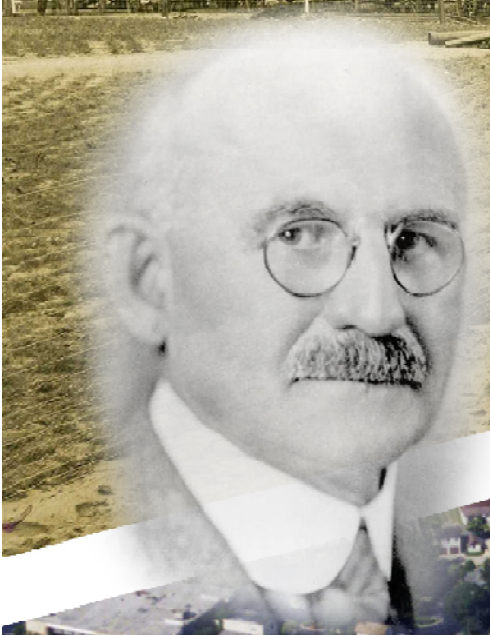


The **One-Hundred**
years of



1912

2012



Sebring



THE ONE-HUNDRED YEARS OF SEBRING
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Note to the Reader

All the information for this book was obtained from personal interviews, and research of newspaper articles and archival documents contained in the Sebring Historical Society Archives. A minimal amount of information was obtained from the internet.

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This book is dedicated to the memory of all the Sebring citizens who gave their lives in service to our country; and in honor of all of those Sebringites who have served over the last 100 years.



The Sebring Historical Society

321 West Center Avenue
Sebring, Florida 33870
863-471-2522

A View From Allen

The book that you are now holding has been in the works for many, many months, if not years. Realizing that Sebring's Centennial would soon be upon us, the *Sebring Historical Society* began the laborious process of assembling content, writing and editing stories, and seeking the sponsorship needed in order to publish this book.

At the same time, on behalf of the historical society, I approached the City of Sebring about giving forethought to Sebring's Centennial and the planning that would be required to make sure that everything would be ready for a Celebration of the Century. In 2009, City Council set the following date, *October 12-21, 2012*, on the calendar for the "big event". At a later council meeting I encouraged the council to consider the formation of a Centennial Celebration Steering Committee, upon which they gave "official" (yet unofficial) approval for us to create the Centennial Committee - Official, in that we sought the blessings of the City of Sebring; unofficial, in that we are not elected or appointed by the city, but have privately and voluntarily organized ourselves to help with the planning of Sebring's Centennial.

With Sebring's Centennial Year rapidly approaching, early in 2010, a list of community leaders representing key organizations that were sponsors of previous celebrations (i.e., The Chamber of Commerce and the City of Sebring - 50th & 75th anniversaries) were contacted. By the end of the summer 2010, a slate of officers was created and with the help of attorney Clifford Rhoades and accountant John Davis, the *Sebring Centennial Celebration, Inc.*, a nonprofit organization was being formed as we made ready for 2012.

Since the latter part of 2010, there have been monthly planning meetings to dream and discuss how to best celebrate Sebring's 100th birthday.

Sebring Centennial Celebration, Inc. gave host to the January 6th Kick-Off event that began a yearlong celebration that will peak with the activities being planned for October. This event was a tremendous success. Were it not for folks like Ila Cox, Alice Fairel, Jen Brown, Jane Hancock, Kathy Haley and Kristie

Sottile, I don't know what we would have done.

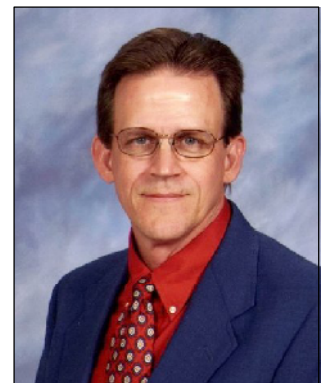
Monthly planning meetings have brought forth suggestions and ideas that early on assured us that Sebring's Centennial would be much more than just one brief week in October, and with the involvement of numerous local civic clubs, churches and community organizations, we have no doubt that 2012 will be filled with lots of celebrating!

The Centennial "Committee" that meets monthly is a diverse group of Sebringites that represents quite a variety of folks from all walks of "Sebring life", some of whom are long standing Historical Society members.

With the celebration aspect of the Centennial being attended to, the Historical Society continued to focus on the publication of the centennial book, *The One-Hundred Years of Sebring*. Our archivist, Carole Goad, has spent literally hundreds upon hundreds of hours working on the articles that make up the majority of this book. Contributions of articles were also sought from Patricia Pond and Romona Washington, in whom we are very appreciative for their contributions.

Due to local economic conditions, I must say there were some concerns on the part of our Board of Directors, but there was mostly faith - believing that the local business community and longtime residents would gratefully embrace this project. Under the leadership of our incoming president, Gary Lamperelli (our "Ad Captain"), a campaign to sell ads began in mid 2011 and has exceeded all expectations!

The last keystroke in the production of this book took place in January 2012 - and as we receive the finished work from The Print Shop, we are excited to make available to you *The One-Hundred Years of Sebring*. I hope that you, too, will treasure this work as I have treasured the two previous editions regarding the history of this place called Sebring!



Allen C. Altwater, III

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen C. Altwater, III". The signature is written in a cursive style.

FOREWORD

The stated purpose of *The Sebring Historical Society* since its 1964 formation continues to be “To preserve, protect and to share the historical records, photographs and stories of the people, events and institutions of Sebring and Highlands County.” Additionally, the purpose is “To promote interest in the collection of historic material...” published and issued to its members each quarter within the pages of *The Historian* newsletter. It is with great pride and dedication to this cause in presenting readers with *The One-Hundred Years of Sebring* Centennial edition. The content offers far more to booklovers than simply a repeat of articles contained in prior publications (Fifty & Seventy-Five Years of Sebring editions), with updates of the last 25 years. Rather, it presents a fresh, thorough and sensitive look at Sebring’s rich history, while honoring the people, organizations and businesses that have played a significant role in the city’s continuing growth and evolution. The individual writings offer accurate and interesting depictions of the selected subject matter, while many of the ads, memorials and photographs displayed throughout the book complement the intriguing and educational text. *The One-Hundred Years of Sebring* book will undoubtedly become a treasured “family keepsake”, as were the previously referenced anniversary editions. Kudos to the many local businesses, purchasers of memorial tributes to family members and sponsors, especially during these challenging economic times, for making this enlightening and educational endeavor possible.



Gary Lamperelli

Read, enjoy and learn...
Gary Lamperelli, 2012 President



Carole Goad, Archivist



Archive Volunteers:
Peggy Peabody, Patricia Pond,
and Joyce Spinning

Sebring Historical Society - 2012 Board Members

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and Jackie Webster



Front, L to R: Marvin Kahn, Shirley Kitchings, Ruth K. Davis,
Gary Lamperelli. Back, L to R: Allen C. Altvater, III, Jacquie
Trevelyan, Wanda Whitehouse, and Jackie Webster.

THOSE SEBRING FIREMEN

By Allen C. Altvater

The early history of the Sebring Firemen is a saga of service, not only to Sebring and Highlands County but to the entire State of Florida. From the beginning of the present organization in 1925, it was an association of leaders, none of whom were expecting or even wanting any praise or advantage for themselves.

On file in the archives of the Fire Department are dozens of letters similar to the one from Lake Hamilton Chief R. E. Haskins to Chief E. C. Henshaw of New Smyrna - "How well we remember the help that the Sebring boys gave us in organizing and developing our Department." And to the one by H. N. Pye, Chief Engineer of the Southeastern Underwriters Association, "... I have had an opportunity to talk to our engineers and needless to say, all reports are good and I hear nothing but praise for the splendid work accomplished."

At the same time, the Department was building an enviable reputation at home for their efficient service in all types of endeavor from that acknowledged by Mr. Ford Heacock to that noted by Mrs. Rex Beach. Mr. Heacock wrote, "I take this means of thanking you for the prompt action taken last evening when Ford Jr. was apparently lost."

When writing about a fire which the newspapers headlined "MANY LEFT HOMELESS BY FIRE." Mrs. Beach said, "Mr. Beach told me of the wonderful work you did at the fire in the quarters last night and I wish to show, even in a small degree, how grateful I am to know that your department can be relied upon."

For the past seventy five years, every new member has been given the charge and obligation that was adopted by the founding fathers of the Firemen:

THE OBLIGATION. I solemnly promise and declare that I will never bring reproach upon the organization, my country, my state or my city, by any act of dishonesty or cowardice, nor ever desert a suffering comrade.

I will fight for the ideals and sacred things of the City, both alone and with many; I will revere and obey the City's laws, and do my best to incite a like respect and reverence in

those about me who are prone to annul or set them at naught, without legal authority; I will strive unceasingly to quicken the public's sense of civic duty. Thus, in all things will I transmit this City, not less, but greater, better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to me.

THE CHARGE. Ever work unselfishly for the advancement of the community in which you live. It is unfortunate that we are so often strongly under the impression that to do a piece of work and not get credit for it, is little less than a calamity.

This habit of making the work secondary and the recognition primary is unfair to the work. It encourages a peculiar kind of ambition which is neither lovely or productive.

By doing the thing for which you may receive no credit, you are building certain qualities which cannot be hidden.

Certainly, there have been dozens of members of the Sebring Firemen who have proven that these are not merely beautiful, meaningless words but, by their service to the community, have converted them into living doctrines controlling their lives.

BEGINNINGS

Although there are no existing records of an organized fire fighting unit prior to 1920, it is known that Mr. George E. Sebring bought two hand drawn reels and 800 feet of 2 1/2 inch hose when the water lines were laid in 1913. This equipment was housed in a metal clad frame building on East Center Street. Mr. Aaron Withers was designated as the first Fire Chief and, in the event of a fire, everyone in the new town responded as volunteer fire fighters.

Water mains, which were considered adequate at the time, were four inch cast iron on Lakeview Drive from Walnut Street on the north to Kenilworth; on North Commerce to the Circle; around Circle alley; and on Pine from Park Street to East Center. All other water

lines were 2 inch or smaller. The water supply of 90 gallons per minute was pumped directly from the two deep wells to the elevated reservoir which was 90 feet high

Just how long Mr. Withers served as Fire Chief is not a matter of record but evidence does show that, in



Original fire station in use 1914 to 1921
This is the first fire fighting equipment ordered for the town by George E. Sebring.

1920, Mr. Walter Zackary was Chief and had organized one chemical and two hose crews, several of the members of which were high school boys but the main body were leading businessmen.

Before the days of this organization, there were several major losses (comparatively speaking), the first of which was Cason's Hotel, just off the Circle on South Commerce in 1914. This was a large two story building of virgin heart pine lumber and it was doomed from the time the fire started.

Next, early in 1915, came the loss of McNeal's store on Ridgewood one block north of the Circle. When the blaze was discovered at about one o'clock in the morning, it could have been easily handled with a couple good hose streams and a trained crew but, lacking those elements, the fire quickly raced through the 50' by 150' frame structure which contained a general line of merchandise including groceries, hardware, grain and hay, all in one large room. The opinion was voiced that the owner was not too sad about the loss. He urged the firemen to spend the water to keep the safe cool and after the fire, he hired watchmen to guard the ruins for several days until he could get someone to open the safe. However, even though the contents were in almost

perfect condition (to his great surprise), there was barely enough money in it to pay the watchmen. Maybe the insurance policy was there.

* * * *

During his administration, Chief Zackary made every effort to keep the department interested and active by holding practice runs but, aside from laying hose lines on prepared trash fires, no effort was put forth to instruct men in handling real fire situations. These practices were always sources of real fun for the members. To create more interest, the department was divided into three companies and the Chief encouraged rivalry by announcing the time of each team in getting its cart to the scene, laying the line and getting water.

The boys looked forward to these practice runs which almost invariably occurred on Tuesday nights. Although it was the intention of the Chief to stage practices without any previous knowledge by the men, it was never very hard to predict the date and hour of each run.

At that period of the town's history there was no organized sanitary department. "Old Man Posey", who owned a horse and wagon, was hired by merchants to haul away their waste boxes and packing materials and he was happy to have official permission to pile this waste at a point close in town. There were two such places; one where the First Baptist Church now stands and the other on about the present site of the Ingle home on South Lakeview.

As the piles grew higher, the firemen knew the time of practice was getting close so a Tuesday night watch was set in the Circle. Around eight o'clock, Chief Zackary would come down the stairs of his home on the upper floor of a building on the Circle, carrying a one gallon kerosene can and then the men would get set for the dash.

Spencer and Brandon Jones had a truck parked around the corner from the fire station while George Whitehouse had a "go devil" which too, was just out of sight with the engine running and all set to go. When the reflection of the fire showed in the sky, the Chief's wife would step out on the porch and fire several blasts of a shotgun which was the accepted fire alarm of the day, and the race was on!

The two wheeled carts careened wildly behind the trucks on the unpaved sandy streets and often turned over when a corner was taken too fast. Then there was a time when a wheel came off and the cart rolled end over end across the sidewalk and onto a lawn. There was some justification for thinking that this might have been caused by the opposing team because sometimes such things happened as a cart being securely tied to the frame of the fire house with strong, well knotted ropes or the wheels lashed together. These things never happened except on practice nights.

At the scene of the practice, when the hoses were laid, interest centered on the battle of the nozzle men who stationed themselves on opposite sides of the burning pile and threw their streams at each other.

This condition existed until the fall of 1920 when a more serious effort was made to strengthen the fire defenses. Great stress was laid on reducing the horseplay, but it was the firemen themselves who put an end to tampering with the equipment. It seems that someone got too enthusiastic and, as a result, the Council offered a \$25.00 reward for the name of the person who cut the hose.



Second fire station, built in 1921, used until 1927.
“Dutch” Kutoz, Harry Kline, Allen C. Altwater, and Eph Sidders

The City had taken over the ownership of the utilities plant the beginning of 1923 but, until the end of the year, had made no extensions to the water mains. Now, began a comprehensive program of civic improvements which included new wells, low level water storage facilities, a higher and larger elevated

storage tank, emergency fire pumps at the plant and at the lake, and a complete system of larger water mains, properly cross-connected to ensure an adequate supply and pressure for fire fighting purposes in all sections of the city as it was then mapped.

Plans for these improvements were completed and work was well under way when the famous Florida Boom struck Sebring. In the feverish excitement of this boom, interest in the volunteer department withered and died. There were no more meetings and no care of the equipment between fires. True, if an alarm sounded, any number of citizens jumped in to help but they were untrained and usually were in each other’s way and did the wrong things. Many times, the trucks started to fires and got only as far as the gasoline in the carburetors would take them; somebody having purloined the gasoline from the tanks. But the worst blow was the fact that Chief Zackary had moved from Sebring. So low was the interest that it was several months before it was realized that the city had no Chief and really had no Fire department.

This condition was brought to the attention of the Council on 30 June 1925:

“The Mayor presented the matter of Fire Chief advising that the Town had no Fire Chief and that it was urgent that one be appointed. The Underwriters association required it and that a man be kept at the engine house. He recommended that the Council appoint a Fire Chief who would be required to organize a Fire Department and report to the Council the requirements of such department, and that such Fire Chief serve at the will of the Council who retain power to declare the office vacant at any time.

“Moved by Mr. Blythe, seconded by Mr. Capwell, and unanimous vote of Council, that the Mayor’s recommendation be accepted and a Fire Chief be appointed accordingly, and the Chair declared the motion carried. Whereupon the Mayor recommended the appointment of Mr. A. C. Altwater as Fire Chief and he was appointed with instructions to report to the Council the organization and requirements of the Fire Department.”

REVAMPED DEPARTMENT

The reorganization of the Fire Department proceeded slowly and carefully. There was an excellent nucleus that was immediately available from the old organization. These men had experience and such training as was available at that time, so the hard core of the new group consisted of: P. G. Gearing, Ford Heacock, George Whitehouse, Spencer Jones, Brandon Jones, Chal Lighthiser, "Hetty" Greene, Roscoe Yeager, Allen Altvater, and Tom Dimberline.

The Council soon after, approved the employment of two full paid engineers and Eph Sidders and Harry Kline were chosen for these jobs.

In 1926, Sebring was a young and vibrant city, full of young and energetic people who saw a roseate future and were willing to work hard to make their dream pictures into realities. By choosing the initial membership with the greatest of care, the organization was in position to accept only the most suitable material as is evident by the results which were shown from the very beginning.

Immediately attracted to the revamped department were: Payne Sebring, O.W. Chapman, Carl Tripp, E.D. Estes, K.S. Johnson, A.L. Butler, E.W. Gallaher, Al Kieffer, Joe Lighthiser, Hayden & Laurie Williams, and others.

A military - chain of command - type of organization was first set up and, for the time being, this seemed to produce satisfactory results. The men took a sincere interest in the development of an efficient fire fighting unit and became proficient in the use of their equipment. But, as the fire station was still only a small, one story building with very limited space for holding meetings, the activities were confined to only those of a fire fighting group but it was a very effective one.

There were several outside factors that contributed greatly to the early success of the new fire department. The years 1925 and 1926 could be classified as "organizing years" for it was at this time that the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, the B.P.O. Elks and other civic societies were formed and it was also the time when the Florida State Firemen's Association began to function. Most of the men who formed the Fire Department were also members of one or more of the other local civic clubs and the community spirit generated in these clubs helped in recruiting the type of men who really wanted to help their city. At the same time, a certain amount of rivalry was felt that was also helpful. Some of the leaders joined the newly formed State Firemen's Association and received greater inspiration by reason of their association with others in similar work.

Another factor that was of tremendous help, was the completion of the system of water mains to cover the major portions of the city. With adequate water supply, plus consistent training, losses were reduced and the prestige of the Department was increased. In addition to routine fire calls, there were several minor emergencies that the firemen handled with dispatch so it was only natural that the leaders of the city should call on the Fire Department to head up the disaster relief party in September 1926 when the dreadful hurricane struck the Moore Haven area.

* * * *

Because of the Florida boom, Sebring was growing by leaps and bounds; the city limits were

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Cheryl M. Williams, CPA, Partner
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Sebring, FL 33870
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constantly being expanded, houses and business blocks were being built in amazing numbers. The Fire Department not only called attention to the fact that fire defenses must be kept abreast of this tremendous growth but it continued to keep this fact before the administration in a carefully planned program. On the Department were three excellent insurance men (Ebb Gallaher, Kenneth Johnson and Ford Heacock) who helped the Chief in preparation of studies which proved where dollars invested in apparatus and salaries meant net profits by way of loss reductions and insurance savings. The Underwriters had made a survey of the city and when their recommendations were received, they were followed to the letter.

One of the biggest problems of fire departments of all times has been the delayed alarm and it was so with Sebring from the beginning. The first method of

arousing the public was by firing some kind of a gun. This was logical because in those pioneering days, practically every household had one or more weapons around the house and no other provision for fire alarms had been made. This method was in vogue until 1920 when arrangements were made with the ice plant to use their whistle exclusively for fire calls. A system of long and short blasts indicated the general location of the fire in town.

Some confusion was experienced as the whistles of locomotives were somewhat similar and usually came from the same section of town as the ice plant; so a siren was purchased and mounted on the fire house. Here, other difficulties arose. Someone had to be notified of the fire and he lost time getting to the station and a siren was not so adaptable to coding. To overcome the loss of time, a switch was installed at the telephone office.

FIRE CHIEFS

Aaron Withers	1913
Walter B. Zackary	1914-1924
Allen C. Altvater	1925-1933
Hal W. Long	1934-1941
Austin C. Heacock	1942
Forrest Howard	1943-1961
G. Thurmon Haywood	1961-1969
V. Legare Smoak	1969-1979
Eddie DeLoach	1979-1994
Kenneth G. Haynes	1994-2006
Bradley H. Batz	2007-present

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Serving Highlands County since 1950

We Salute Sebring's 100th Birthday

Taylor Oil Co., Inc. Founders, Dot and Wayne Taylor

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But even this step was not too satisfactory as all volunteers had to hurry to phones and all call at the same time to learn the location. So, as the Underwriters' recommendations included the installation of a modern fire reporting telegraph system, the Council contracted for a Gamewell alarm which was installed in the summer of 1926 at a cost of \$11,000.00.



Central Station, soon after its completion in 1927.

First truck from left: Al Butler, Harry Kline, P.G. Gearing, Kenneth Johnson, Ford Heacock. Second Truck: Art Young (standing), Harry Raymond, Spencer Jones & Billy, Stan Wyandt, Walter Ivings, Doug Estes. Third truck - on running board: Payne Sebring, Al Keiffer, Dutch Kutoz, Eph Sidders, O.W. Chapman. Roscoe Yeager & Laurie Williams on back of third truck. Allen Altvater leaning against car.

The new system overcame most of the problems caused by late alarms but, for the time being, presented some new ones. The raucous blast of the diaphone gave rise to many complaints about the noise and the boxes proved too much of a temptation to some who wanted to turn in false alarms. In 1961 (thirty five years later), the complaints about the tone of the diaphone were sometimes heard and false alarms will probably always be present but, fortunately, not to the extent they were in 1926.

* * * *

The original housing for the hand-drawn reels and chemical engine, which was built in 1914, was entirely adequate for the purpose but it was also a good place to temporarily store other city equipment that was not too bulky. Oftentimes it was necessary to move shovels, rakes, surplus trash cans and other minor tools before the reels could be moved out. But it kept the equipment dry.

A bigger house was needed when the first motorized chemical engine was bought in 1920. Soon after that, the City built a one story, two car building on the site of the present station. This had a 12' by 22' room on the rear which was used as a club room and, when the engineers were hired, as sleeping quarters. When the Seagraves was put into service, a lean-to was added to the east side to house the Ford hose truck.

In the general improvement program of 1926-27, a new fire station was included and this was completed and occupied in December 1927. Months of careful planning went into this building, not only by the architect, Wm. Helm but also by Mr. Douglas and the members of the Sebring Department. Every suggestion was accepted and thoughtfully weighed and every newly built fire house in South Florida was visited, the thought being that this house should meet not only the needs for 1927 but for the long range future and it must be said that it has

met this specification very well.

Today, Sebring Firemen, Inc., no longer fight fires; they've yielded the hoses to a fully paid professional fire department. Yet their organization is still a strong force in our community - sponsoring many events, including the Highlands County Fair, Bullistic, and the Central Florida Barbecue Festival. These events help Sebring Firemen, Inc. raise funds to maintain the grounds, as well as assist with the local school's athletic programs. From uniforms to a newly built convention center located at the fairgrounds near Firemen's Field, Sebring Firemen, Inc. has assisted in raising thousands of dollars to benefit the school's athletic programs and Firemen's Field improvements.





City of

SEBRING

Fire / Rescue

Serving Proudly Since 1913

The Sebring Fire Department is responsible for the protection of the City of Sebring. The city has a population of over 10,000 residents and covers approximately 12 square miles. The department consists of 23 personnel, a Fire Chief, a Fire Inspector, (3) Deputy Chiefs, (3) Lieutenants, (3) 2nd Lieutenants, (12) Firefighters with (3) members serving as Fire Inspectors. Most of our Firefighters are dual certified as Firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians. The Sebring Fire Department currently holds an ISO fire rating of "5".



Photo by Mike Sawyer

The department operates out of 2 stations and responds to emergencies with two BLS (Basic Life Support) engines and one 105' quint. We also have (1) reserve engine and a brush truck. These units responded to over 1,400 alarms in 2004. The Sebring Fire Department provides mutual aid response to other Fire Departments located in Highlands County. The department utilizes a 2-tier rescue system, in which medical patients are treated by the department until the arrival of an ALS (Advanced Life Support) ambulance from Highlands County Emergency Medical Services (HCEMS), at which time our department assists Highlands County. HCEMS then transports the patients to the hospital.



Chief Bradley H. Batz

301 North Mango Street, Sebring, Florida 33870
Phone (863) 471-5105 - Fax: (863) 471-5123

FIREMAN'S PRAYER

*When I am called to duty, God... Where ever flames may rage...
Give me the strength to save some life... Whatever be its age...
Help me embrace a little child... Before it is too late...
Or save an older person from... The horror of that fate...
Enable me to be alert... And hear the weakest shout...
And quickly and efficiently to put the fire out...
I want to fill my calling and... To give the best in me...
To guard my every neighbor and protect his property...
And if according to your will... I have to give my life...
Please bless with your protecting hand... MY CHILDREN AND MY WIFE.*

- Author Unknown

Sebring Heroes

Three of the many to whom this book is dedicated!

Major Thomas B. McGuire, Jr.

By Romona Washington

Airdrome on Negros Island in the Philippines. Two of the P-38s never returned; one of them was piloted by Major Thomas B. McGuire, Jr.

Confidence is the one word used over and over to describe Thomas “Tommy” McGuire, Jr. in the 1930s, as a high school student and again later as World War II pilot. By war’s end, the word “bravery” could justifiably be added to describe McGuire’s heroic service to this country.

Tommy graduated from Sebring High School in 1938 and entered the Army Air Corps in 1941. One year later, McGuire received his wings, his commission as a second lieutenant and orders to report to the 50th Pursuit Group in Key Field, Mississippi for training as a fighter pilot.



When he served in the Pacific during World War II, McGuire was awarded a host of medals earned during his hours of combat. These include the Purple Heart, Air Medal, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross and the Distinguished Service Cross, with most medals awarded multiple times. His final medal, the Congressional Medal of Honor, was awarded posthumously in 1946 to his wife in a ceremony in Patterson, New Jersey.

McGuire made his first combat training mission in April, 1943. When he was assigned his first plane, he named it Pudgy I, in honor of his wife Marilyn, whose nickname was Pudgy. However, just a short time later, he was flying the P-38 in an aerial battle near Wewak in the South Pacific when a Japanese plane fired into Tommy’s left engine, setting it ablaze. After some maneuvering and taking measures to stop the fire before it reached the gas tanks, McGuire piloted his crippled plane to a safe landing at an American airfield 250 miles away. Pudgy I could not be flown again.

McGuire was soon given a brand new P-38H5 and promptly named it Pudgy II. By the end of September, 1943, he had nine kills to his credit and was the leading ace in the 475th Fighter Group.

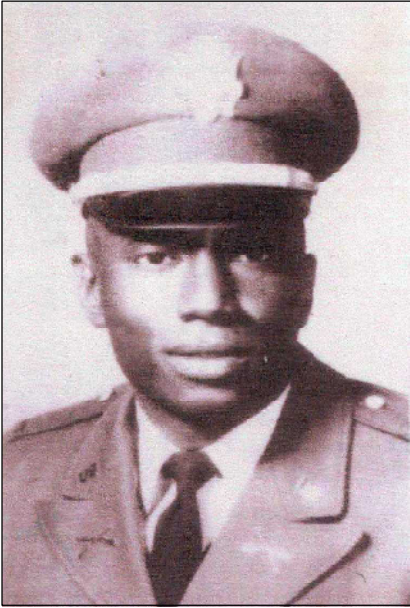
He was up to Pudgy III by March of 1944, when he was made commanding officer of the 431st Squadron. In May, his kill count was up to 18 and he had made the rank of Major. In September, Pudgy V was introduced and the number of Japanese flags on her numbered 21.

Then in January, 1945 a four-plane flight commanded by Major McGuire headed off for Fabrica



Captain Dennis Smith, Jr.

Dennis Smith, Jr. was born in 1943 in Sebring to Dennis and Willie Mae Cooper Smith. He graduated from E.O. Douglas High School in 1961 where he had been active in band, athletics and art. He then attended Gibbs Junior College in St. Petersburg in 1962. In 1965, he enlisted in the Army.



After basic training and nearly a year in Korea, Smith applied for and was accepted to Officer Candidate School.

He received his commission in 1967 at Fort Benning, Georgia and was later transferred to Germany. In early 1969, he went to Texas for training as a helicopter pilot

and in July of that year, after his training was completed, his wife, Annie, and children returned to Sebring.

After short assignments in California and Hawaii, Smith was sent to South Vietnam where he was in C Co., 2nd Bn, 1st Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade. He was promoted to Captain one month later and on November 30, 1969, he was killed by an explosive device while on night patrol in the province of Quang Tin.

Funeral services were held December 13, 1969 at the Church of God on Harris Street, where Dennis was a member. Rev. Jessie Anderson conducted the services, and a special Army honor guard conducted military rites at the graveside in Lakeside Cemetery. Smith's survivors were his wife, Annie, son Willie; daughters, Marilyn Smith, Rosalind White, and Dr. Wilatrel Smith; and mother Mrs. Willie Mae Hall.

Willie Kirkland, American Hero

By Carole Goad

The story of Sergeant Willie Lee Kirkland is the compelling story of the 20 year old graduate of Sebring's E.O. Douglas High School who became the second highest decorated soldier in Highlands County for any war in which American soldiers have ever fought. Kirkland was a combat medic in the Vietnam War.

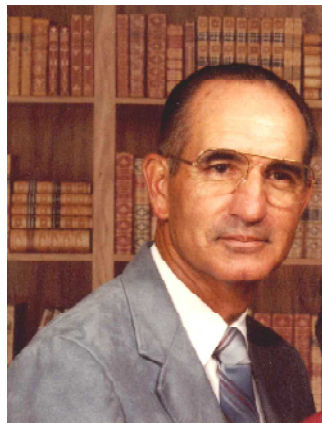


On May 18, 1969, during a bloody battle in the Ashau

Valley of Vietnam, Kirkland's platoon was under intense fire. Kirkland had responsibility for the care of 41 men in his unit. During the battle, many men were wounded, and Kirkland himself was mortally wounded early in the battle. Though he was ordered by his Commander to stop, he continued to render care to his wounded comrades until he, himself, died during the very act of helping his fellow soldiers.

In Loving Memory of Jack Hancock (1928-2001)

*Native Son of Sebring
1946 Graduate of Sebring High School
Some of His Best Memories were:
Shooting Marbles on The Circle, Playing
Ball with the Lemon Street Gang,
And then onto Firemen's Field*



From His Family

Kirkland was born on July 24, 1948, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Gus Kirkland of Sebring. He was born in Weems Hospital in Sebring, the youngest of four children. His older sister, Margaret Cooper, is a retired Registered Nurse who lives in Cincinnati, Ohio; his sister Jean Baker is deceased; and his brother, Bobby Kirkland, lives in Avon Park.

Willie had graduated from E.O. Douglas High School in 1966, just three years prior to integration of the area schools. He enjoyed being in Herman Hudson's agriculture class and raised rabbits as an FFA project. He was an avid reader, just as were all of the members of the Kirkland family. He enjoyed listening to the music of Dionne Warwick. He was a member of St. Mark's Baptist Church in Avon Park.

Willie was a big kid, always kind and gentle, and "always stuck up for the underdog", according to his older sister, Margaret Cooper. She stated that he always wanted to help people and was very protective of people, especially those who were younger, or smaller or more vulnerable in some way. Willie's brother, Bobby, describes his brother as "humble", a person who was always concerned for the well-being of others. He was friendly, outgoing and well liked in school and had many friends.

After graduation from E.O. Douglas, Willie joined the military and served as a combat medic with the 187th Infantry 101st Airborne Division. He had told his friends and family that he wanted to serve in the military as a medic so that he could help people. And that is exactly what he did. During his service in the war, Willie was highly respected by his fellow soldiers for his courage and valor.

At the time of his death, Willie Kirkland's medals included the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, Vietnam Medal of Honor, Vietnam Campaign Medal, and the Combat Medics Badge.

In 1992, Kirkland was honored posthumously at a Memorial Day ceremony by local veterans groups, including the Highlands County Veterans Council, local VFW posts, American Legion, Heartland Vietnam Era

Veterans, Fleet Reserve, WAVES International, Air Force Association, Disabled American Veterans and the U.S. Air Force. National representatives from the 1st Air Cavalry Division and the 101st Airborne Division also joined in honoring this young hero who had died so valiantly in the service of his country and his fellow man.

Let us always remember Willie Lee Kirkland – a young man with a magnanimous spirit who lived that great commandment: Love thy neighbor as thyself. He laid down his life for his fellow man! *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15: 13.*



***In Loving Memory of
Bea and Steve Vosburgh***



Married 1945→Maine→Virginia→Puerto Rico→Texas→
New Jersey→Korea/Massachusetts→Missouri→Illinois
Retired Lt. Col., US Army Medical Services Corps
Moved to Sebring, Florida in 1967
Summers at Dunrovin' on Little Sebago Lake, Maine since 1928

<u>Bea (1921-2010)</u>	<u>Steve (1919-1986)</u>
Assistant Librarian: South Florida Community College	Business Manager: Florida Alcoholic Rehabilitation Center
Friends of the Library (President)	Kiwanis Club (President)
Public Library Volunteer	American Red Cross (Chair)
Christian Women's Fellowship	Sebring Elks Club
Highlands Republican Women	Highlands Shrine Club - 32

First Christian Church (Chair, Deacon; Elder)
Military Officer's Association of America
Sebring Historical Society

***With Love,
Richard Vosburgh and Phyllis Braswell***

Sebring Airport History

by Allen C. Altvater

It was in the summer of 1940 when that group gathered around a table. There were sheaves of data upon it; photographs of Sebring, their home, could be seen among the data. There was a tenseness in the air; they had a job to do, and they were ready to tackle it, come what may.

The leader of the group of men arose and said, "Gentlemen, I think we shall find ourselves embroiled in World War II before many months have passed. Our country is establishing army and navy installations throughout the land, and especially in Florida. We haven't been considered because we have offered our government nothing to obtain consideration. I believe conditions in Highlands County are ideal and the War Department would be interested in the advantages that exist hereabouts. I propose that we lay before the War Department the many advantages we have to offer in this locality. The effort may be fruitless, but at least we can show our patriotism by offering what we have."

The speaker sat down. Other men arose and voiced their opinions. All agreed that "now is the time for all good Sebring citizens to come to the aid of their country." The group filed out of the smoke-filled room, each carrying a sheet of paper on which was outlined what he was expected to do; compile more data. And each was pledged to keep the proceedings secret. And that secret was well kept.

Not long after, a prospectus containing Sebring's bid for an army installation was printed, and taken to Washington by members of the group. They called on the Hon. J. Hardin Peterson, their representative in the House of Representatives; on the Hon. Claude Pepper and the Hon. Charles O. Andrews, United States Senators from Florida. And with the aid of these three lawmakers they placed copies of the prospectus in high places within the War Department and other government agencies. The group returned to Sebring, where they bided their time.

Months passed - in fact, it seemed that so much time had passed that nothing would come of the trip to the nation's capital. So they continued to bide their time. An acorn doesn't become a mighty oak over night.

Came the Spring of 1941, and the rains, and the blooming of trees and flowers - and the sprouting of the seed the group had planted in the War Department. Khaki-clad figures came here, some of them with stars on their shoulders; and eagles; and silver and gold leaves; and silver and gold bars. And one with gold bars was to vividly recall that trip about four years later, because that second lieutenant is now Col. Charles D. Farr, the present commanding officer of Hendricks Field.

The uniformed men were representatives of the Southeast Army Air Corps Training Center, predecessor of the Eastern Flying Training Command. They were on an inspection trip; they were looking over a suggested site for an air base. They hurled question after question at the men responsible for their presence on a broad, flat, palmetto-covered tract. Evidently the answers were both favorable and interesting. More questions were asked, such as: "Can you obtain more acreage?" "Can you extend Sebring's power lines and supply the current?" "Can you get a road to the base?" Those and many other queries of "Can you do this" and "Will you do that?" were propounded. And the answers always came in the affirmative.

June 13, 1941 dawned and a few hours later a telegram was received by the group of energetic, courageous, visionary Sebringites. It was a message to set the entire city rejoicing. Sebring had been selected as the site of a basic flying school, to be built on the broad, flat, palmetto-covered prairie. The following month brought the signing, sealing and exchange of papers between the Secretary of War and the City of Sebring, whereby the site was leased for 99 years, at \$1 per year, by the government.



The group responsible for all the happenings up to this time is a modest one. They want no credit, no praise, no mention of their names. They are thrilled with the mighty oak from the seed they sowed, and they wish to remain nameless.

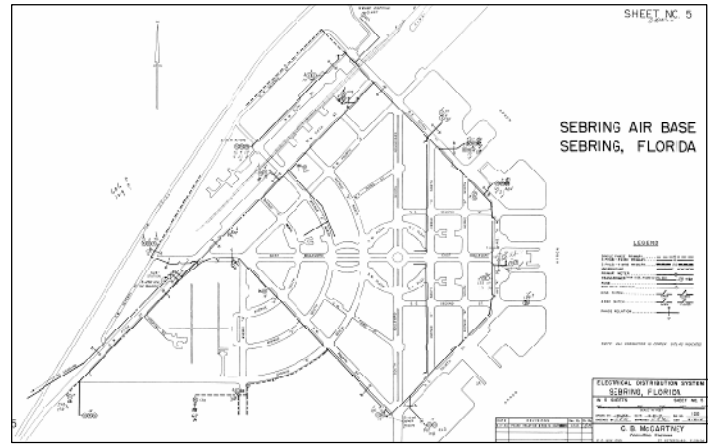
Those not-so-young and not-so-old men of Sebring performed a great service for their community. They had stuck out their necks to get “something” for Sebring. They were well rewarded for their efforts. But there was plenty of work ahead - work which would require the cooperation of all Sebring people. They had no difficulty in obtaining that cooperation.

By the end of 1941, the base was no longer just a pilot training school, it became the first Combat Crew Training School and the U.S. B-17 Flying Fortresses began using the field where entire crews - pilot, copilot, navigator, bombardier, aerial engineer, radio operator, and gunner were trained.

In January 1942, the base was named Hendricks Field in memory of First Lieutenant Laird Woodruff Hendricks, a native of Ocala, Florida. At this time, the base was essentially in place with four runways 150' by 5,000' with directional bearings N-S, NE-SW, E-W, and NW-SE, an aircraft parking apron, and the majority of the buildings and facilities were complete.



On January 29, 1942, the first Flying Fortress landed at Hendricks Field. By mid-1942, the runways were widened to 300 feet, and the perimeter taxiways were constructed. Late in 1942, the function of Hendricks Field again changed to become exclusively a First Pilots flying school for B-17s.



With the end of World War II in 1945, Hendricks Field was inactivated on December 31. On January 25, 1946, the air base property was declared surplus to the needs of the U.S. Government and the lease was surrendered to the City of Sebring. The airfield, roadways, utilities, some buildings, various equipment and miscellaneous items were released to the city with typical reservations and restrictions concerning land and airport use. Many of the buildings were either sold or torn down at the time of surrender.

On February 21, 1946, the city received a temporary permit to operate Hendricks Field as a civilian airport and an Airport Committee of the City Council was appointed. A few days later, the first commercial flight from Hendricks Field was made when Sebring Flying Service made two passenger flights from the field.

Initially, the City Council was reluctant to assume responsibility as custodian of the field with a maintenance bill of \$50,000 annually; however, the city agreed to lease the field with the limitation that it would not expend any money other than revenues derived from subletting facilities at the field. In May 1946, the city began airfield operations under a Right of Entry Permit and the field's first two occupants, Eighth Air Depot and Veterans' Airlines, opened for business. Both companies provided aircraft repair and maintenance. Under the permit, the airfield, three hangars and all buildings immediately adjacent to the landing area were turned over to the City of Sebring.

In January 1947, unable to secure absolute title to the field, the City of Sebring agreed to take over management of the airport. The airport's name was changed to Sebring Air Terminal to avoid confusion with the wartime activities and to give it an advantage in

attracting industry to the field. Under the terms of the transfer from the U.S. Government, the airport buildings could not be used for any purpose other than one relating to aviation. They included six connected with the field's water supply, nine buildings associated with sewerage, nine administrative buildings involved in care of the field, one building housing electrical equipment, one building with telegraphic equipment and eight buildings housing equipment for the repair of aircraft. The Army Air Force reserved the right of use of 25 percent of the capacity of the field during peace time. Some 221 other buildings on the base site were not included and



remained the property of the government. Soon after assuming management of the field, the city sold most of the airport land so that, essentially, the present airport property line was formed. In June 1947, the City of Sebring purchased the railroad system at Hendricks Field for \$4,000.

The first ten to twelve years were the most financially difficult years for the young municipal airport. Its survival was dependent on rental income from businesses willing to base themselves at the airport. Were it not for Art Dorman and George Dumont in bringing the Eighth Air Depot, Inc. to the base, the Air Terminal may never have survived!

The Government finally released all of the old Hendricks Field properties to the City of Sebring to enable any and all types of industry, trade and air transportation to be developed at the Sebring Air Terminal. The City of Sebring sold the land immediately adjacent to the present eastern edge of the airport.

In November 1958, the City Council passed an ordinance establishing an Airport Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the City of Sebring relative to the operation, management and control of the Sebring Air Terminal.

In 1967, the city turned over the deed of the airport to the Sebring Airport Authority, which had just been formed by the State Legislature.

Under the Sebring Airport Authority, the airport name was changed to Sebring Regional Airport and Commerce Park. During 1981, the Authority sold 35 acres of land to the Sebring Utilities Commission to form the current airport property boundaries. The airport is identified in the Florida System as the Sebring Regional Airport.

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Sebring International Raceway

By Romona Washington

Each year, fans flock to the Mobil 1 12 Hours of Sebring to celebrate America's most prestigious sports car endurance race. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Race.

Legends from all forms of motorsport have been gracing the landscape of Sebring since the 1950s. Anyone who knows the sport can recognize names like Mario Andretti, Carroll Shelby or Sir Stirling Moss, only a few of the famed drivers who have sped around the local track.

It was in 1958 that Race promoter and originator Alec Ulmann secured permission from the Sebring City Council to build four permanent observation towers at key sites around the then-5.2 miles circuit. This was to facilitate better public address, newspaper, photo and radio coverage of the event. That construction was underwritten by the Triumph Motor Company of England.

The Grand Prix Ball also started in 1958. It was dubbed "The Social Event of Race Week". The inaugural ball was staged by the Junior Woman's Club of Sebring and was held at the municipal pier auditorium on Thursday of that Race Week.

Among the listed guests were broadcaster Walter Cronkite, along with now Hall-of-Fame drivers Stirling Moss and Carroll Shelby. The highlight of the evening was the crowning of Miss Sebring Grand Prix, Betty Frazee of Silver Springs. At the time, Frazee was a mermaid at Florida's Silver Springs tourist attraction.

The paddock, which is the garage area for the race cars, had been upgraded for the 1958 affair. There was a special parking area, seating and dining facilities. But the paddock was not the only improvement at the track that year. The Jaguar-sponsored triple-deck officials tower was built on the front straightaway.

There also were two new bridges and four new grandstands added. The main straightaway bleachers were enlarged, and stands were put up in the Tower Turn, at the Esses, near the Hairpin and at the famous Webster Corner. Sponsored by MG, a pedestrian overpass also was built near the Esses.



To help with access to the paddock, a new vehicular overpass was put up across the front straightaway near the pit area. That one was sponsored by Italian vermouth manufacturer Martini & Rossi.

There were many new features and ideas incorporated in the Race, as organizers became more sophisticated. In an effort to cut down on the revenue-draining practice of ticket sharing by some of the fans, 1958 was the first year that the now-familiar Pass Out tickets were used at the front gate for those leaving or returning to the track. That year, Waco Import Cars of Miami also set up one of the first “hospitality areas” for the general public ever recorded at the track. Fans were invited to come and relax in the shade of their “Exhibition Tent”. Naturally, there were autos on display, and salesmen were available to answer any questions fans might have about the cars.

Now fans are greeted by the new two-story, 10,000 square foot administration building that houses a gift shop, registration center, ticket office, business center, conference room, staff offices and archives.

In the paddock is the new Gallery of Legends that also serves as the Sebring Hall of Fame. The 7,500 square foot building will be available year-round for car clubs, vintage racers and special events. The 50 by 150 foot structure is a project of the Sebring Hall of Fame, a non-profit entity created in 2002 to preserve Sebring’s race heritage.

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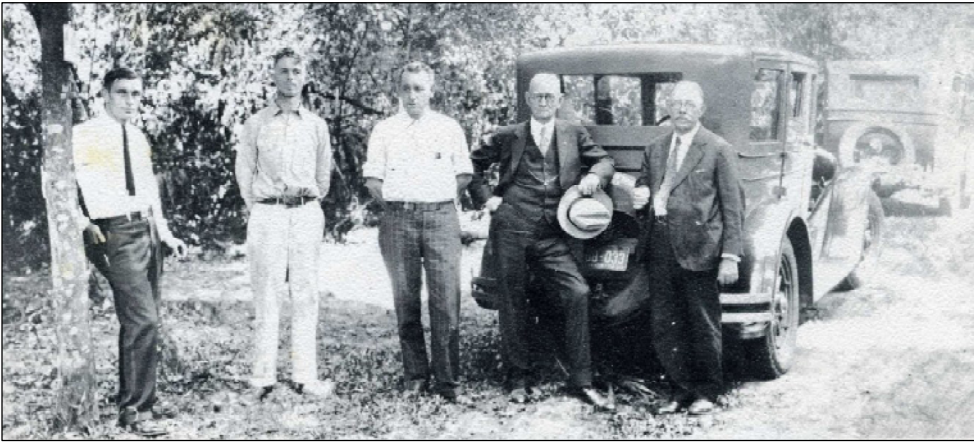
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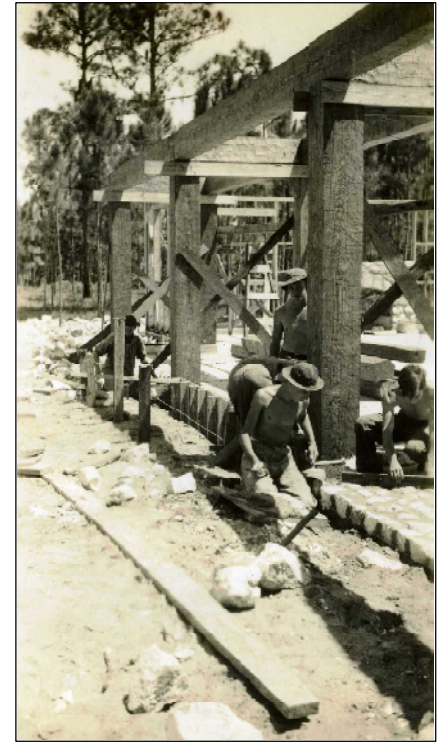
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Congratulations, Sebring
Here's to the next 100 years!!!





Congressman Herbert Drane Inspected the Hammock in 1930
 L to R: A. C. Altvater, Pres. C of C; Oscar Spivey; William Becket, News Reporter;
 Rep. Drane; C. F. Saunders, Sec. C of C.



Refreshment Building



CCC workers - mid 1930s



Dec 1, 1938

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Highlands Hammock State Park

Park Superintendents/Managers

C. R. Vinten	1934 - 1935
Allen C. Altvater	1935 - 1942
E. L. Greene *	1946
Guy Van Duyn *	1948
Joe Brown	19 ? - 19 ?
J. R. Tipping *	1954
Paul Walker *	1959
James Cook	19 ? - 1965
Bob Baylor	1965 - 1967
George McGraw	1967 - 1977
James Crane	1978 - 1983
Peter A. Anderson	1983 - 2009
Steven Dale	2009 - to present

* Although we do not know exactly when their service began or ended, records do show they held this position for the year shown.

Highlands Hammock State Park

by Allen C. Altvater

Sebring's first settlers had recognized an area west of the new town as a spot of unusual beauty; and although the roads to that section were practically nonexistent, many picnics, hunting parties, and sight-seeing trips were made there in horse drawn buggies or wagons. The area was known as "Eiland's Hammock" and/or "Hooker's Hammock", taking its names from early owners. These pioneer settlers had lived on the property, and evidence exists that at a more distant time, Indians had dwelled in the Hammock. The Indian burial mounds in the Hammock, which have been explored, have yielded pottery and other artifacts. Some of the mounds remain undisturbed to this day.

Prior to the Boom, a corporation bought the land, divided it, and sold it in five and ten acre plots. The soil appeared to be very fertile and well adapted to farming, especially truck gardening. Only one buyer put any appreciable effort into that sort of development. Thomas Whitehouse bought ten acres, and his sons, George and Tommie, spent some time in clearing it. This site may be recognized today as the Vesper Service Area of Highlands Hammock.

After the collapse of the Boom, a group became interested in the promotion of the Hammock as a national park, and a survey was made by officials to determine the value of the property for such a purpose. The officials were very appreciative of the beauty of the area, but they found that it was not of national park or national monument size. The citizens who had originally backed the park idea organized into the Tropical Florida Parks Association early in 1930. Ray Greene and Dr. C.S. Donaldson (then Mayor of Avon Park) were leaders in this movement, and Rex Beach was president of the Association. Throughout the lifetime of the Association and the organizations which succeeded it, support was drawn from the entire state. Prominent leaders from all parts of Florida took an interest in the formation and maintenance of a park at the Hammock. However,



chance - or perhaps Providence - determined the direction of the Hammock's history.

Mrs. Margaret Shippen Roebling was flying over this area with her son, Donald Roebling. She "happened to notice" the beautiful area west of Sebring. When she learned that a movement was afoot to purchase the property she had admired and to

preserve it for public use and benefit, she joined enthusiastically and enlisted her husband's assistance. John Roebling, always a practical man, agreed to supply a vast sum of money providing that local public raised relatively minor amounts to prove that it was a project in which the people of Highlands County were genuinely interested.

From 1934 to 1941, a group of approximately 230 men ranging in age from 16-18 came to Highlands Hammock to work. These young men were known as the Civilian Conservation Corps, a program instituted by Pres. Franklin Delano Roosevelt to provide needed jobs during the Great Depression. Those here were just one of many C.C.C. groups that worked throughout the United States up until about the time when many of them were drafted into World War II.

These young men constructed roads, bridges, fences, water control structures, and buildings throughout the park, and to this day, these facilities are still being used and stand as a tribute to these fine men.

Many visitors enjoy bicycling the scenic 3-mile loop drive or hiking on many of the parks trails. An elevated boardwalk traverses an old-growth cypress swamp. Picnicking is another popular activity as are ranger-guided tours of the park. Highlands Hammock offers a full-facility campground, as well as a youth/group tent campground. A recreation hall is available for rental, as are several picnic pavilions. A museum showcasing the history of the CCC is open 9:30a.m. - 3:30p.m.

Today statues stand as sentinels to America's landmarks

"Their presence informs Americans about the legacy and value of natural resource conservation and the care of public land."

"Iron Mike", dedicated August 2, 1997. The fourth CCC worker statue was donated by Henry Billitz in honor of his brother, Emil Billitz who suffered complete paralysis as the result of a truck accident while serving in the CCC. Through hard work and therapy he regained the use of his upper body. The statue is also dedicated to the 2,876 men who lost their lives while working for the CCC between 1933 and 1942.

Editorial note: One could fill many volumes with the historical writings and photographic images found in the collections at the Sebring Historical Society and the Highlands Hammock State Park CCC Museum. For a brief early history of the park, there is perhaps no better single document than the *Resume of Highlands Hammock History*, written by Alexander Blair in March of 1936. For a more thorough history, we refer you to *Highlands Hammock*, written and compiled by Allen C. Altwater in 1966, amended in 1979 for the Sebring Historical Society; updated and reprinted a third time in 2008 by Allen C. Altwater, III.



DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF EMIL BILLITZ SR. AND COUNTLESS OTHER C.C.C. ENROLLEES WHO WERE INJURED, DISABLED OR LOST THEIR LIVES IN PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTY. WE ESPECIALLY REMEMBER THE 228 C.C.C. MEMBERS WHO PERISHED SEPTEMBER 2, 1935 DURING A HURRICANE AT THREE CAMPS, UPPER KEYS, FLORIDA

DONATED BY
HENRY BILLITZ
AND NAJCCCA
1997



CCC Recruits at Work



"Bike Riders"

L to R: Ethel Ives Lewis, unknown, Betty Jane Lewis (Westburg), and Suzie Leaphart (Estes) in 1936.

the task of restoring this historic house as closely as possible to its original architecture, removing many partitions and opening up the interior spaces.

Linzer opened the Twin Oaks in October of 1994, naming the business after the two large oak trees in the front yard. She served tea, coffee and desserts from the beginning, but recalls that people began asking her to serve sandwiches and soup. She added other items over the years, doing the cooking herself and “it just grew and grew.”

Linzer said that her favorite events at Twin Oaks were wedding showers and baby showers. She enjoyed following the histories of many Sebring families: “Those babies grew up and had their showers here, all at my place.”

New Owner of Twin Oaks Learns History from Her Customers

In the spring of 2009, after 15 years, Diana Linzer sold the Twin Oaks Tea Room to Kelly Kilgo, who was looking for an interior design location, but not a restaurant. Kilgo states, “I began thinking that this could be something fun. I could buy this myself and have my decorating business right here, so I purchased it.”

Kilgo is a “hands-on” interior designer with practical building skills learned from her family members who are in the construction business, so she is up to the challenge of maintaining an 80-year-old house.

Before re-opening in March 2009, Kilgo made some gentle changes but the look is the same relaxing, homelike atmosphere. She has kept the original menu favorites plus a couple of new specials. Instead of doing the cooking herself, Kilgo has retained Clary Jacobs who worked many years at the Tea Room.

Kilgo said that she did not know much about the history of the house when she bought it, but the regular customers did. “People come in here and tell me they knew the families who used to live here. One even said: ‘My friend was born in this room.’”



Kelly Kilgo

Another man told me that he remembered playing in this house when he was a boy and said they were always building go-carts. So I have been hearing more about the history of Twin Oaks from the customers since I opened.”

Patrons

We are grateful for the generous support of these persons in our efforts to assist in the Sebring Centennial celebration and to publish the commemorative Centennial book:

Ruth Handley

Edgar & Norma Stokes

*Gary Lamperelli & His Trusted Companion, Sophie
H.N. Webster Manufacturing, Inc.*