you can give once a week either in the morning or afternoon, please consider volunteering at the Museum.

Admission, to the museum, for St. Lucie Historical Society members is FREE. So come and take a tour.

The latest exhibit is St Lucie Families-Crafters of Local History.

The Pineapple Patch Gift Shop has a large selection of books of Florida historical value, cards, handmade Seminole Indian dolls, and baubles made by volunteers.

Museum Hours:

Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.