

The Historical Quarterly

of The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

Vol. 40 No. 2

Spring 2022



The antique Spanish cannon sits on its custom-made carriage near Fort Pierce's Melody Lane fishing pier where it will remain on public display. A descriptive marker gives details about the ill-fated fleet wrecked along these shores by a hurricane. Historians estimate that at least 1,000 of the fleet's passengers and crew died. The cannon, more than 300 years old, underwent a three-year restoration process, immersed in a special chemical bath.

Restored cannon from 1715 fleet adorns waterfront

By Susan Enns Stans

At a festive downtown Fort Pierce event on Feb. 15, a restored ancient Spanish cannon was dedicated and placed on public display. There was a big crowd -- chairs set up at the edge of the St. Andrews ball field. St. Andrews donated the property to the city to be a home for our newest historic property, a cannon brought up from the Atlantic floor after 300 years.

The cannon was from the wreck of a Spanish galleon located north of the Fort Pierce Inlet that was leaving Cuba in 1715 loaded with the spoils of gold, silver and jewels from the country's South American colonies. Spain was in need of coin for their coffers to support the empire's extravagant lifestyle and endless wars.

A July hurricane sank the fleet off our coast sending a swath of treasure to the ocean floor from Jupiter to Sebastian. A gold fever to recover the riches began in my last years in high school circa 1960s-70s. And dreams

continue today for divers and seekers with metal detectors still search for the glitter and gleam of underwater prizes. Much of what has been retrieved heretofore is in private, public and state collections, some on display.

The cannon and explanatory plaque were unveiled by Mayor **Linda Hudson** along with other dignitaries including treasure diver **John Brandon**, who donated his time and skill in bringing up and treating the cannon for long-term display.

To visit the massive cannon look for it behind St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on Melody Lane at the corner near the marina fishing pier. Δ

Prominent local historian Lucille Rights, wearing a necklace of 1715 fleet coins, stands with the preserved cannon placed on public display Feb. 15. Rights, a longtime leader in the St. Lucie Historical Society, also was present in 2018 when the cannon was brought ashore in Fort Pierce for restoration. She was among several hundred dignitaries and local residents at the display's dedication near the Melody Lane fishing pier.

Photo by Leah Voss, courtesy of TCPalm.



Welcome - New Members

Sue Favorite, Membership Chairman

New members: Ernie & Rebecca Ascoli, Suzie Smith

Returned members: Mia Tignor, Sharon & Willie Ortiz

The Society is a Florida Corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3). The Society is also classified as a public charity under 509(a)(2).

The Historical Quarterly
of The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

Officers and Board of Directors

President: Nancy Bennett
First Vice President: Terry Howard
Second Vice President: Sue Favorite
Secretary: Deborah Billis
Treasurer: Bob Burdge
Parliamentarian: Roger Miller

Jon Bell, Nancy Bennett, Deborah Billis, Bob Burdge, Ted Burrows,
Richard Coffman, Carolyn Dodge, Sue Favorite, Terry Howard,
Robyn Hutchinson, Ernie Merrill, Norma McGuire, Roger Miller,
Rick Modine, Jean Ellen Wilson

The Historical Quarterly Staff

Editor: Ted Burrows
Staff: Sue Favorite, Katy Purcell, Mary Schrader
Historian: Jean Ellen Wilson

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of The St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc., P O Box 578, Fort Pierce, Fl. 34954, Telephone (772) 461-8020, stluciehistoricalsociety.net

The President's Message

by Nancy Bennett

The past several months have been active ones for our historical society, with interesting dinner meeting programs, plus a highly successful St. Lucie County Fair.

Again this year, **Harry Quatraro** produced an outstanding exhibit booth for us. It had many eye-catching ingredients showing aspects of local history and was very attractive to fair visitors as usual. Let's all thank Harry for his creative efforts.

Hearty thanks also to the SLHS volunteers who sat at our fair booth and greeted visitors. It's so important to have our members there to share information about our society and invite people to join us. We sold several dozen books and gave away many informative handouts.

This year's fair volunteers included: **Jon and Lisa Bell, Maggie Summerlin, Sue Favorite, Ernie and Judy Merrill, Katy Purcell, Betty Jo Starke, Beverly Traub, Roberta Murray, Debbie Billis, Ellen and Richard Lynch, Robyn Hutchinson, Richard and Marianne Coffman, Norma McGuire, Tommy Bailey, Bob Burdge, John Honea, Rick and Lisa Kate Modine.**

We have several more dinner meetings with interesting speakers before we take a summer break. Your board of directors also is beginning to plan next season's activities. If you have ideas, check with any board member. 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).

Leonard & Peggy Berg ----- 4/23	Cynthia Putnam ----- 10/22	Peggy & Robert Allen ----- 10/23
Bill & Beverly Theiss ----- 4/23	Michelle Franklin ----- 7/22	Pat Modine ----- 10/22
Beate Hunton ----- 10/22	Deborah & Stephen Billis ----- 4/23	Rick & Lisa Modine ----- 10/22
Michael & Erlene Hucks ----- 10/22	Ted Burrows ----- 1/24	Robert & Louise Summerhays ---- 10/22
Janis R. Brown ----- 10/22	Pommie Hardie ----- 4/22	Pam & Larry Blandford ----- 10/22
Herb & Judith Bopp ----- 1/23	Noah & Bonnie Ludlum ----- 4/22	Tom & Kathy Gladwin ----- 10/22
Margi Lloyd & Pete McLeod ----- 10/22	Beth Stafford ----- 7/22	Rhonda Hilson Realty ----- 10/22
Terry & Fannie Howard ----- 10/22	Roger Miller ----- 10/22	Peggy Monahan ----- 1/23
Paul & Joann Berg ----- 10/23	Adele Lowe ----- 10/22	Carolyn Dodge ----- 7/22
Charles Hayek & Kathy Gilmartin ----- 10/22	Matt & Crystal Samuel ----- 10/24	Grace Scott ----- 7/23
Robert & Carolyn Lloyd ----- 10/22	Thomas Bailey ----- 10/22	Teri Horn ----- 7/23
Elizabeth Lambertson ----- 10/22	Richard & Priscilla Goff ----- 10/22	Jarret & Jessica Romanello ----- 7/22
John & Sallie Ventresco ----- 10/22	Nels & Suzanne Hallstrom ----- 10/22	William & Fran Slat ----- 1/23
Maureen & Gaylon Ware ----- 10/22	Larry Hardie ----- 10/22	Buck Bryan ----- 1/23
Ann Cali ----- 4/23	Carl & Kathryn Hensley ----- 10/22	Mary Ann Bryan ----- 1/23
Barbara Secor ----- 4/22	Jeanie & Dick Lattner ----- 10/22	Elizabeth Trachtman ----- 1/23
Jean Ellen Wilson ----- 4/22	Norma McGuire ----- 10/22	Terri Sisson ----- 1/23
Harold & Mae Holtsberg ----- 10/22	Laura & Hoyt C. Murphy ----- 10/22	

Creator of lurid ‘dime novels’ had early adventures in Florida

By Ted Burrows

The Second Seminole War in Florida had its share of bold young military men who later rose to national fame, especially in the Civil War. One veteran of the Florida conflict, **Edward Zane Carroll Judson**, is sometimes overlooked by Florida historians. He became more famous for his writing than for his military record.

Judson, born in 1823 in a small New York village, was a young U.S. Navy midshipman from 1839-42. He served in the Florida Squadron patrolling the peninsula's southern coast, generally along Biscayne Bay, the Keys and the Ten Thousand Islands. He also ventured with his unit into the mysterious Everglades. He saw little combat, however.

After the war, Judson traveled widely and carved out a career as a newspaperman, public speaker and author, using the pseudonym **Ned Buntline**. He is known as the inventor of the “dime novel.” They were short, cheap and action-packed. A series titled *The White Wizard*, or *The Great Prophet of the Seminoles*, drew on his wartime impressions of the Florida wilderness and its people.

His tales were exciting, but largely untrue. Some titles included *The Fiend of Blood*, *The Pirate King of the Floridas*, and *Scouts of the Plains*. To the public, Judson aka Buntline is mainly associated with thrilling tales of the American west, although only a relative handful of his novels had a distinctly western theme.

Judson roamed the country, getting into trouble almost everywhere. Historian **Jay Monaghan**, in a 1951 biography, calls Judson “The Great Rascal.” He was an untrustworthy fellow, often in financial distress. Judson was married at least four times (including twice to the same woman), was narrowly saved from hanging after fatally shooting a man in a duel, and helped instigate a New York City riot in which almost two dozen people died.

Florida Fact

Spanish explorer **Juan Ponce de Leon** landed on April 2, 1513, reportedly near the mouth of the St. Johns River, although historians for years have disputed the exact location. Two other possible landing sites have been suggested – Ponce Inlet near today's Daytona Beach and, even farther south, Melbourne Beach. He named this land *La Florida*, after *Pascua Florida*, the Easter season festival of flowers.



Edward Zane Carroll Judson
aka Ned Buntline

During a Western trip Judson met frontiersman **William F. Cody**, dubbed him “Buffalo Bill” and wrote a series of stories – greatly exaggerated -- about Cody's career as a scout and hunter. This launched Cody's career as a star of wild-west shows.

Later in life Judson dabbled in politics and toured as a temperance lecturer, though he was often drunk. He continued to write, but couldn't hold onto money. He lied about many aspects of his tumultuous life, puzzling later biographers. His health also began to fail. At home in Connecticut, he died July 16, 1886 at age 63.

Member's contribution will repaint Gardner House inside

A generous contribution from St. Lucie Historical Society member **Norma Cassons Axx** will enable the society to address a long-overdue need.

The board of directors has earmarked the funds for repainting the interior of the historic Gardner House adjacent to the museum. Paint in most of the rooms has not been refreshed for many years and is now peeling and dull in many places. The repainting is expected in the near future after estimates are received for the work. Δ

Modine's ranching saddle added to Adams-Cobb exhibit



The Bud Adams Gallery of Vintage Photographs in the old Cobb building downtown acquired a new exhibit item recently when SLHS board member **Rick Modine** lent his well-worn ranching saddle for display.

The saddle, plus an attached slicker and rope, have been added to the section devoted to cattle ranching memorabilia. Exhibit director **Jean Ellen Wilson** says that visiting children are especially fascinated by the saddle and accessories – another reminder of the cattle industry's historic importance to our area. Δ

Florida Fact

John Milton, Florida's fifth governor, fatally shot himself on April 1, 1865 at his home near Marianna. He was depressed over the South's defeat in the Civil War. In his final address to the Legislature he had declared, "*Death would be preferable to reunion.*"

Echoes from our past

Browsing through old copies of newspapers and magazines can be a fascinating pastime. They give us intriguing glimpses of life in bygone times and how people coped with the challenges of daily living.

The following items were gleaned from editions of the *St. Lucie County Tribune* published more than a century ago.

An item from the Feb. 28, 1913 edition:

"C.D. Blakeslee, who manages the ferry at Stuart, was in [Fort Pierce] on Saturday. He asserts that the county [Stuart then was in Palm Beach County] should make some repairs on the ferry approaches because when the wind and the tide are in certain conditions the carrying of automobiles is very dangerous and difficult. There have been times when, with an auto weighing some 3,500 pounds, he has been forced to cruise for a couple of hours ere he dared to attempt the landing. It would require, so Mr. Blakeslee says, less than \$100 to make the landings safe and render things far more satisfactory."

From the same day's edition, this real-estate ad:

"Cottage and pineapple property, situated on a hill about 400 yards from and overlooking the Indian River, at St. Lucie, Florida, a favorite winter resort. About 200 yards from railway depot, also the new county rock road. Consists of five and one-third acres – three and one-half acres in pineapples ... crop for 1912 netted \$1,350, also three dozen grapefruit and orange trees. Everything about premises in first-class condition. A bargain at \$2,500 cash." A small photo showed a white frame cottage with a porch, surrounded by pineapples.

From the edition of March 21, 1913:

"A grand jury presentment says the St. Lucie County jail is in need of painting and some repair, including a fence, to prevent promiscuous visiting and talking with prisoners. ... We strongly urge that this fence be erected at once and the windows be cleaned and repaired." According to the article, the grand jury also recommended "better sleeping bunks, the whitewashing of the jail interior and removal of offensive refuse around the jail."

Baseball

On April 5, 1993 the Florida Marlins baseball team played their first game in Joe Robbie Stadium, a 6-3 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers. A major league baseball franchise had been awarded to Miami in 1991, but the team did not play until two seasons later. In 2011 the team changed its name from Florida Marlins to Miami Marlins.

Remembrances

Claudia Schneider

Longtime historical society member **Claudia Jean Davis Schneider**, died Jan. 20 following several years of declining health. She was born Feb. 21, 1940 in Atlantic City, N.J. and was raised in St. Lucie County. Her family had been prominent White City residents since the 1920s.

She was a 1958 graduate of Dan McCarty High School and worked in various local businesses. With her keen interest in local history, she was a regular attendee at SLHS dinner meetings and a volunteer at the museum. She also was active in the White City Improvement Club.

She was predeceased by her parents, **Claude and Lillian Davis**, and by her husband **Matthew P. Schneider**. Her survivors include sons **Michael Schneider, Mark Schneider** and **Matthew C. Schneider**. Also surviving are her brothers **Robert A. Davis, Edward Davis** and **Jeffrey Davis**, plus numerous grandchildren.

James Midelis

Judge **James William Midelis**, a member of one of St. Lucie County's prominent professional and business families, died Feb. 10 at his Fort Pierce home. He was born Dec. 27, 1935 in Paterson, N.J. and came to this area as a boy with his parents **Harry and Catherine Midelis**.

He was a graduate of the University of Florida and the Florida State University College of Law. His legal career spanned 40 years, including service as a Senior Circuit Judge.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by his wife **Gay Midelis** and a son, **Jeffrey Scott Midelis**. He is survived by son **James William Midelis III**, plus several grandchildren.

Joan Ankeny

Former SLHS member **Joan Ankeny** died Feb. 28 at age 89. She was born in Bridgeport, Conn. and had been a registered nurse. Her husband of 70 years, **Rollin F. Ankeny**, a member of a pioneer St. Lucie County family, survives her.

Survivors also include three sons, **Rollin B. Ankeny, Douglas L. Ankeny** and **Bruce H. Ankeny**, plus nine grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. Δ

Feedback

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

Mathias Reuther, Germany: "A great museum. Very interesting."

Richard & Elizabeth Caster, Walden NY: "Wonderful Museum."

Crystal Butler, Gouvernor, NY: "Cool place to visit."

Janet Cook, Warren, OH: "Great display of history."

Victoria Guitarte, Fort Pierce: "Amazing! Glad I learned about where I live."

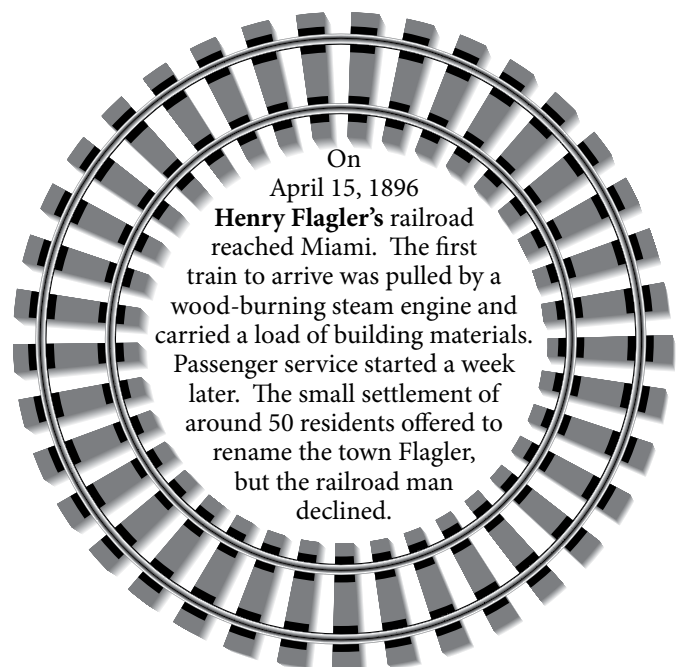
LaValle family, Nanuet, NY: "Beautiful museum!"

Beth Coke, Fort Pierce: "Great idea for the treasure hunt."

Brittany Hengst, Vero Beach: a "Kids loved the treasure hunt! Thank you." Δ

Florida Fact

Acclaimed Florida environmentalist **Marjory Stoneman Douglas** was born on April 5, 1890. She was raised in Massachusetts and was graduated from Wellesley College in 1912. During her newspaper career in Miami she gained fame with her 1947 book *Everglades: River of Grass*. It became a primary source for understanding the Everglades and stimulated efforts to preserve the vital wetland. She died in 1998 at age 108.



St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.
P O Box 578
Fort Pierce, Florida 34954

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
Fort Pierce, Fl
Permit No 422

Or Current Resident

Membership Application

St. Lucie Historical Society, Inc.

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 _____

Email _____

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 \$13.00 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.