

THE **FIFTY** YEARS OF
SEBRING

1912

1962

*History and
Official Program*

SEMI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

OCTOBER 8-13, 1962

Published by

Sebring Semi-Centennial Committee

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SEBRING, FLORIDA

DEDICATION



ALLEN C. ALTVATER

To Allen C. Altvater, this book is dedicated.

The formal celebration of the founding and first fifty years of Sebring is taking place largely because of the energy and dedication of this one man.

Altvater has devoted most of a year to planning, writing letters, telephoning, organizing. For fifty years he has collected a treasure chest of historical source materials—letters, minute books, old deeds, newspaper clippings and pictures. Without his files, compilation of this book would have been far more difficult, if not impossible.

A native of Indiana, Altvater has resided in Sebring since the town's earliest days. At first he engaged in construction business, but through the years he has followed several occupations.

At the height of the Depression he assumed duties of city manager and within a year wiped out a deficit in the city's finances and restored Sebring's credit. He was project superintendent for the Civilian Conservation Corps when a CCC camp was located at Highlands Hammock. Later he was director of Sebring Air Terminal. During World War II Altvater served with the Seabees in the Pacific Theatre.

Allen Altvater has been active in the work of the Elks Lodge, the Masons, the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, the Methodist Church, the VFW, and the State Forestry Board. Perhaps his best known activities around Sebring however have been the Chamber of Commerce and Sebring Firemen, Inc.

In 1925 he was appointed fire chief and began a complete re-organization of the Fire Department. Under his guidance the Sebring Firemen extended their activities to include city recreation programs, and construction of the Sebring athletic fields. He was instrumental in the launching of state-wide fire fighting education through the Florida Fire College (now a state supported institution with headquarters in Ocala).

The relationship of Allen C. Altvater to his beloved Sebring has been summed up best by the man who wrote, "So far as I have ever heard, Mr. A. C. Altvater has never turned down a job, which would lead to the betterment of Sebring. He has given more time on projects for Sebring's good than any one else you could name".

SEBRING, FLORIDA
Semi-Centennial Celebration
October 8-13, 1962

Official Program

EVERY DAY, October 8-13

9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.—Registration at Chamber of Commerce.

MONDAY, October 8

12:15 P.M.—Rotary Club Luncheon at Hotel Sebring.

TUESDAY, October 9

12:15 P.M.—Lions Club Luncheon at Hotel Sebring.

8:00 P.M.—Reception at Tourist Center for Community and Official
Guests.

WEDNESDAY, October 10

12:15 P.M.—Kiwanis Club Luncheon at Hotel Sebring.

3:00 P.M.—Regatta, South Shore Lake Jackson.

7:30 P.M.—Union Church Service.

THURSDAY, October 11

8:00 P.M.—Street Dance.

FRIDAY, October 12

3:00 P.M.—Parade.

4:30 - 7:30 P.M.—Entertainment at Fair Grounds.

5:00 - 7:00 P.M.—Fish Fry at Fair Grounds.

8:00 P.M.—Football Game at Firemen's Field.

SATURDAY, October 13

3:30 P.M.—Dedication of Historical Marker in Circle Park.

8:00 P.M.—Fireworks Display on Lake Jackson.

9:00 P.M.—Dance at Woman's Club Building.

FOREWARD

The fifty years of Sebring. So many are the people and events that have been a part of these fifty years, that to chronicle them looms a monumental task, not easily assigned or undertaken. Not one of the committee which has produced this book guessed at the size of the job. But we are pleased to offer it as our contribution to a city we love. We acknowledge there may be mistakes, and we may have wrongly interpreted some of the research. But we think the narrative contained here will give some insight into the character and personality of OUR town, and how it got to be like it is.

You have in your hands the result of many hours of labor. Many people have contributed generously of time and effort to make this book of Sebring's history possible. Some of these are long-time residents who have watched the history unroll through the years and have played their part in it. Others are relatively new-comers who have taken Sebring to their hearts.

Allen Altvater has, of course, given extensive effort to this phase of the anniversary celebration, as he has the rest of the preparation and program. His detailed records and phenomenal memory have added immeasurably to the production of this book.

To Alberta and Tom Jones go credit for the actual preparation of this book. Mrs. Jones researched and wrote almost all the narrative history of Sebring contained herein. She was assisted in part of the research and writing by Harve Olsen, Allen Altvater and Lance Eastman. Mr. Jones edited the book, created most of the historical ads, and did the complicated job of layout—making it all fit together. He was assisted in proof-reading by Ruth Handley. To each of these our sincere thanks are extended.

We have decided that no more than half the book would be advertising. We hopefully set a goal of 48 pages. The finished product is twice that size. The overwhelming response of advertisers has made this possible. More history is included and more pictures are used because over 100 firms believed in this project. Most of the ads were not "sold". People wanted to help tell the story of their town—and were pleased to do so in this way. The advertisers deserve our support.

Kiwanis Club undertook the sale of advertising for the book. W. Robert Lindsay was chairman of the project. To each member of this club who assisted with the sale, and to the several non-members who helped, we give our thanks.

One final word: you can probably think of a dozen people who would enjoy reading this book. We have purposely kept the price low enough that you can send many copies to friends. Address the back cover, stamp, and mail to those who would enjoy it.

Ray J. Graddy

Chairman

Anniversary Book Committee

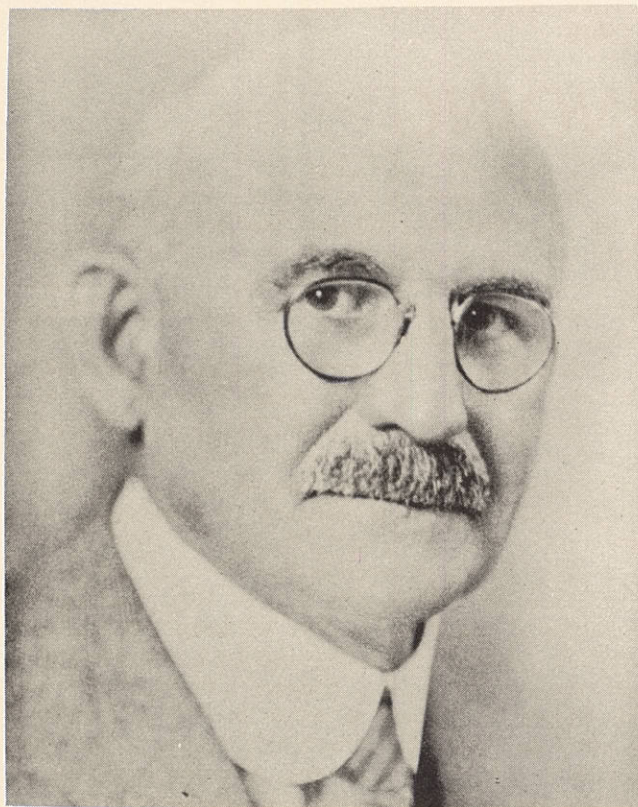


MEMBERS OF THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION COMMITTEE posed for this picture at one of their late summer meetings. Those here, seated, left to right, are Ruth Sebring, Dorthie S. Wooden, Allen C. Altvater (chairman), Clifford Price, P. G. Gearing. Standing, left to right, Lance Eastman, Tom W. Jones, Roy P. Alexander, Marjorie Hamlin, Helen Pugh, Margaret Pollard, Ray T. Graddy, F. M. Schumacher, Theon Sebring McDonald, Alberta Jones, Ray Gerling, W. J. Post, Walter O. McGrath, M. H. Parnell, Jim Musselwhite. Committee members not present when the picture was made include Don Pillinger, Ron Wilson, Ford Heacock, J. A. Butler, "Sunny" Weaver, Bob Lindsay, Earl Crutchfield, George E. Sebring, III.

GROUPS ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY

Registration, Publicity.....	Chamber of Commerce
Reception.....	Staff and Book Club
Regatta.....	Veterans of Foreign Wars
Union Church Service.....	Ministerial Association
Street Dance.....	Elks Lodge
Parade.....	Lions Club
Friday Entertainment.....	Firemen's Auxiliary
Friday Supper.....	Sebring Firemen
Fireworks.....	Anniversary Committee and Pyro Display Company
Dance.....	Sebring Woman's Club and Sebring Junior Woman's Club

THE FOUNDERS



GEORGE E. SEBRING



H. ORVAL SEBRING



MRS. GEORGE SEBRING



MRS. ORVAL SEBRING

THE FIFTY YEARS OF SEBRING

CHAPTER ONE

THE FOUNDING

The Dreams That Made Florida

Florida made its entrance into world history on the wings of a dream. Ponce de Leon came in search of a Fountain of Youth, and he was followed by other white men who pursued their own relentless visions. Gradually—and often bloodily—the Seminoles were pushed back. With their retreat went their dreams. The modest hopes the early settlers may have had for Florida were lost under the waves of new visionaries—those who conceived of cities rising upon the sand and homes where once there were only palmettos.

At the beginning of the 20th century, central Florida was still a wild and sparsely populated area. A few homesteaders had settled along the lakes, and some citrus had been planted even before the turn of the century. To most people, however, the southern interior was mainly a hunting and fishing ground. That is the way George E. Sebring first saw it. He came to fish in Lake Jackson and soon envisioned a town built around the lake.

The Dreamer Who Made Sebring

George Sebring and his brothers had already founded one town—Sebring, Ohio. There they had built a successful china manufacturing business. Failing health had forced George Sebring into retirement while still a fairly young man. He

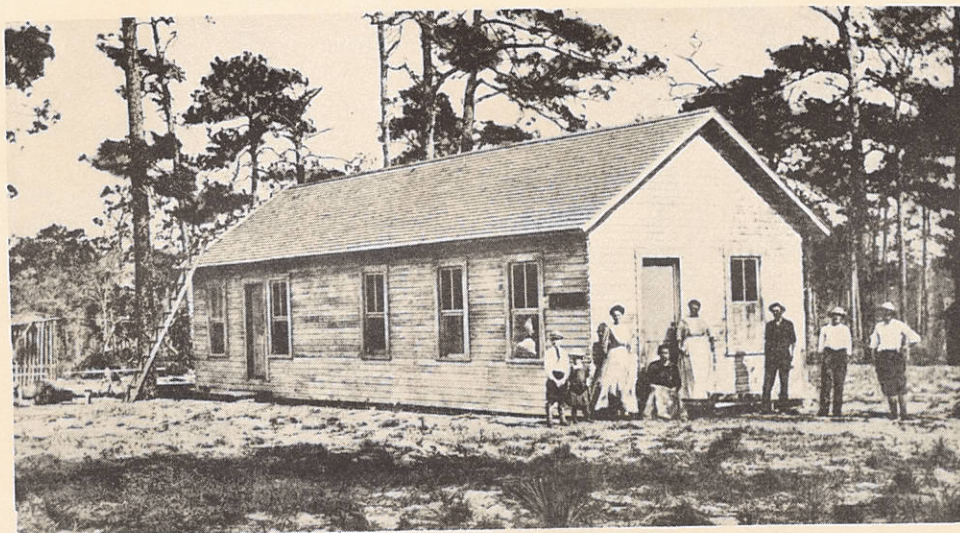
first came to live in Rockledge, Florida, and later built a home at Daytona Beach. In 1910, Mr. Sebring and three other men bought a tract of land near Auburndale. Mr. Sebring had visions of founding another town — one very different from Sebring, Ohio.

The tract at Auburndale was not large enough for the dreams of four men, and Mr. Sebring sold his share. In partnership with a man named Gardner he bought land near Lake Alfred—known in those days as Chub. Two different stories are told about the Chub venture, and perhaps they are both true.

The Sebring family says that as people in the Chub area began to realize they had buyers for their land, they began to boost prices very sharply. Rather than pay the inflated prices, Mr. Sebring sold out and moved. Friends say that he hoped to found a town, while his partner wished to concentrate on citrus groves. The partnership was dissolved and the men separated, so that each might pursue his own dream.

In 1911, Mr. Sebring became acquainted with A. G. Smith, a Wauchula resident, who took his new friend on a fishing trip—to Lake Jackson. The lake bordered land owned by Smith. Mr. Sebring saw in this land an ideal town site. Almost at once he bought nine to ten thousand acres from Smith. He telegraphed his son, Orval Sebring, to come, for the building of a town could begin.

FIRST THREE BUILDINGS in Sebring were identical to the Club House seen above.



BOWLING ALLEY and the Sebring Real Estate office were among the first buildings. Above are Ed L. Hainz, left, and Willis Kugler. Kugler made many of the early photographs of Sebring scenes.



The Dream Takes Shape

The father and son worked together throughout the years and are considered co-founders of the town which became Sebring, Florida.

The father, George Sebring, remained the dominant figure in the town throughout his life. His dreams for the community were always tempered with a hard-headed realism. The son, Orval Sebring, became the innovator—the dreamer who sought to do new things new ways.

A Polk County surveyor, A. C. Nydegger, has written of the commencement of town-building activities. Nydegger wrote: "My notes show that I made a preliminary map for the town of Sebring on October 28, 1911. He (Sebring) took me on the train to Wauchula, where we rented a car and hired a couple of men to help. We drove to Avon Park through the sand; stopped two or three days and then kept on driving and pushing the car down to Lake Jackson each day while we measured for the location of the Circle and main street to the lake.

"I picked out a small oak tree for the center of the circle. We then returned to Winter Haven so that I could map out the plans for the new



THE SEBRING TOWN-SITE was purchased by George E. Sebring from A. G. Smith of Wauchula (shown here). The first deeds were recorded on October 11, 1911.

town, but since I was too busy in Polk County, Mr. Sebring employed an engineer from Lakeland to do the job."

First Businesses Are Established

The first business to be established in Sebring was the Sebring Real Estate Company and the Sebring Development Company, known to most in those days simply as "the Company". Mr. Sebring and family lived in a hotel at Avon Park while the first buildings were erected in Sebring—three frame buildings built in the long, narrow

THE OLDEST BRICK

BUILDING IN SEBRING

IS NOW THE LOCATION OF

Fisher's RESTAURANT

"On the Circle in Downtown Sebring"

FISHER SAULS, Owner
EUGENE SAULS, Manager

Serving Sebring

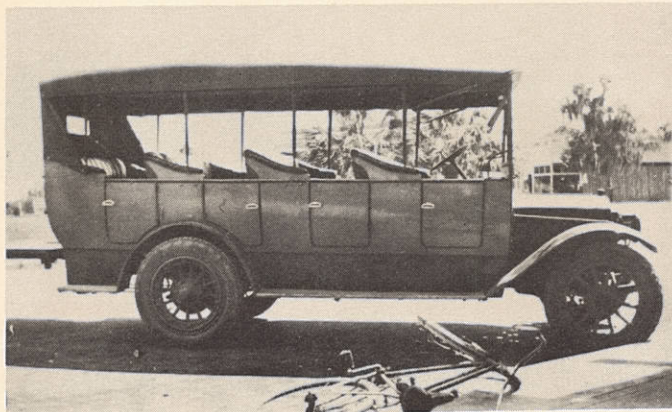
... with quality food
... for over 32 years

Open daily—6 A.M. 'til 9 P.M.
Sundays and Holidays—7 A.M. 'til 9 P.M.

Air Conditioned

Phone EV 5-8348

1913 — See Sebring in a Buick



1913—Buick bus making regular trips between Sebring and Wauchula.

1962—Buick Special—the happy medium size car!!!

1962 — See Sebring in a BUICK from . . .

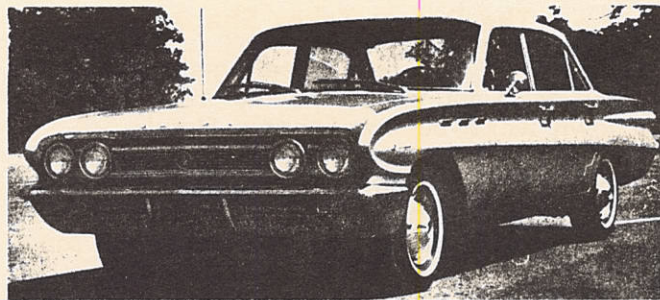
C & C

**Pontiac — Buick — GMC,
Inc.**

41 South Ridgewood

EV 5-0742

EV 5-0159



style usually called "shotgun". One of these buildings was the office for Sebring Real Estate Company and also living quarters for the Sebrings until their home was completed. (The old Sebring homeplace still stands on North Lakeview Drive—a large two-story frame dwelling which now houses Tomae's, widely known food specialists).

Shortly after "the Company" began operations Milt Baker's store on the Circle, McNeal's store on North Ridgewood, J. H. Dopp's store on North Commerce and J. B. Brown's Hardware store were in business. Ed L. Hainz, who worked for "the Company", also established a drug store on the corner of West Center and the Circle.



ONE OF THE OLDEST
living city officials is Dr. Ernest G. Skiff. He served on the city council. He was Sebring's first dentist.



Tropical Hotel

17 North Commerce

Clean, quiet, comfortable, convenient, recreation room, tropical garden and patio, reasonable rates.

Mrs. Vernon C. Eason
Owner - Manager

Now Attract the People

With construction and business underway in Sebring, the founders moved to publicize the new town. A real estate sales office was opened in St. Petersburg. Mr. Sebring would arrange to bring prospective buyers to Sebring by bus, provide them with a box lunch, and show them land sites. Some settlers recall having first seen Sebring on such a tour.

"Active retirement", a phrase to become popular in promoting some Florida communities a half-century later, may not have been used in so many words in the early sales talks about Sebring, but the concept was present.

Mr. Sebring pictured the new Sebring as a

"delightful, wholesome community" which would be populated with "contented and happy people seeking health, pleasure and happiness". Early brochures described Mr. Sebring's dreams for his town in terms not far removed from those used by the founders of the various "utopias" which sprang up from time to time in earlier history of the United States.

Pioneer Personalities

Towns are founded on dreams. Whether the town survives may depend less on the quality of the founders' visions than on the fortitude and ability of the early settlers. Florida, like every state, has had its share of towns that died. That Sebring has lived and continued to grow is a tribute not only to its founders but to key residents, particularly those here before the town reached its second birthday. We have included individual sketches of some of these earliest residents. These we have called **PIONEER PERSONALITIES**.

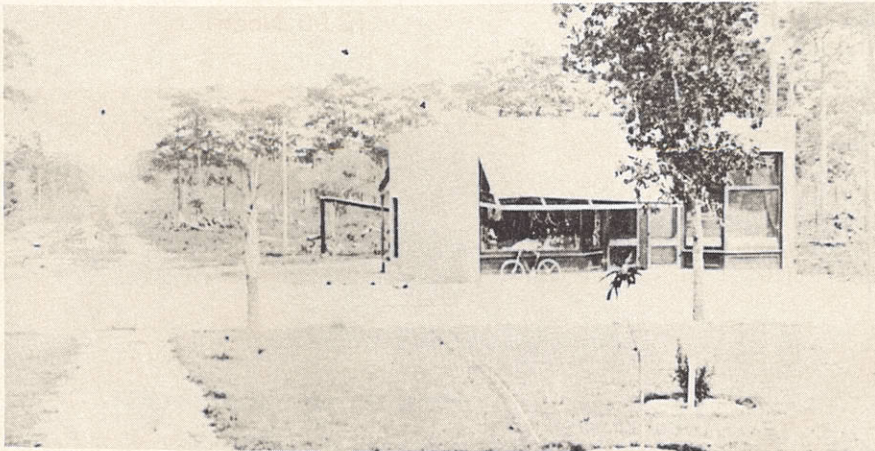


FIRST RELIGIOUS SERVICES were conducted under the trees. Two congregations were born from this experience.

Religious Interests Encouraged

To further his dream Mr. Sebring actively sought residents with strong religious interests and gave every possible encouragement to the establishment of churches. Religious services were commenced immediately upon Mr. Sebring's arrival at the town site. Even before a building was ready to house such rites, worship was conducted under the trees at the northern edge of the Circle. Two of the town's present churches—First Methodist and Salvation Army—were born in those outdoor services.

Back in his native Ohio Mr. Sebring had served as a Salvation Army bandmaster at the



WHITEHOUSE

I.
G.
A.

ON THE CIRCLE

EARLY GROCERY STORE: The Whitehouse Grocery Store was on the corner of East Center Street and The Circle. Built by Thomas Whitehouse, Sr., it was operated by him and his sons, George and Tommy, for years. Customers would often arrive by ox-drawn cart to do their shopping. Today **WHITEHOUSE I.G.A.** is in the same location as the original store. Owned by Tommy Whitehouse, it continues in the same tradition of quality and service.

Nan-Ces-O-Wee HOTEL IN THE HEART OF SEBRING

E. G. Burton, Jr.
Manager

East Liverpool Corps, so in his new town, Mr. Sebring sought the Army's help. Before the year 1911 was gone Col. William Evans had paid a visit to Sebring. Commandant Ira Munselle soon arrived to conduct the open air services, and in 1912 the first Methodist minister, the Rev. E. P. Michener, came.

For a time services were held in the old pier building. In 1913 everyone joined efforts to build First Methodist Church's first sanctuary—the famed "Church That Was Built in a Day".

The Salvation Army building, on North Ridgewood, was completed in the early years of the city and is the oldest church building in continuous use.

In his desire to promote religion, Mr. Sebring donated land to any church group wishing to launch a congregation in Sebring. Only the Salvation Army and St. Catherine's Church still occupy the sites given to them by Mr. Sebring.

The latter church was constructed in 1923. Prior to that time the Roman Catholics had worshipped in private homes and hotels—first in an apartment at the Arrowhead Hotel and later at the Kenilworth Lodge.

"The Church Built in a Day" stood at the corner now occupied by the Sebring Post Office. In

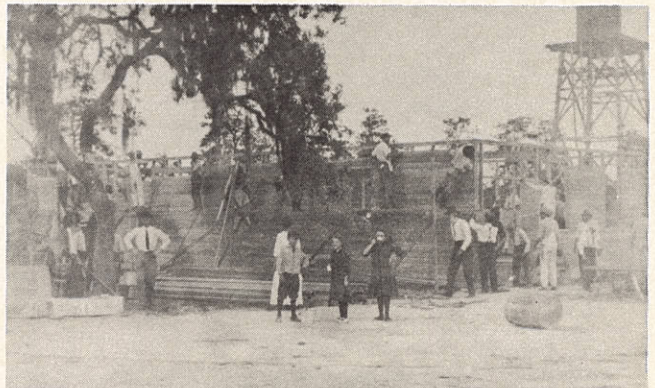


CHURCH BUILT IN A DAY became a famous example of the cooperative spirit in Sebring. Above is an exterior view of the building.

"CHURCH BUILT IN A DAY"



8:00 A.M.



12:00 Noon



8:00 P.M.

1916 the Methodists built a new church—this one at the present location, Pine and Center Streets. In time this building was too small, and a series of small structures began to spring up on the lot to house the Sunday School classes. These gave way in 1949 to a new educational building. The present Methodist sanctuary was consecrated in 1953.

A planing mill was the first home for the Presbyterian church, which began in May, 1913.

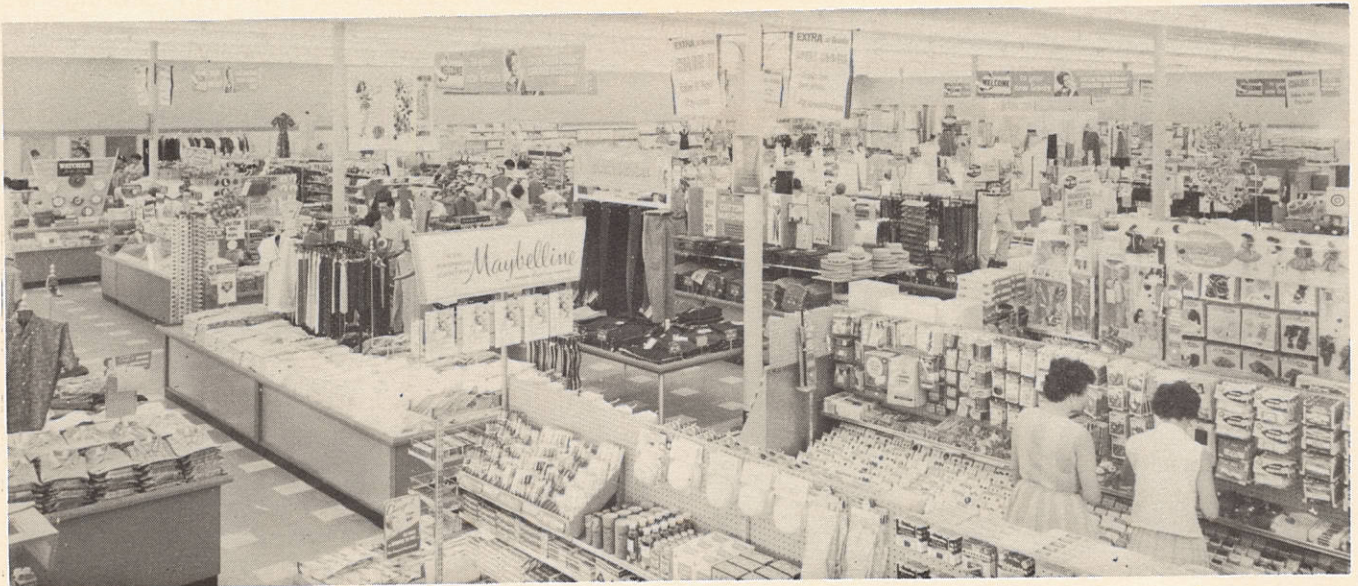
SEBRING'S FIRST STORE



M. W. BAKER opened Sebring's first store in 1912, on the site where the Elks Club is now located. Pictured at left is the first sale. Seen are, left to right: John Harrison, first postmaster; his mother, Mrs. Harrison; George E. Sebring; M. W. Baker; Mrs. Baker; Aaron Withers. The small boy in front is Miles Baker.

SEBRING'S NEWEST STORE

Serving You in Southgate Shopping Center



W. T. GRANT CO.



FIRST YEAR OF SCHOOL found these 36 children studying under Miss Sallie Chapman, teacher. This building was one of the original three built in Sebring and was located approximately where the Georgian Apartments now stand.

The following winter a small wooden chapel was erected on a Sebring-given site, at the corner of North Pine and Maple Avenue.

In 1922 Mr. Sebring exchanged that location for a lot on Oak Street, and the chapel was moved to the new site. At the height of the Boom (1925-26), the First Presbyterian Church was built

on Poinsettia Avenue. An educational building was added in 1954.

School and Newspaper Started

School began in Sebring almost as quickly as religious services did. In 1911 Sebring had too few children to qualify for an accredited school rating. Only eight boys and girls of school age lived in the new community. Mr. Sebring instituted a personal "survey" in the surrounding area and found three or four more children whom he offered to transport to Sebring if the parents would enroll them.

By August 1, 1912, 53 children were available for classes. A teacher was engaged at the salary of \$65 a month. First classes were held in one of the original "shotgun" structures, located at the site where the Georgian Apartments now stand.

The first "newspaper" to appear in Sebring so frankly slanted its material that it might be more correct to call the August 1, 1912, edition of the **Sebring News** an advertisement. H. O. Sebring, editor, proclaimed the paper's policy in the masthead: "Published every once in awhile by those on the ground in the interest of those of our friends in the North and those who ought to be interested".

Other staff members listed for the **News** were J. J. Lawrence, assistant editor; Ed L. Hainz, business manager, and W.J.S. Albright, circula-

Pioneer Personalities

E. W. Harshman

Engineer in first power plant, mayor and member of town council for several terms, co-founder of building supply business, farm supply and feed firm and grove management service.



tion manager. The **News** boasted a guaranteed circulation of 3,000. There was no charge for a subscription but Editor Sebring added, "A good live man will soon see that there is a splendid opportunity for a weekly paper here and then he will write you for a real hard cash subscription".

The first edition of the **News** contained eight pages—and every one of them stuffed with news and advertisements all pointing out the wonderful opportunities abounding in the new Sebring.

Train and Auto Access to Town

One event reported in that first newspaper was the laying of the railroad into Sebring. The Atlantic Coast Line Railway was laying track southward from Haines City when the Sebrings were mapping out the new town. On the afternoon of June 14, 1912, the track was completed into Sebring. The new town had a sure link to the rest of the state and, of even more importance, had easy access to the North. For a short time Sebring was the terminal point for the Atlantic Coast Line, but soon the track was extended to the south and east. Three trains per week ran through Sebring in the earliest days. The **News** reported that freight shipments were so heavy that trains were running late.

The importance of train service is apparent when consideration is given to such problems as the condition of the roads and the difficulties

EV 5-8242

EV 5-8940

Belcher's Taxi

100 Circle

Agents for Hertz Rent-A-Car

caused by variations in tire treads.

Until 1917 people who did succeed in getting their cars into Sebring from the North found them to be of little or no use in the sand ruts unless several passengers were along who were able and willing to push at regular intervals.

Two different tread widths compounded the problem. One width was designated as "northern" (54 inches) and the other "southern" (60 inches). Popular theory was that the 60-inch treads had been created to accommodate vehicles operating between rows of cotton. The fact is, the wide southern tread sometimes worked in the Florida sand, the narrow northern tread did not.

THE FIRST CITY PIER—1912



Building the pier comes to a temporary halt while all hands assist in off-loading a boat. Note the one building at the head of Center Street, and the two canvas covered homes to the left.

**FOR THE FINEST IN
BUILDING SUPPLIES**

Butler & Still, Inc.

Builders' Supplies

507 North Ridgewood

EVergreen 5-8247

JAKE BUTLER

MONROE STILL



FRONTIER HIGHWAY

NORTH RIDGEWOOD, a beaconing finger calling one from downtown Sebring out into the untamed reaches of frontier Florida in 1912.

1962 HIGHWAYS
beckon you to go first class
with



C. B. Jones, Jr.
MARKETEER

Sinclair Refining Company

Wholesale Distributor of Goodyear Tires

SPENCER JONES

Serving Sebring 36 Years

BRANDON JONES

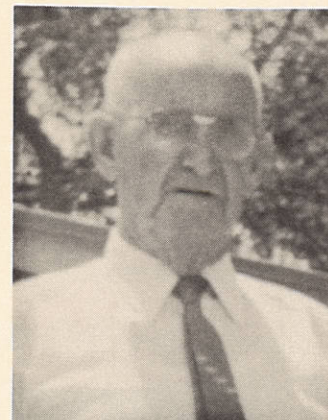
Few people ventured forth on the central Florida roads of a half-century ago. Members of the Sebring family relate that when they were new residents of the area they passed a house in a clearing near Avon Park and stopped to chat. George Sebring asked the man on the porch if many people passed that way. The man replied, "Oh, yes! About three weeks ago a party went through here, and now you'uns."

A sketch written by Rose Graham Vinten suggests the difficulty of auto travel. It describes her family's first trip to Sebring: "We left Haines City in a Hudson 640 and made Avon Park in eight hours. Avon Park natives offered sound advice not to try to make Sebring that day. Next day we left early and arrived at Sebring at noon with all five children pushing most of the way

in sand ruts on the hills. The final pushing was in front of the present Nan-Ces-O-Wee Hotel. There townsmen came to the rescue and pushed us to our home on Pine St."

Pioneer Personalities

Ed. L. Hainz



Early employee of the Sebring Real Estate Company, elected to the first town council in 1913, instrumental in obtaining first telephones in Sebring, operated several different types of businesses in the new town, at the time of his death in 1961 associated with First Federal Savings and Loan Company.



NEW ARRIVALS from the North (notice the coats) receive help from "old" residents of the month-old town.

City Government Established

Less than two years after the first map of Sebring had been laid out, town government was instituted. The first town council meeting was held at 9 A.M. on July 2, 1913. First item of business was to canvass the election which had been held to choose the town's first officials.

Top vote-getters were F. B. Barber, who was elected clerk, and Councilmen Ed L. Hainz, J. B. Zeall and J. C. Rice—each had received 14 votes. R. G. Haskins and A. E. Withers were elected with 13 votes.

J. H. Lopp received 13 votes for mayor while his opponent George Couch was polling two votes. For treasurer E. O. Douglas won out over Thomas Whitehouse 13-2.

Councilmen Zeall and Rice were elected for terms which were to expire within six months—on February 1, 1914. Councilmen Hainz, Haskins, and Withers were to serve until February, 1915.

Mayor Lopp, Councilmen Rice and Hainz were appointed to draw up a Code of Ordinance, and the council then adjourned to meet again on call by Chairman Haskins.

The second set of minutes in the town council records are dated "August 8, 1914", but it is apparent that this is an error, and the brief account is really of a meeting held in 1913. Not all errors in council minutes were undetected; indeed, in view of the rather extensive editing of them which has been done, it is surprising that this was left standing.

Official Minutes Are Edited

The editing, in itself, is interesting, for the unknown editor had a rather prim approach to the minutes. Essential meanings of council actions have not been changed, but words and phrases have been added. The editor obviously thought the clerk should have made more liberal use of the phrase, "It was moved, seconded, and passed". The editing is readily observable for the minutes were kept in ink, in the often awkward script of the various clerks. The editor made corrections and "clarifications" in pencil, in firm round letters.

One of the actions at the second meeting of the council was the appointment of a town marshal. A. E. Withers was named to that position.

At the third meeting the Ordinance Committee (Lopp, Rice, and Hainz) was "relieved of its



THEN

AND

NOW

< J. H. LOPP
Sebring's First Mayor

J. D. Hunt >
Sebring's Present Mayor



Complete Home Furnishings

PORTER FURNITURE CO.

TV Sales and Service

Alternate 27 North

HOOVER

NORGE

PHILCO

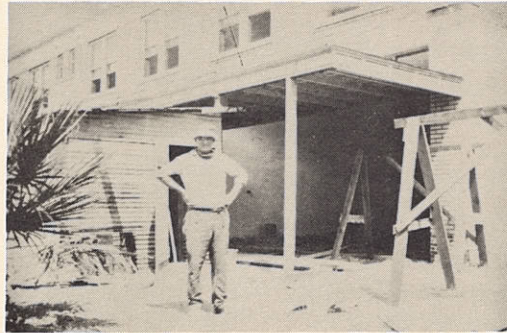
BOB'S MEN'S WEAR

14 North Ridgewood

**BOB BUTTS
WELCOMES YOU**



A TRIBUTE



IN RECOGNITION of the lasting influence and contributions to Sebring, our association proudly dedicates the following memorial to our deceased director:

Ed L. Hainz

(Serving Sebring From 1912-1961)

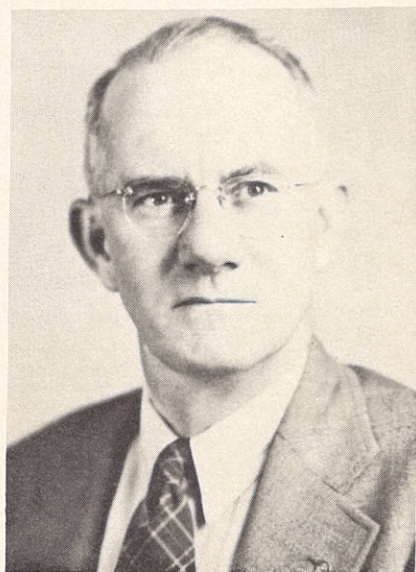
BY PROFESSION:

BANKER, BUILDER,
REALTOR, DRUGGIST,
JEWELER, RETAIL
MERCHANT, SAV-
INGS and LOAN
DIRECTOR.

BY DEVOTION:

BELOVED HUSBAND
OF EFFIE C. HAINZ,
TRUE FRIEND and
COUNSELOR TO ALL,
CIVIC LEADER,
FAITHFUL CHURCH
WORKER.

***First Federal Savings
and Loan Association of Sebring***



THEN AND NOW

< R. G. HASKINS
First Council President

DR. J. D. HOLLIMAN
Present Council President >



responsibility". No reason was given for this action, but it certainly was not because the committee had completed its work for at the October 7 (1913) meeting Councilmen Zeall and Withers were appointed "to select and present a preamble and code of ordinances for consideration of the Council at its next meeting same to be adopted at the next regular meeting on the first Tuesday night in November".

Mayor Lopp and Councilman Rice, two of the

original ordinance committee, resigned at the October 7 meeting. Only Councilman Hainz of the original committee stayed with his council post, and two weeks later he was elected council chairman.

Councilman Haskins was elected mayor to succeed Lopp. The council vacancies (left by Haskins and Rice) were filled by council's appointing Orval Sebring and John Newcomb (an unsuccessful candidate in the first council race).

W. W. HARSHMAN,
President

F. M. SCHUMACHER,
Secretary-Treasurer

WITHERS & HARSHMAN, INC.

CHAS. R. SCHUMACHER
Horticulturalist

ESTABLISHED
1913

O. L. TAYLOR, SR.
Superintendent

Growers Agents

Growers

Grove Caretakers

Founded in 1913 by A. E. Withers and E. W. Harshman, we have provided a complete grove service for local and absent growers for over 49 years.

Write or phone when in need of our services.

"Our Customers — Our References"



First Grapefruit Tree planted in
Sebring in 1911



NORTH COMMERCE STREET in 1913, with its new sidewalks attracted many people to the railway depot (where the power plant is today) to see the arrival of the train twice a week.

Inevitable Issues: Streets and Taxes

Councilman Newcomb, Zeall, and Withers were named to the street committee, and thereafter street improvement occupied a great deal of the council's attention.

On October 14, 1913, George Sebring presented to the council a petition from "three-fourths of the city's property holders". This petition requested that sidewalks be laid on "either side of Lakeview Drive beginning at the north side of said town of Sebring". The requested walks were to extend southward "until said street intersects Ridgewood Drive". The same petition asked the council to arrange to clay Lakeview Drive and to lay sidewalks on both sides of Ridgewood Drive "beginning at the south and running northward to city limits and also clay said street".

Enthusiasm for these projects was perhaps not so high as first related, for on October 16 the council noted that instead of three-fourths of the property holders, the petitions were from "two-thirds of the property holders along certain streets".

As the year was drawing to a close the council began to make arrangements for the collection of taxes. City Clerk F. B. Barber was named tax assessor.

At a later meeting the council set up a salary of two dollars per day for the Clerk when he was serving as tax assessor. "While acting in capacity of Collector", he was to receive "such fees of percentage allowed the collector".

Pioneer Sebring residents had, as in all ages, a certain resistance to taxes and little reticence on the subject. On December 10, 1913, the council minutes note, "Tax Collector reported that those

who were to pay License Tax as Insurance Agents on Meat Market and Express Company all complained that the amounts were excessive, except the Meet (!) Market man who claimed that the present ordinance did not give sufficient protection to warrant any License at all".

ENCLOSURES



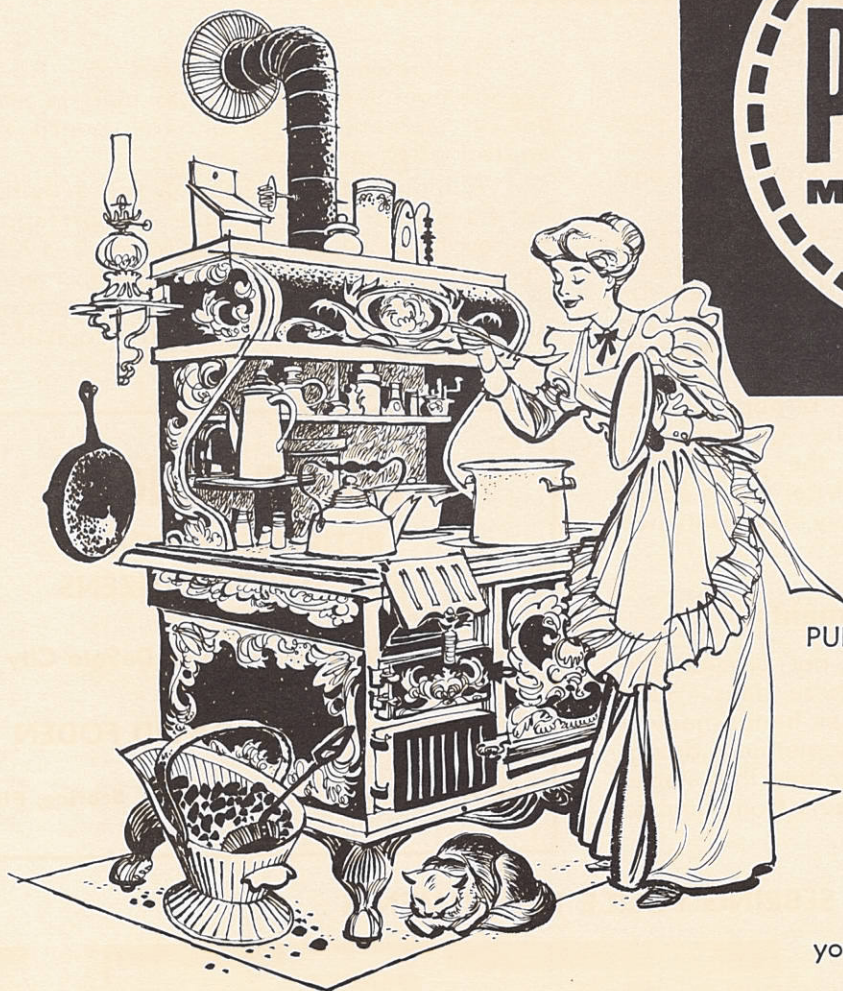
1912
STYLE

For 1962 STYLES
of a Different Nature:

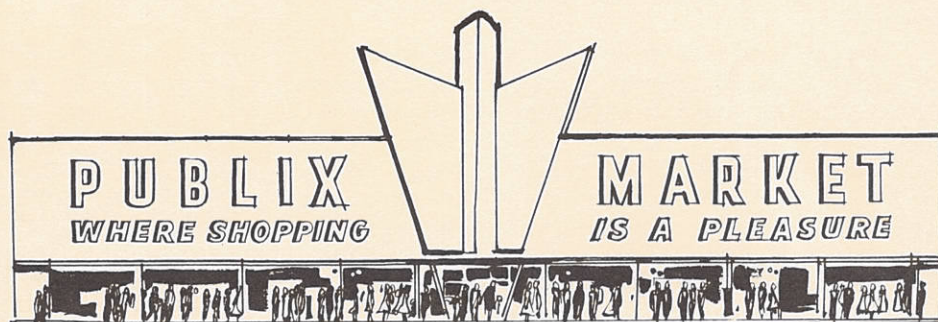
- Screened Enclosures
- Awnings and Carports
- Caban-a-rooms
- Custom-Built Trailers
- Trailer Repairs

 **Swan Industries**

17 HIGHLAND AVENUE
SEBRING, FLORIDA
PHONE: EV 5-0773



PUBLIX MARKETS, where shopping
is a pleasure . . . takes
great pride in joining
in the "Semi-Centennial"
of Sebring! At Publix
you will find many modern con-
veniences to help make your
meal planning and shopping
a pleasure!



CHAPTER TWO

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Part I—Innocents at Home

Heaven on Earth

American historians have dubbed the pre-World War I period "The Innocent Years". This description certainly fit Sebring in the teens and early twenties.

If life was difficult in those days, few realized it. Electricity had begun to take over some tasks, and in Sebring—populated almost completely by transplanted "Yankees" newly escaped from the rigors of northern climate—life seemed to be better than ever.

One vacationing Methodist bishop was reported to be so enchanted by the "glorious sunsets and balmy air laden with the perfume of orange blossoms" that he said, "Wife, this is about as near heaven as we can possibly have until we are called to our heavenly home".

Frequent Entertainments

Balmy air and sunsets did not provide the only sources of enjoyment in those days. One brochure proclaimed, "Time never hangs heavily in Sebring. There is always something doing. We have a live Good Time Committee that stages special entertainments in the streets from time to time".

The town council granted the Epworth League's request for funds to help in staging a July 4 celebration in 1915. The council made an appropriation of \$25.

A hint that the "Good Time" activities may not have met with complete support appears in the town council minutes for March 2, 1920. The clerk noted that complaints had been made about the music committee's blocking the streets on Wednesday and Saturday nights. The council took no action.

LINGER LONGER

RETIREMENT HOME FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

State Road 17 South in DeSoto City

MR. and MRS. DAVID FODEN

Rt. 2, Box 196

Sebring, Florida

SEBRING POLICE DEPARTMENTS

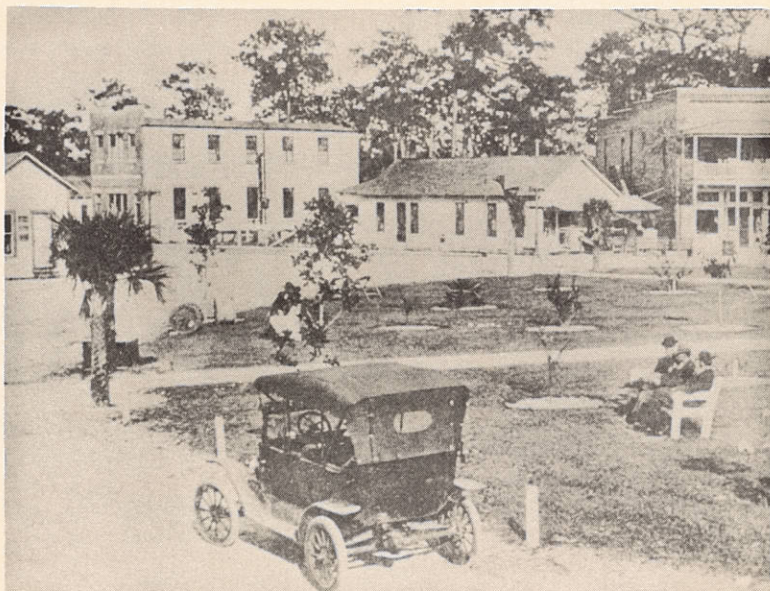


FIRST POLICEMAN
"Ike" Dottery



PRESENT POLICE FORCE—First row, l-r: Police Chief Lonnie Curl, Joy Swanson, Sgt. Pat Robbins, Bill Robbins and Bill Ray (radio dispatchers). Back row: Detective W. E. Fowler, Patrolmen Bill Pardee, Jeff Maddox, Marvin Spires, Gerald King, Bill Engelbrecht and Charles Watson.

On the Circle — In a Ford



ON THE CIRCLE IN A FORD. This picture taken in 1914 shows several of the buildings which are still standing. And still a favorite of Sebring residents is that particular make of car: It's a FORD!

FORDS are still the way to travel in Sebring. For the new FORD in your future, see . . .

JIM BLACKMAN FORD

300 North Ridgewood

EV 5-0144

At one of the street "concerts" in 1923 an incident occurred which seriously affected the city administration. A few young people of high school age began to dance to the music. The mayor ordered them to stop and attempted to arrest several of the youth. The next day, when charges were not pressed, the mayor resigned and the council had to appoint a successor.

During these relatively carefree years, every Thursday afternoon was a holiday. During the summer this weekly break in the routine was dedicated to baseball. During the winter—"in the season"—different programs were planned for each week.

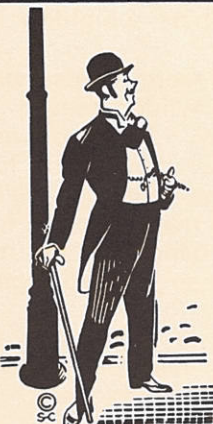
Races Are the Rage

A fondness for races early became apparent and perhaps was a forecast of the day when Sebring would become world famous for its sports car races. Of course none of those early races was really very speedy, and some of the most widely remembered events were those which involved no speed at all.

For example, old-timers recall a boat race on Lake Jackson. An inboard powered canoe, owned by a member of the Sebring family, was loaned out for the race. The hapless borrower was still at the starting line coaxing a stubborn engine when the other entries crossed the finish line.

Almost a score of boats entered the race. Design, size, power and speed varied so greatly that it was impossible to run the race by classes. A system of handicaps was worked out. The slowest boat started first; then, according to the handicap, the faster boats took off. George Sebring provided the prizes—a life preserver and an anchor.

As an ex-bandmaster George Sebring was very much interested in music, and the first band was founded almost simultaneously with the beginning of the town of Sebring. By 1922, this project had grown to the point where city council hired a professional band director. Professor Standiford Johnston was signed to a year's contract at \$150 per month. He was to conduct the Sebring Military Band and teach music in the schools.



CASON'S

FATHER & SONS

have been in business in
Sebring since 1912

Now serving you on the
Circle

Negro History

A popular Friday night program was the debates of the Phyllis Wheatley Literary Society. The Society began as a serious study group. The debates offered a means of sharpening interest in education, and making money. Two rows of pews at the African Methodist Church were reserved for the white people who attended the debates. However, the programs became immensely popular, and the white seating area was gradually increased until almost no space was left for Society members and other Negroes who might wish to attend. As the debates became more popular, the emphasis on education waned and in their final days the debates were frankly "shows".

In the summer of 1914 the town council instructed the city attorney to investigate "intimidations of colored people". About three years later the Negro quarters were relocated—moving from the original site north of the present power plant to the current location.



A TRUE FISH STORY could be told about the ones that didn't get away. Lake Jackson has always been popular with fishermen.

MODERN HAIR STYLING

Is a Professional Art

With 30 years of practice we take personal pride in offering you the best in barber service.

OSCAR QUIGGLE'S BARBER SHOP

10 South Ridgewood

Remember These 1926 Headlines?

**100,000 Are Headed For Sebring
Over \$2,000,000 Realty Sold This Week
New \$200,000 Theatre For Sebring**

**REMEMBER US
FOR READY-MIX CONCRETE**

**JAHNA
Concrete, Inc.**

HELPING THE CITY GROW

Some of the major jobs for which we furnished concrete products last year: New Lutheran Church, Publix, Thriftway, Tropical State Bank.

"Serving the Ridge with Ready-Mix"

The Sporting Instinct

The shores of Lake Jackson had attracted many wild animals, and for several years after the founding of Sebring, many kinds of game were plentiful. Deer and turkey were so easily found that no one traveled without his gun. A trip to the county seat at Arcadia was almost certain to net some fresh wild meat.

Fishing was as popular half a century ago as now, and veteran fishermen vow that the results were much better. One fisherman reported that he caught two bass in a single day—one weighing 20 pounds and the other 16 pounds. Another old resident wrote, "Parties fishing in Istokpoga Lake and Istokpoga Creek were in the habit of throwing back any bass weighing less than four or five pounds".

Popular sports of the day were tennis, horse-shoes and baseball. In the winter season the tennis court was always busy. It served as a social and recreational center for players and tourist-spectators and was a fashion center as well.

Proper tennis attire for a man included long white trousers and a "sweat band" for his forehead. At the sidelines the player donned a gayly striped blazer.

Proper costume for women was quite elaborate by modern standards. Even players wore ankle-length white skirts and middie blouses. The fair-skinned might add elbow length gloves and

16 East Center

EV 5-0646

Polly Prim Beauty Shop

GERALDA WHITEHOUSE ESTES

. . . in Sebring since 1913

. . . in business 30 years

Baseball was enormously popular. No organized leagues operated in the area during these years, and transportation was a great problem. Inter-city matches were arranged, however, and when one took place in Sebring all business came to a halt. The entire population went to the game.

One such contest was an early Haines City-Sebring game. The visitors—team and spectators—arrived on a special train. Sebring was leading when a general "free-for-all" broke out. Whether it began on the field or in the stands no one now remembers. The game was never completed, but



SEBRING ATHLETIC CLUB represented the newly founded town as early as 1914.

broad-brimmed hats. Of course lady spectators used parasols.

A downtown vacant lot was the gathering place for the "horseshoe pitching fraternity". A neighboring businessman, who kept the shoes in his store, was considered the most practiced and best player in town.

the visitors left behind some \$2,000 in undisputed bets.

An early Sebring team was known as the "Sebring Sweets". This was also the brand name for all citrus shipped from Sebring at that time.

HOME OWNED

SAME LOCATION 15 YEARS

Smith's Sheet Metal & Roofing Co.

(D. W. Smith)

Heating and Air Conditioning by Chrysler Air Temp

Roofing All Types

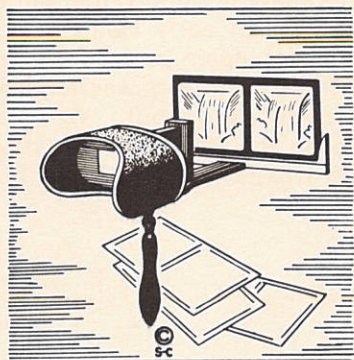
Awnings — Car Ports

Wall Furnaces and Space Heaters by Duo-Therm

146 Lemon Street

Phone EVERgreen 5-7346

Remember When?



... the most
modern of liv-
ing rooms con-
tained a stere-
opticon?

TODAY . . . the most modern of
living rooms contains a **COLOR TELE-**
VISION from . . .

BOB & JACK'S

TV Sales and Service

South Ridgewood

Cleanliness is Next . . .

Like any city, Sebring had to arrange for routine clean-up. In a special meeting on April 28, 1914, a Sanitary Committee was appointed, and a Mr. Dryman "engaged to empty rubbish cans twice a week". Mr. Dryman was instructed to "punch holes in the bottom of the cans to let the water out". Garbage cans were to be emptied on every Saturday afternoon. For his services Mr. Dryman was paid a salary of 50 cents per week.

A Street Clean-Up Day was proclaimed in October, 1914. Although this observance has not been held annually, it has been revived from time to time.

To Fence or Not to Fence

Conflict between herdsmen and farmers is so ancient it can be traced to the first book of the Bible. Sebring in its earliest years fought a battle in this war.

At the beginning of the century Florida still operated under open range law. Travelers bore the responsibility for avoiding animals wandering on highways, and homeowners who did not wish to receive four-footed guests had to fence out the animals.

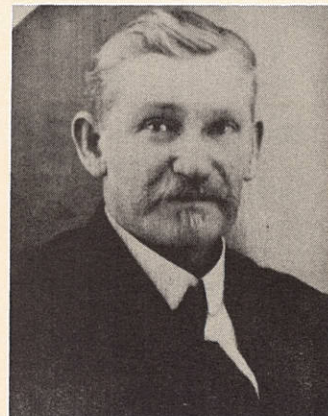
Almost at once, Sebring became a center of agitation for a fence law. Citrus growers complained about putting up fences. City-dwellers

clamored for measures which would keep animals out of flowerbeds and city streets.

From the beginning of its history, Sebring town council passed ordinances aimed at restraining the roving of chickens, hogs, and cattle.

Occasionally the town clerk would record these discussions and ordinances in great detail. For example a March, 1915, meeting resulted in a plan to impound stray chickens.

Pioneer Personalities



Dr. R. J. McMurray

Was the first physician in Sebring, established practice in the new town in 1913, a native of Indiana, educated in Ohio, had practiced medicine in Illinois.

PARAGRAPH FROM 1920 SEBRING BROCHURE:

Read what doctors say regarding the cures and benefits derived from temperate living and drinking Sebring's famous water. We can furnish a countless list of testimonials from doctors and people who have been cured of, or helped in, the following diseases: kidney trouble, bladder trouble, rheumatism, fevers, all kinds of nervous trouble, gravel, liver trouble, Bright's disease, diabetes, neuritis, auto-intoxication, gout, colitis, eczema, stomach trouble, general debility, laryngitis, asthma, neurasthenia, high blood pressure and the exhaustion so common among overworked business men.

**FOR TODAY'S
HEALTH NEEDS, IT'S**

City Drug Store, Inc.

The *Jenall* Store

Phone EV 5-0341

**PRESCRIPTION SPECIALISTS
ON THE CIRCLE**

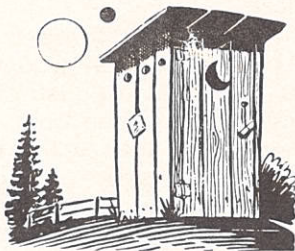
The town marshal was instructed to "take up" stray chickens (a service for which he could charge 25 cents), then notify the owners (and for that service charge 10 cents). Board for the chickens would be charged at the rate of 10 cents per day per head. Provision was made to sell impounded chickens and give the owners 50 percent of the proceeds. Since anyone who permitted chickens to roam could be fined \$10, it is doubtful that many owners claimed either the impounded fowls or the proceeds from their sale.

On November 8, 1918, the council met in special session to consider the offer by a cattle company to fence the town and place gates at all roads.

Councilmen told the delegation that they were "ready and willing to cooperate with cattlemen in keeping cattle out of the territory and if cattlemen . . . will place gates at all roads traveling into Sebring, then the town of Sebring will offer to pay for one-half the cost of keeping said gates closed, but the town of Sebring cannot resume (!) any responsibility of keeping the gates closed, and if cattle get into . . . town the Marshal will impound said cattle."

Some citizens felt the town fence would be a good compromise—cattle would be out of town and ranchers would be spared the expense of individual fences. Many townspeople did not agree with this point of view and continued to work for a fence law.

Remember This?



Remember Us . . .

. . . For Quality Plumbing
and Plumbing Fixtures

HIGHLANDS PLUMBING CO.

122 Lemon Ave.

EV 5-8548

ERNEST EURES, Owner

"Born and Reared in Highlands County"



ROBBINS SINCLAIR SERVICE

Fishing Supplies

Goodyear Tires and Batteries

EV 5-8549

South Ridgewood Drive

Fire Fighting Problems

Fire fighting is assumed to be a civic responsibility, but in the first months of Sebring's history the town council spent more time fighting **about** the fire hose than fighting **with** it.

The town's first fire protection materials—two hand-drawn reels and 800 feet of two and a half inch hose—had been purchased by George Sebring prior to the organization of a city government.

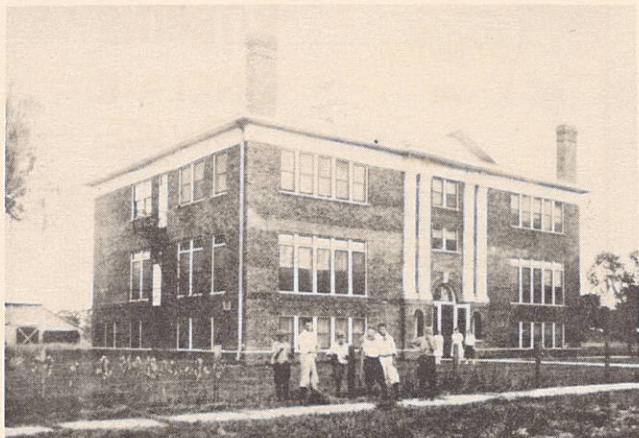
When a town council was elected, the town assumed responsibility for the fire-fighting equipment—and a debt of \$1,100 on the hose. For the first six months the council had almost no income and could not pay for the hose. Later it did not seem inclined to make any payments.

In August, 1915, the hose company brought suit to collect. The council ordered the city attorney to advise Eureka Fire Hose Company that "there are no minutes in the City's Book giving authority to purchase said apparatus". The council also maintained that the hose was defective, and as if to underscore this contention, soon arranged to buy 1,000 feet of new hose.

The squabble with Eureka Fire Hose Company dragged on, and the final payment was made in April, 1918. The council had paid \$1,000 of the original \$1,100 debt.



FIRST FIRE-FIGHTING EQUIPMENT was ordered for the town by George E. Sebring before formal town government was instituted.



Sebring High School's first unit was built in 1916

IN DOWNTOWN SEBRING
Now We're Bigger and Better
FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE

LANDMARKS



Pioneer Personalities

M. W. "Milt" Baker

Drove the first stake for the survey party that laid out the town of Sebring, operated first general store in the new town, later operated a theatre, an automobile agency, a concrete and brick manufacturing plant, served on City Council, a civic leader so long as health permitted.



The Town Goes to Blazes

Aaron Withers was the first fire chief, and in event of a fire everyone in town responded to fight the blaze.

The first major fire occurred in 1914 when Cason's Hotel burned to the ground. The two story structure, which stood just off the Circle on South Commerce, had been built of heart pine lumber that burned so quickly the building was doomed from the first spark.

In 1915 McNeal's store, one block north of the Circle on Ridgewood, burned. Even though the store was a frame building, some thought it

WE ARE HERE NOW TO SERVE YOU

The Highlands Office Supply

Quality Lines for the Modern Office

22 South Commerce

EV 5-7748

could have been saved by a trained fire-fighting crew.

In the fall of 1918 the local Boy Scouts, under the leadership of the Rev. D. E. Bennett, began holding fire drills. They used the town's fire hose and cart in their training.

Formal drills for the adult fire-fighters did not begin until two years later. W. B. Zackary was appointed fire chief on May 14, 1920 and undertook a more formal organization of the volunteer firemen. To keep interest high, he instituted practice runs.

Practice Runs Generate Excitement

The firemen were divided into three companies. Chief Zackary encouraged rivalry by announcing the time of each team in getting its cart to the scene of the "practice fire", laying the line, and getting water.

Allen Altvater, in his history of the Sebring Firemen has written, "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 of the men, it was never very hard to predict the date and hour of each run.

"At that period 'Old Man Posey', who owned a horse and wagon, was hired by merchants to haul away their waste boxes and packing materials. Posey was happy to have official permission to pile waste at points close in town.

Sebring Tile & Terrazzo, Inc.

Pomegranate and Eucalyptus Streets

INSTALLATION Terrazzo Floors, Ceramic Tile, Quarry Tile, Armstrong Floor Covering and all types vinyl flooring, Fine Mirrors, Stanley Windows and Sliding Glass Doors, Tub Enclosures and Shower Doors, Monarch, Downs and Coronet Carpets.

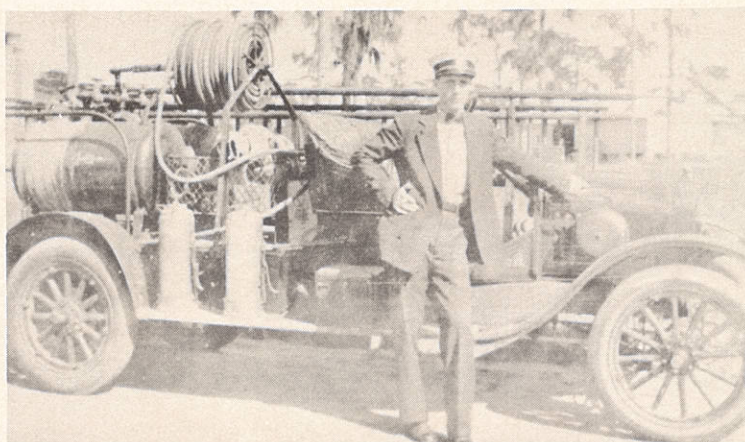
Telephone EV 5-7046

There were two such places—one where the First Baptist Church now stands and the other about the present site of the Ingle home on South Lakeview Drive.

"As the piles grew higher, the firemen knew time of practice was getting close. A Tuesday night watch was set in the Circle near the Chief's home. Around eight o'clock Chief Zackary would come down the stairs of his home carrying a one gallon kerosene can. 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' just out of sight with the engine running and all set to

In Case of Emergency



1920—CALL LIGHTHISER

SEBRING FIRE DEPARTMENT'S first motorized equipment was acquired in 1920. One of the early engineers, Joe Lighthiser, poses here with the truck.

1962

CALL

WARREN Funeral Home

AMBULANCE SERVICE

200 S. Commerce St.

EVergreen 5-0101

24 Hours

Oxygen Equipped

Radio Dispatched

Pioneer Personalities

George E. Sebring, Jr.



Son of George E. Sebring, was a realtor, hotel manager, owner of abstract service, member of city council, member of county commission, member Elks Lodge, charter member of Rotary Club, promoter of aviation and golf, member of the board of Highlands Hammock, Inc.

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!

"Two-wheeled carts careened wildly behind the trucks on the unpaved sandy streets and often turned over when a corner was taken too fast. 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 this might have been caused by the opposing team since such things happened as a cart being tied to the frame of the firehouse or wheels being 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."

YOUNG IN YEARS
OLD IN EXPERIENCE

LARGEST

And Most Complete Marina
in Highlands County

MARINE P-X

Two Miles South of Sebring on U.S. 27

MARTIN BARLOW, Owner

EV 5-7144

SEBRING HERO



LESLIE E. COLLIER was the first Highlands County man killed in World War I. He died in France on August 8, 1918, a few days shy of his 19th birthday. Sebring's American Legion Post was named for him.

Pioneer Personalities

W. B. Zackary



City clerk, town marshal, DeSoto County deputy sheriff, fire chief, merchant.

Representing Sebring with a Quality Product

During the summer of 1942 the Florida Citrus Exchange decided to close its cooperative fresh fruit packing house in Sebring, as it was not considered economically feasible to continue its operation. Payne M. Sebring, youngest son of George E. Sebring, Sr., feeling that the closing of the plant would work hardship on the employees (some who had worked for the association since its opening in 1918), organized the Sebring Packing Company, Inc., for the purpose of purchasing the assets of the cooperative and to continue its operation as an outlet for Highlands County citrus.

Aggressive merchandising and close attention to Grade and Pack over the years has resulted in Sebring packed fruit being accepted throughout the northern market as a quality product.

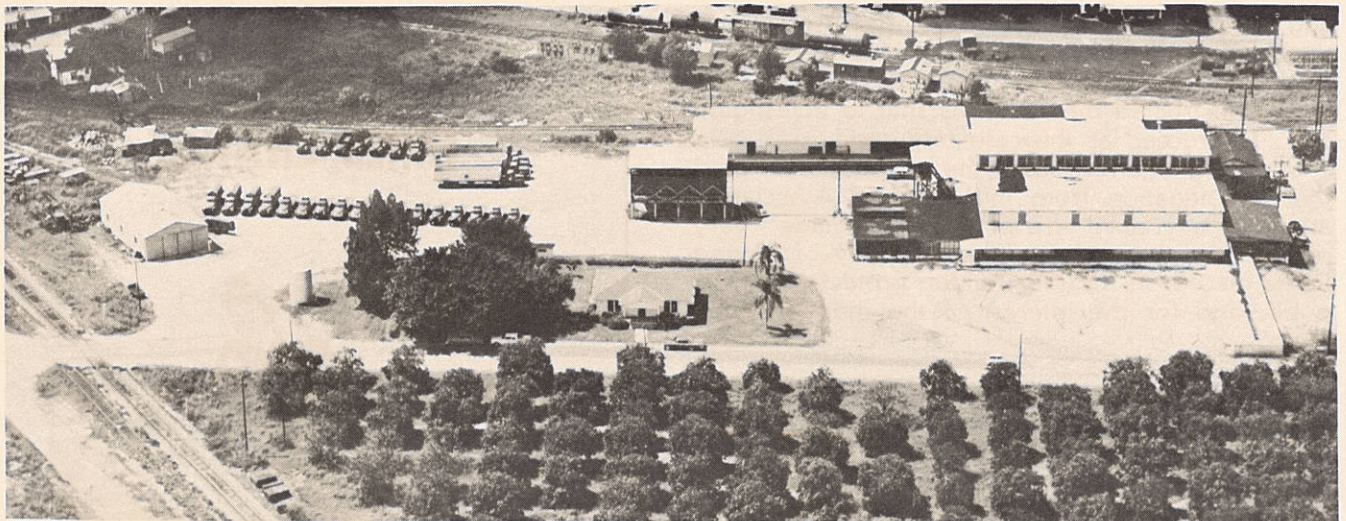
FAIR PRICE

SEBRING BRAND

CAREFUL PICKING

STAR BRAND

PROMPT PAYMENT



W. W. HARSHMAN, President

F. M. SCHUMACHER, Secretary-Treasurer

Sebring Packing Company, Inc.

PEAR STREET

PHONE US WHEN YOU HAVE FRUIT FOR SALE

EV 5-0345

EV 5-8149

ORGANIZED 1927

Sebring Business and Professional Women's Club

**Former and Visiting Members
Invited to Attend Our Meetings**

Second Monday Each Month

First Federal Lounge

Woe-men

During the years when the town of Sebring was beginning to take shape, the suffrage movement began to give a new direction to American life.

From the beginning, women in Sebring were active in civic affairs. As early as 1914, minutes indicate delegations from "the Ladies of Sebring" attended town council meetings to bring special requests.

The town council minutes for November 10, 1914, state, "A petition from the Ladies of Sebring was read drawing attention to the drunkenness and cursing on the streets asking if something could not be done to protect the ladies of our town from being insulted on the streets". The council instructed the town marshal to investigate and "to proceed as the case required".

A few months later the town clerk noted that a delegation from the Ladies Association attended a council meeting and made "very pointed" remarks about "the necessity of having lights placed on the pier for the protection of the public and for the interest of the morals of the town".

Sebring Woman's Club

High water mark in council attendance was reached in the spring and summer of 1920. The Woman's Club—then one year old—sent delegations to virtually every town council meeting. One time the delegation came to demand better ice service. Several times the clerk merely noted that a Woman's Club delegation was present, but did not record any special requests.

Two of the early projects of Sebring Woman's Club are still being sponsored by that group. Most of the money raised in the club's first years went into the town library. Although the library has broadened the base of its support, it still derives vital assistance from the Woman's Club. The annual Halloween Carnival and parade is the other project which continues into the present.

The Sebring Woman's Club, oldest of the non-church women's groups, has faced two major

building campaigns in its 43-year history. The first campaign was to pay the debt on the old Oak Street club building (purchased from First Presbyterian Church), and the second (still in progress) is to pay for a new Woman's Club Building on West Lakeview Drive. The latter building was dedicated in 1961.

Business and Professional Women

The local chapter of Business and Professional Women was launched in 1927. One of its popular early activities was the sponsoring of the Sebring White Wings—a women's baseball team which played other women's teams in this area. Admission charged at these games launched the educational fund which the BPWC still maintains to assist deserving girls in obtaining a business education.

Light-Hearted Living

The first decade of Sebring's life as a town encompassed World War I, the Spanish influenza epidemic, and town council battles on a dozen fronts. Yet, throughout it all, the temperament of the town remained gay, innocent and perhaps a bit naive.

Two incidents seem to capture the childlike spirit of the new town. The town council was more than four years old when this resolution was adopted and recorded in the minutes: "Whereas our ordinances have been insecurely kept and

TIMES CHANGE

**FROM
THIS . . .**



TO . . .

**Modern, Coin-Operated Laundry and
Dry Cleaning**

**FOSTER'S
LAUNDERMAT**

Corner Orange and North Ridgewood

many of them lost, and Whereas this condition is a detriment to the town: Therefore be it resolved that the Council take up codification of all ordinances and . . . when completed such ordinances be put in book form and constitute the ordinances of the Town of Sebring".

Some time later the council purchased a binder to be used as an ordinance book, and the same binder is still in use.

In Hot Water

If this incident revealed a light-hearted approach to city government, an event of 1921 was even more revealing.

In the late summer a new well was driven near the ice plant. To the amazement and delight of the workers the new well had hot water!

The town that had so long boasted about its remarkable health water was thrilled with the thought that natural hot water was available. Overnight the whole town was bustling with plans to build a health resort to rival the famed hot springs in the Ozarks.

In early September a geologist reported to the town council that he had traced the hot water stream from the well at the ice plant to the Circle. A committee was appointed to investigate the cost of sinking a well to tap this remarkable stream.

A few days later the council "authorized Sebring Real Estate Company to drive a well on or near the Circle tapping said Hot Water Stream".

MAKE YOUR APPOINTMENT AT . . .

Ridgewood Beauty Salon

Owned and Operated By

FAITH NEWLAND

430 North Ridgewood

EV 5-0450

9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. — Closed Mondays

Older residents remember that this was a time of great excitement. Other business was virtually at a standstill while the drilling operations were underway. Finally the new well yielded water, but it was cold water! Then the embarrassing facts came to light. The hot water at the original site was not coming up from a well, but rather was the surface waste draining from the ice plant where great quantities of water were used to cool the big machinery.

The chagrin felt in Sebring in the fall of 1921 was a small taste of what would come to the town and the whole state of Florida in the late 1920's, at the end of the brief frenzy known as "The Boom".

BIG BUILDING UNDERWAY



Kenilworth Lodge was under construction in 1916. This was the first and central unit.

We didn't build Kenilworth, but we CAN build for you.

JOHN J. HUBER

101 Bay Street — EV 5-8279

CUSTOM BUILDING

HOMES FOR SALE

CHAPTER THREE

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Part II—Problems and Issues

Problems of a New Town

"Sebring is the land winter forgot", an early advertisement stated. "You can depend on the germ-killing, life-giving soft rays of our glorious sun almost every day in the year."

Sunshine alone could not solve the real and serious problems Sebring faced. Transportation, communication, reliable water supply, reasonably priced power—the perennial municipal problems were all present and compounded in difficulty because Sebring was a new town in pioneer territory.

Communication

The communication problem was one of the first tackled by the city founders. At the suggestion of George Sebring, Councilman Ed Hainz went to Arcadia (not later than the first of 1914) and opened conversations with Ed Scott, owner of the telephone company serving this area.

At the February 10, 1914, meeting of the town council Mr. Scott asked for a 25-year franchise for a telephone company. The council tabled the request and did not get around to passing on the franchise until November, 1916.

The council stipulated that no telephone poles or wires were to be strung on the Circle. Scott agreed that all lines on the Circle would be underground.

Scott, for his part, required that at least 10 phones must be ordered before service would begin. Although the rate was only \$1.50 per month, few persons could be persuaded to subscribe for the new service. To fill out the contract two or three of the first telephones were hung on trees in the Circle for public use.

In July, 1917, the franchise was sold to Jerome E. Parker, and rates went up. The rate



MILT BAKER'S store was Sebring's food grocery and a favorite meeting place of early residents.

for business phones was not to exceed \$36 per year. For residences the rate was not to exceed \$27 per year. The rates for party lines were 50 cents per month less, while battery phones cost \$3 per year extra.

Transportation

Poor Access to Town

The telephone phase of the communication problem apparently was solved with ease. No part of the transportation question was easy.

When George Sebring came to Lake Jackson to fish, central Florida between Avon Park and Okeechobee was wilderness. For several years the roads in the Sebring area were really unsurveyed "snake trails" which meandered through woods and around palmetto clumps. As late as 1918 a Sebring resident, bound for a honeymoon

Theon Sebring McDonald
President

Established 1921

George E. Sebring, III
Vice President

HIGHLANDS SECURITY ABSTRACT & TITLE COMPANY

INCORPORATED

"Serving Sebring for Forty-Two of its Fifty Years"

ABSTRACTS OF TITLE

EV 5-0340

TITLE INSURANCE

Southgate Shopping Center



Locally
Owned and
Operated

ADAM & GWEN BAIR, Natives of Pennsylvania own and operate Sebring's newest Jewelry Store — featuring franchised lines such as Keepsake and Starfire Diamonds; Longines, Bulova, Mido, Wyler and Elgin Watches; Speidel Bands; Buxton Wallets and Golden Shield Radios. A large selection of charms and bracelets in stock at all times.

Friendly credit extended — No carrying Charges

in Miami, took the "short cut" to the East coast—through Palatka. At that time Palatka, in the older and more thickly settled northeast Florida, boasted a "hard road"—a strip of marl and sand with ruts so deep and hard that the only accurate description of the road would be "washboard".

The short cut to Tampa was a road which bore to the right at the western end of Avon Park's Main Street. This road ran through Fort Meade and Berea, the latter a turpentine settlement. In good weather brave drivers might take the direct route to the county seat at Arcadia. That road, through Crewsville, was impassable in wet weather. In the rainy season trips to the county seat were made via Avon Park and Zolfo.

No one attempted to make a round trip to Arcadia or Tampa in a single day. Between Bartow and Tampa a few stretches of road had been paved with brick. On these "super highways" the speed limit of 30 miles per hour was rigidly enforced.

Road Conditions in Town

The intra-city transportation was in some ways even more difficult than inter-city travel. At least railway service was available to Sebring within months after the city's founding. Passable streets came more slowly.

Inside the town limits the imaginative Orval Sebring tried several methods of street improvements. The first attempts at paving were made

LOW FOOD PRICES — LOW FOOD PRICES
THRIFTWAY — THRIFTWAY — THRIFTWAY
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Thriftway

IS PROUD TO BE A PART
OF A GROWING SEBRING.

on Pine Street, near the present site of the Presbyterian Church.

Under Mr. Sebring's direction huge fires were built under large sheets of flat metal. On top of the metal, sand and tar were slowly and laboriously mixed, using long handled shovels. While still hot the sand-tar mixture was shovelled into the roadway and hand tamped. The process was slow and difficult; the results were unsatisfactory. This method was abandoned after one try.

The second experiment was more satisfactory. A test section of concrete, about 20 feet wide, was laid at the corner of Mango and Ridgewood. It is still in use.

A highly ambitious experiment was made in the initial stages of developing the western shore of Lake Jackson. This land was all but inaccessible when Orval Sebring began to develop the lakefront property in 1920.

From the northern city limits the lake was bounded by a sandy scrub known as "ball bearing sand". It was tough going for a mule team. The southern approach was equally sandy and no bridge spanned the neck between Lake Jackson and Little Lake Jackson.

Mr. Sebring experimented with a water route to move road materials he needed for the paving of West Lakeview Drive (romantically referred to by Mr. Sebring as "Twilight Drive").

A narrow gauge railway spur was installed from the end of the Atlantic Coast Line rails, at

Pioneer Personalities



Harry and Laura McCorkle

He was the 17th man to come to the new town-site of Sebring in 1911, as carpenter and builder helped erect many of the early buildings including the first and second structures—the Sebring Real Estate Company office and the Club House—helped build the Jackson Hotel and McMurray & Hainz building, in the mid-twenties engaged in real estate business, married the daughter of Henry Henning, also one of Sebring's earliest pioneers, McCorkle home on North Lakeview Drive was built before Arrowhead Hotel, the first City Pier or the present Sebring home.

Call Us For Your Building Needs

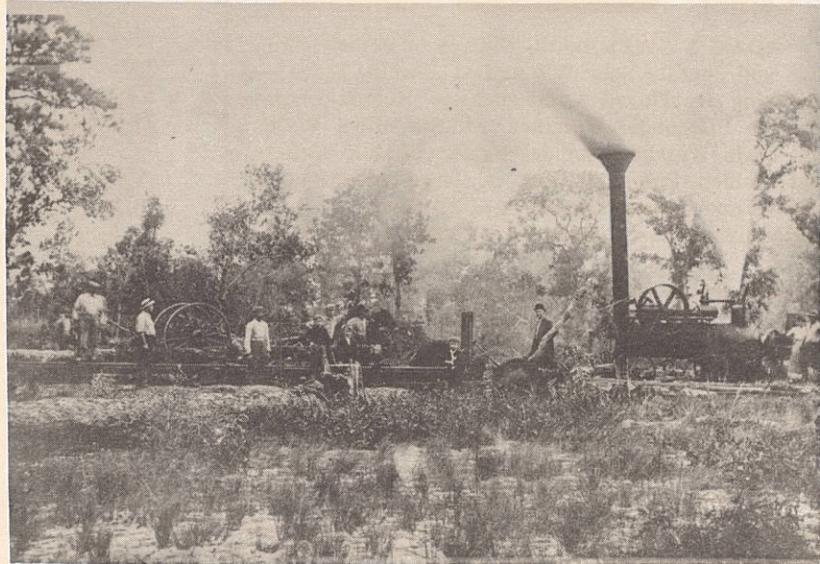
1912

THIS SAW MILL turned out the lumber for most of the building in Sebring for at least four years.

1962

Telephone EV 5-0178

505 Eucalyptus



CENTRAL BUILDERS SUPPLY, INC.

the foot of North Commerce Street, to a pier at the end of Park Street. Road materials were off-loaded from railroad gondolas onto self-dumping cars on the narrow gauge. These cars were pushed to the pier where their contents were dumped onto barges to be towed across the lake to "Twilight Drive". This was a costly process and had to be abandoned before the road was completed.

Utilities

Private Ownership

Probably the most significant decision the city made in its first decade was to buy the Sebring Light and Water Company. Although negotiations for the purchase began almost simultaneously with the establishment of a city government, a firm commitment was not made for some years. The sale was finally consummated in 1923.

The utilities company was owned by George Sebring. It was almost a year old when the first city officials took office. The **Sebring News** for August 1, 1912, reported, "A 150-horsepower Erie Boiler for the Central Power Plant has been shipped and will be unloaded and set up in the Y to be used by both the electric light plant and the water works.

"Dynamos, engines and switch boards already are here. In a few weeks we will have bright electric lights where only a short time ago there was a virgin forest."

By modern standards the early electric lights were not very bright. The first power plant generated 50 kilowatts of power—"about enough to light a ballfield very dimly", one pioneer resident recalls.

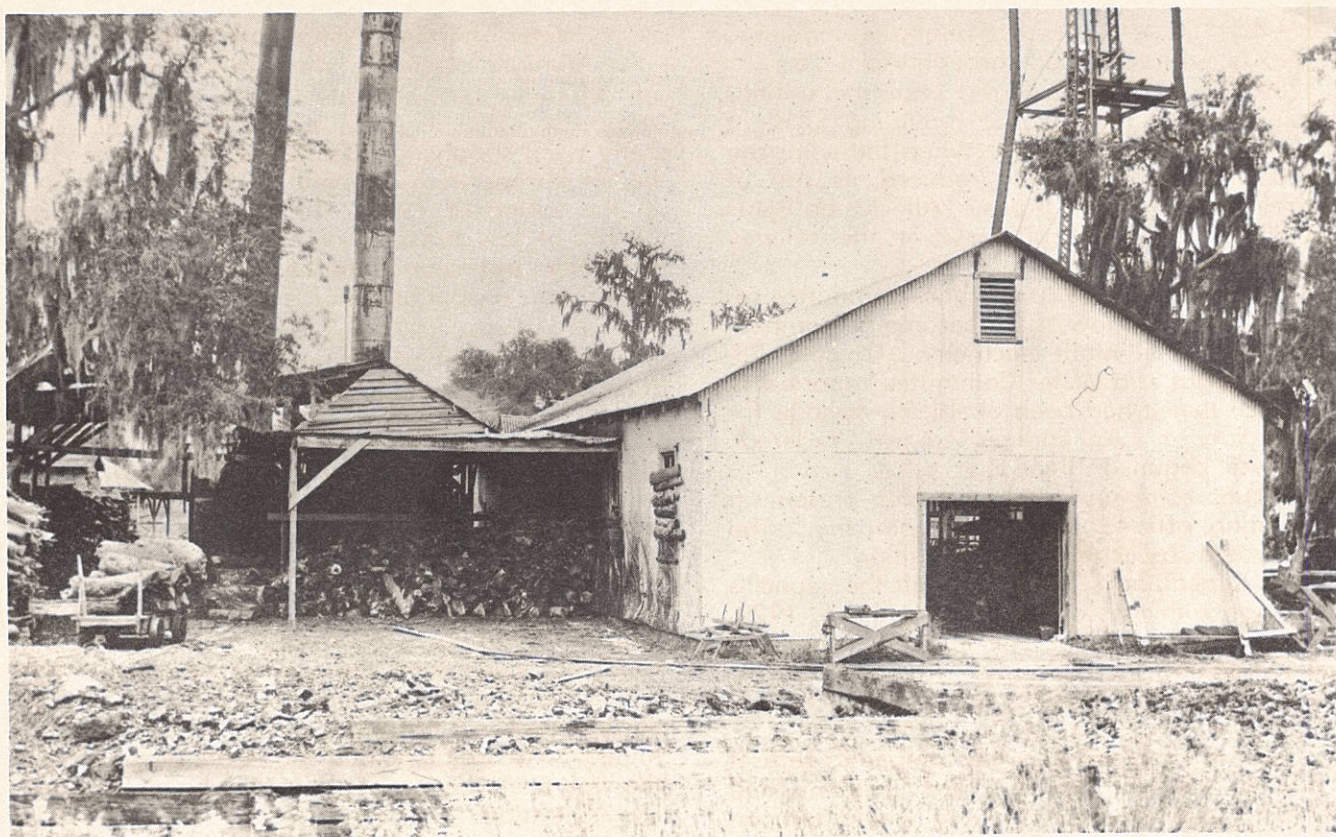
For the first two years all consumers paid the same flat rate, \$1.50 per month for electricity. "It would have been hard to use much electricity," pioneers recall. "We had no appliances, and power was available for only a few hours a day".

Electricity was turned on at six o'clock each evening. At 10:45 p.m. lights blinked, giving warning that in another quarter hour the current would be turned off for the night.

Electric washing machines and irons were the first appliances to appear in large numbers of homes. Sebring Light and Water Company took note of this and soon extended service hours to include Monday mornings.

Extension of night-time electricity eventually became a matter of contention between the utilities company and the city of Sebring. This apparently played an important part in the city's decision to buy the company.

Four months after the establishment of city government, in 1913, George Sebring wrote to the council offering to sell the company to the city for \$10,000. He added that he would include in this fee three lots on which the plant was standing and all equipment then in use.



SEBRING'S FIRST POWER PLANT, pictured above, was a wood-burning steam-driven generator of 50 KW capacity. Sebring's modern plant now has a capacity of 10,000 KWs.

The council appointed a committee to draw up an ordinance for issuing bonds. At the November 12, 1913, meeting such an ordinance was approved and a bond election called. The election was never held. Sometime during 1913 the first franchise was granted to the utilities company, but no mention is made of this in the town council minutes. The original franchise provided that the city of Sebring might purchase the company at the close of any five-year period.

The year 1914 brought several changes to the utilities company. As of January 1, the company began to charge the city for electric light

service. G. F. Bobb, who had been interested in a northern utility company, moved to Sebring and bought a half-interest in Sebring Light and Water Company. He moved immediately to install meters and fix bills on the basis of power used, an action raising the ire of many citizens. Service was extended to midnight each night.

The first five-year period in the company's franchise was to expire in 1918. In August, 1917, the discussion of municipal ownership was reopened, but no action developed.

Controversy Over Night Light

Meanwhile, the utilities company was expanding its services. In December, 1917, it announced it would offer all-night service for the months of January, February and March.

An ice plant was constructed and ready for service by the summer of 1918. In June, 1918, the town council decided to draw up an ordinance on ice sales. The following month the ordinance, requiring that ice be sold by weight, was passed. Anyone who attempted to sell ice without weighing it was to be fined.

The following winter (1918-19) all-night electricity was made available again for the win-

Ridge Air Conditioning, Inc.

**CARRIER Air Conditioning and
Heating Equipment**

KELVINATOR Home Appliances

2 Carrier Plaza — Hwy. 27 North

Rt. 1, Box 150

SEBRING, FLORIDA

The next problem was to arrive at the price to be paid. A single arbitrator was hired and paid, but later a three-man board of arbitrators was named. The company chose a representative; the council chose a representative. The third member of the board was chosen by chance.

The company's second five-year period concluded in 1923, and control of the company passed to the city. Some improvements were made immediately and more extensive ones were approved during Boom days.

Management of the utilities—electric, water and gas service—is vested today in Sebring Utilities Commission, under the direction of city council.

Through the years the services have been updated, and in 1962 a new diesel power generator and auxiliary equipment were installed to boost the power plant output to 9,850 kilowatts of electricity per hour. Cost of this new equipment—\$448,680—was more than four times the value of the entire utilities operation when the city purchased it.

Impure Water Episode

The long utilities company negotiations were not the only water problems the town council had to face. Water contamination was not an unknown menace in early Sebring. Not everyone in town used city water. Many residents had shallow wells on their own property, and from time to time illness would be traced to one of these wells.

Dissatisfaction with "city water" was often emotional, frequently originating with a disgruntled customer of Sebring Light and Water

Company. For example, one woman who had not paid her water bill found her service discontinued. Even though she contended that the water was poor and had made her ill, she was angry (to say the least!) when it was cut off. Some older residents recall that when this unhappy ex-customer met G. F. Bobb—co-owner of the utilities company—on the street, she attacked him, using her hickory walking stick to strike him several blows.

One of the most serious water situations arose in the summer of 1915. On June 16, the town council minutes noted that numerous complaints had been received "as to impurity of water". The council decided to send two samples to the state health department laboratory in Jacksonville. One sample was to be taken from "the well and one from some of the hydrants", according to the minutes.

The state health laboratory reported the water was "very unsatisfactory, unfit, and contaminated". New samples were ordered, and the council stipulated that "hereafter all reports of analysis be given to the Council first, before being made known to any outsiders".

The council's anxiety to have the matter cleared up got a little out of hand. In early August a Jacksonville bacteriologist wrote an angry letter to the city council pointing out that the recent—probably the second—set of samples had obviously been boiled prior to shipment.

Council hastily sent new samples. The bacteria count continued to rise throughout the late summer. Letters flew back and forth between council and the Jacksonville laboratory. At least once, suggestion was made that water mains should be checked for possible contamination. Soon after that suggestion the "impurity in water" discussions disappear from the minutes and Sebring continued to advertise its fine water.

One of the more extravagant statements, circulated two or three years after the contamination episode, said, "Sebring water is rightfully called The Fountain of Youth. It is not only medicinally good for all ailments, but it clears up your complexion and makes our women more beautiful, our men more manly . . . Drinking our famous water makes you immune from typhoid fever. It looks like willful waste for the citizens of Sebring to bathe, wash their clothes and sprinkle their lawns with the water that is equal if not superior to health waters that retail from \$1 to \$3 per gallon. There is a movement on foot . . . to organize a company to bottle and ship our famous health-giving water . . . You will undoubtedly be able to buy this water in other towns, but in our judgment it would be better to drink it as it comes from the wells at no cost. However, if you find you cannot come to Sebring . . . have the water shipped to you. If your health is bad, for relief try Sebring water".

Pioneer Personalities

E. O. Douglas

Head of the first bank in Sebring, first town treasurer, second postmaster, served many years on town council and school board, charter member of Sebring Rotary Club and Board of Trade, patron of Fire Department, county's only Negro high school is named for him.



ter months. However, instead of ending in March, the service was continued through April 16.

The council had conferred with the utilities company several times about providing all-night service throughout the year. When the company refused, the city drastically reduced its use of power in the available hours. All cluster lights were discontinued except those at the railway depot.

In the spring of 1920 a council committee reopened what, by now, had become the annual negotiations on all-night electricity. On May 28, 1920, the Light and Water Committee reported to the council that it had been unable to arrange for all-night service. An enraged council "ordered" this service begun on June 1.

Utilities company representatives present at the meeting offered to sell the company. The council voted to "accept the proposition".

The impending sale did not halt the council's wranglings with the company. On July 6, 1920, the council instructed the city attorney to enter a legal suit against the company. This was the first of several threatened suits, none of which ever came to trial.

Cause for the suit was the company's refusal to provide all-night service. The company had offered to give service if the city would turn on all lights on the Circle. The council rejected this proposal and planned to bring suit "immediately if all-night service is not given at once".

Water Shortage Compounds Difficulty

All-night electricity was not the only source of difficulty between the city and the utilities company. The deep wells operated by the company were supplying 10,000 gallons of water per hour. Pumps were in operation 24 hours per day in the spring of 1921. To the continuing complaints of low pressure or no water, the utilities company and council replied that "the present insufficient supply of water is caused by drought".

In January, 1922, residents of the Poinsettia-Eucalyptus neighborhood appealed to the council for help in obtaining water. The council intervened and after several sessions with the company, instructed the city attorney to institute a suit against Sebring Light and Water Company "because of failure to supply water".

Final Steps to City Ownership

On November 2, 1920, the town council began the procedure for issuing bonds to obtain funds for purchasing the utilities company. The council set the bond issue at \$100,000, although at this time no purchase price had been determined. According to the terms of the franchise, the value of the property would be determined by arbitration.

On February 25 the election was held with the following results: for the \$100,000 bond issue 51; against, 30. At the same time a \$50,000 bond issue for street improvement was passed by a vote of 69 to 12. Interest for both these bond issues was set at seven percent.

When the city council canvassed the election, the clerk was instructed to note that more than 75 percent of the voters who had cast ballots in the bond issue election were qualified freeholders.

The bonds were first offered for sale in the summer of 1921, but no bids were received. It would appear that some question had been raised about the legality of the bond issue. On August 2, 1921, the council voted to secure "legal opinion on bond issue procedure".

In November the council—for the second time—passed an ordinance for the issuing of \$150,000 worth of municipal bonds. Several bids were submitted by the bid opening date, December 19.

Conditions listed by the bidders were not satisfactory, and all bids were rejected. The bids had been opened at one o'clock in the afternoon. The council notified bidders that amended bids would be considered at a called meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Sebring Light and Water Company was one of the original bidders, but no amended bid was submitted by the company. Most of the original bidders did amend, however, and the new bids were more favorable to the city. Bids for the utilities purchase bonds and for the street improvement bonds were awarded at the night session.

REMEMBER THIS ITEM?

from

Sebring White Way

April 4, 1919

The great evangelist Billy Sunday has paid the long-looked-for visit to Sebring and while he spent but a few days with us, we were all proud to have him come, and judging from the admiration he expressed he is coming again and possibly several more times after that. The fact is some day in the not far distant future we hope to have him as a regular winter resident.

Mr. Sunday stated he wanted an orange grove sight on the shores of Lake Jackson, where he wanted to erect a bungalow and come down and enjoy rest and recreation.

And
Remember

DUTTON'S APPLIANCE STORE

W. H. (Bill) DUTTON

"Serving Sebring Since 1922"

214 North Pine

EV 5-0944

County Division

Sebring was a "youngster" not yet ten years old when it launched its drive to become the county seat. Sebring won that decisive campaign but only "by the skin of its teeth", a margin of 66 votes in an election with over 1,600 votes cast!

The fight for county division began almost simultaneously with the founding of Sebring. The new town's founders came from old northern states where transportation and communication problems had dictated the formation of many small counties.

The situation in central Florida was very different. Sebring was a part of DeSoto County, an area so vast that when it was divided in 1921, Highlands, Glades, Hardee, Charlotte, and DeSoto Counties were all carved from it. The county seat was in Arcadia, and a trip there over rutted, sandy roads was a major ordeal not undertaken lightly. A round trip from Sebring could not be made in less than two days.

Agitation for division was constant; and when it became apparent that the fight would be won, a four-way contest for the honor of becoming the county seat began.

A 1920 SEBRING BROCHURE said, "There is absolutely no place in the South freer from insect pests than Sebring".

**IN 1962, WE HELP KEEP SEBRING
FREE FROM INSECT PESTS**

"C" MILLER PEST CONTROL

DONALD R. PETTIT, Owner

617 South Eucalyptus

EV 5-8258

Contest for County Seat

The division was made official by the Florida legislature at 1 P.M. on April 20, 1921. The county seat competition had already been underway for sometime, and Sebring had won "round one" on March 11, 1921. On that date a public meeting was held at Avon Park, and Sebring was named temporary county seat.

Dr. E. J. Etheridge, founder of DeSoto City and county representative at the time of the division, was not pleased with the results of that meeting. Etheridge, along with Senator Cooper and County Democratic Committeeman W. M. Reck,

THEN



Personal
Loans
**AMERICAN
FINANCE**

**GWENDA
LEE**
Dress
Shop

Home
Owned

**WESTERN
AUTO**

**GILBERT
DRUGS**

Walgreen
Agency

NOW



Remember When...

Sebring First Ruled the Ridge in Basketball?



SEBRING HIGH SCHOOL'S first basketball team in 1921 netted an impressive record of wins. The team:
Back row, left to right:

Homer Wakefield
principal and coach

Ford Heacock

Orval Sebring, Jr.

Floyd Schumacher

Gerald Bee

George Swank

Front row:

John Warren

David Lane

Lloyd Leopold

Harris Muff

Guy Miller

REMEMBER...

For Insurance, It's

Heacock Insurance Agency

50 South Ridgewood

EV 5-0642

EV 5-0842



SERVING SEBRING

THROUGH THREE GENERATIONS:

A. C. Heacock, Sr.

Ford W. Heacock

Ford W. Heacock, Jr.

OUR WELCOME TO ALL OLD-TIMERS

and particularly to
S.H.S. CLASS OF 1922



CLASS OF 1922: Left to right, first row: Merle Young, Mrs. Emilie Auslund Gearing, Ava Leatherman, Mrs. Willye Taylor Nolan; second row: Charlotte Varena, Janie Cobia, Alfred Varena, Mrs. Ellen Heacock Bee; third row: Mrs. Mary Estes Altvater, Mrs. "Martee" Saunders Heacock, Mrs. Helen Moyer Rattray, Mrs. Martha Swank Horton.

HOBBY HILL FLORISTS

OLD TIMERS,
Please Come to
See us at our
Downtown
Shop, 39 North
Ridgewood,
and our New
Shop in the
Southgate
Shopping Center.



OUR STAFF: Ava Leatherman, Lillian Depp, Ruth Whipp.

City, third district; A. M. McAuley, Lake Stearns, fourth district, and W. W. Williams, Venus, fifth district.

Serving on the first Highlands County board of education with Rigdon were W. A. Marshall of Avon Park and W. Z. Millar, Lake Childs.

The temporary county offices, set up in 1921, were in the law offices of T. V. Conway. When the Hainz-Conway building was completed, it housed the county offices with rental set at \$225 per month.

Construction of a courthouse was one of the campaign issues in the fight for the official county

seat. An Avon Park newspaper publisher said Sebring wanted to construct a courthouse "as soon as possible". Avon Park promised the voters that it would provide courthouse offices "for at least 10 years", thus postponing need for the structure. The courthouse was built in 1926.

The county seat campaign was long and heated, but when the voters had made the decision the county's newspapers noted that "it was a clean, fair fight". The newspapers cordially saluted each other for the fine attitude exhibited when the final ballots were counted and the decision of the voters announced.



RAH, RAH GIRLS are part of the July 4, 1921, celebration of the formation of Highlands County.

TUSCAWILLA ENTRANCE ARCH receives finishing touches from Bill Bogel-song, the city electrician.



was credited with obtaining the long desired county split.

Etheridge not only disassociated himself from the meeting when the temporary county offices were located, but he declared that the **Sebring White Way** was in error when it intimated that the county courthouse would be permanently located in Sebring.

The other communities of Highlands County made it clear that Sebring truly was only the **temporary** county seat. Avon Park, DeSoto City, and Lake Stearns (now Lake Placid) continued their own campaigns, as did Sebring.

The fight suddenly narrowed on election eve. Lake Stearns and DeSoto City withdrew. On November 21, 1922, an astounding 96.8 percent of the county's 1,700 eligible voters went to the polls. The final tabulation showed Sebring had received 844 votes to Avon Park's 778. It is possible that the percentage of voter participation in that election holds the all time record in Florida political history.

County Officers Named

While Sebring was getting the county seat, it literally had no more county officials than the law required! One county commissioner and one school board member were the only Sebring residents among the first slate of county officials appointed by Governor Cary A. Hardee. The Sebring men who were appointed were John E. Graham, county commissioner from district two; and Ira Rigdon, board of public instruction member.

Other officials appointed by Governor Hardee included A. H. Saunders, DeSoto City, clerk; Cyril Baldwin, Avon Park, assessor; DeForest Canfield,

Avon Park, collector; D. R. Rouse, Avon Park, judge; I.C.M. Ellenberger, Avon Park, superintendent of schools; L. L. Henderson, Lake Stearns, supervisor of registration.

Named to the first board of county commissioners were William King, Avon Park, first district representative and commission chairman; Graham, second district; Perry Etheridge, DeSoto

G. V. HUDSON came to Sebring March 18, 1918—when the population was about 400, and there were no paved streets. His first business venture was a pressing club, where Fisher's Restaurant is now located. Clothes were washed or dry cleaned by hand, then pressed by an eight pound iron heated on a kerosene burner. Later, socks and shirts were added for sale.

The Boom came and he sold his business, deciding to get rich quick. That didn't work. So it was back to work, as there came into being:

HUDSON'S

Men's & Boys' Wear

Now at 67 North Ridgewood

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BOOM

A Frenzy Strikes

Just at the close of George Sebring's life the town he had founded was caught up in the Florida Boom. That bizarre period of history struck Sebring like a flash flood, lasted approximately two years, and when it was over the debris included not only many financial ruins. George Sebring's dreams had been seriously displaced. The town floundered, gradually regained financial stability, and even more slowly rebuilt community goals.

The original dream had been for Sebring to be a quiet, happy community of homes. Promotional literature sent out in the early 20's proclaimed, "Sebring is not a manufacturing town, nor do we want that . . . nothing but orange groves, tourists, and sweet dreams. The only money to be made here is in the growing of oranges, which is very, very remunerative, but is restful and noiseless".

Rumors of skyrocketing land values in the rest of the state crept into Sebring, but, as one veteran resident put it, "We felt that they were only rumors to be taken with much salt and, even if true, were foolish as there was nothing to back up the skyrocketing values. There was no indication or reason to believe that the craze would ever hit our part of the state. When it did, very few were mentally prepared to accept it as a fact and almost everybody felt that anyone becoming involved was nothing short of being more than a little 'touched in the head'."

Even as it was being swept into the madness, Sebring still clung to the belief that its real fortune lay in the "restful and noiseless growing of oranges". But convinced or not, the residents of Sebring suddenly were confronted with evidences of the Boom—the swarms of people, seemingly millions of little stakes marking out "subdivisions", and a "peculiar kind of insanity".

Anatomy of a Deal

Allen Altwater, Sebring historian, has described a "standard" business transaction of the time in this way: "On South Ridgewood Drive, only a short block off the Circle, the first owner sold a lot with 50-foot front on the Drive, for \$1,000.

"The purchaser put down a 'binder' of \$100 to guarantee that he would pay one-fourth of the purchase price upon the delivery of a satisfactory abstract of title and the balance in equal payments of one, two and three years.

"Before the abstract would be delivered to

him, he bargained to sell the same lot to buyer Number Two for \$1,500, but he required a binder of \$600, which represented the \$100 binder he had put up and his \$500 profit.

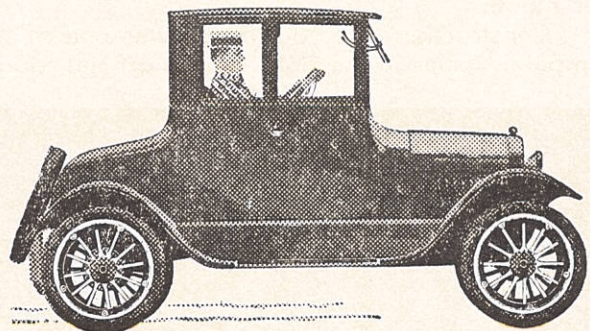
"Probably the same day, the lot was sold to buyer Number Three for another \$500 or \$1,500 profit with the binder being correspondingly higher. Each succeeding buyer assumed all prior obligations against the property.

"Each of these operations required another entry in the abstract of title and as more and more deals were made, the abstract company became further and further behind in delivery dates so that more and more deals were made thus delaying the ultimate consummation of the contracts.

"This particular lot finally sold for \$30,000, which is about the going rate for this class of property on that section of South Ridgewood.

"As prices went up it became necessary for the sellers to take part of the profits on paper and to give some paper in the purchases. The higher prices also gave birth to the formation of 'syndicates' which became very popular in the later days of the Boom."

Walker Chevrolet INC.



SALES and SERVICE
99 North Ridgewood
EVERgreen 5-0186

MAXCY GROVES

P. O. BOX 466, SEBRING, FLORIDA



The Finest Fruit from the Tree

Over 500 Acres of Cultivated Citrus Groves

Founded by the late **GUIGNARD MAXCY**, who had been in the Florida citrus business since the early 1900's

Shipper of Fancy Citrus Fruit to Individuals



CITY PIER was a popular meeting place and became a virtual trademark for the town early in its history.

A Special Vocabulary

The Boom developed its own vocabulary. Not all the words were complimentary. Two of the more colorful phrases, with a derogatory tinge, were "Binder Boy" and "Bird Dog".

The latter, as might be surmised, was applied to persons who found potential buyers and steered them to salesmen or land owners. If a sale was made the "Bird Dog" received a commission for his services.

A "Binder Boy" put up real money to bind a deal for property, but he hoped to sell it before he had to make any further payments. The term was applied to persons considered to be chiselers.

"Developer" and "Operator" designated the big time broker.

Government and Business Expand

In Boom days being a city councilman was almost a full time job. The council was meeting almost every night, and additional meetings were worked into business hours. New subdivision plats had to be approved, bond issues prepared, new facilities of many types planned for the mushrooming population.

Because of the psychology of the time the public voted in favor of bond issues for street

improvements, extensions and installations of water, sewer and electric systems, the construction of piers, parks, and a golf course. In all, more than \$3 million in new bonds were issued. Under normal conditions, most or all of these projects probably would have been rejected.

Most of the hysteria was created by the buying and selling of property on a purely speculative basis. Stories of people becoming wealthy overnight went out. The rest of the United States was involved in its own brand of post-war madness, so the stories did not have to be proven to be believed. People flocked into Florida to make their fortunes as Americans of another day had rushed westward to find gold.

New Businesses Mushroom Overnight

Profits were not confined to real estate. All sorts of new businesses opened. It was a "seller's market". People had money in their pockets—a lot of it. It was not unusual for a man of "moderate circumstances" to carry \$500 to \$1,000 for "pocket change". And he was willing to spend his pocket money and more for almost anything, but especially for new cars. Automobiles were sold as fast as they could be delivered with the higher priced models (many costing about \$7,000) much in demand.

Openings of new subdivisions were major events. Chartered buses brought prospective

Serving Highlands County Since 1923

Hinckley-Durrance
HARDWARE COMPANY, INC.

R. N. Durrance

102 South Circle

EV 5-0349



SEBRING HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING addition under construction during the Boom in 1925. The original unit can be seen at the left. It was built in 1916.

Pioneer Personalities

Chesley A. Skipper



One of the few native-born old timers, born near western boundary of old Manatee (later DeSoto and still later Highlands) County, in 1886, taught school in Venus and other areas in the county 59 years ago, active in Masonic and Shrine organizations, financier, officer in the old Highlands Bank and Trust Company (one of Sebring's early banks), now engaged in ranching, lives on shores of Josephine Lake.

buyers and sightseers from coastal cities. Bands played, expensive door prizes were awarded, and skillful auctioneers (aided by the bidding of Bird Dogs and Binder Boys) whipped excitement to a fever pitch.

Just a few months before the Boom swept in, the energetic pursuit of wealth had been denounced. Sebring publicity advised, "If you want activity, such as ringing of bells, blowing of whistles, the dust and noise of making money, the

SANTA ROSA HOTEL

301 North Ridgewood

EV 5-9856

Mrs. M. F. McGee
Owner - Manager

. . . operating hotels in Sebring with husband since 1925. M. F. McGee was mayor of Sebring 12 years, longer than any other mayor.

STRIKE UP THE BAND!



FIRST CITY BAND dates back to 1913. It was directed by George Crump. Standing, left to right, Guy Ruhl, Walter Zackary, Ben Pollard, Ray Gearing, Geo. Crump, G. A. Rule, Herbert Gearing, Thomas Whitehouse. Kneeling are A. I. Young, Paul Pollard, George Whitehouse.



For Sebring's

Newest

Automobile Dealer

Harold Bartee Mtrs.

55 South Ridgewood

Across from Tropical State Bank

same as you are accustomed to in the North, do not come to Sebring. Our town is a place of rest and pure water, sunshine, flowers, tropical trees and song of the mocking bird".

Once the Boom had come, these boasts were forgotten; Sebring was anything but "restful and noiseless". Forgotten too were the early efforts of George Sebring to prevent the sale of liquor.

Intemperance Flourishes

All the original deeds contained a "no liquor" clause at the insistence of George Sebring.

"There will never be any saloons in Sebring . . . Sebring is, therefore, absolutely free of the vices that usually afflict rapidly developing communities," an early brochure boasted.

The founder's aversion to the sale of liquor was never a universally accepted idea. The town council at its third meeting (August 26, 1913) felt it necessary to offer a \$5 reward "for the arrest and conviction of any parties for the illegal selling of intoxicants in town".

The town council for several years continued to offer rewards, increasing the proffered amount as time passed.

As the prohibition movement was reaching a high mark in the nation as a whole, Sebring town council (February, 1921) passed several ordinances forbidding the manufacture, sale, or even transportation through the city of any type of liquor.

ESTABLISHED 1925

STEPHENSON FUNERAL HOME

JACK STEPHENSON,
Funeral Director
SEBRING, FLORIDA

"Service Above Self"

Those ordinances were officially on the books and national prohibition in effect when the Boom was at its height. But neither local nor national law was observed in Sebring.

The going prices of liquor were well known —\$15 per bottle or \$125 to \$150 per case. Leaders of society gave parties which cost many hundreds of dollars. On opening night at a night club on the shores of Lake Sebring, many would-be merry-makers had to be turned away although the cover charge was \$20 per person. A honky-tonk in Lakemont did a thriving business with prices which would rival those charged today in Miami's best known resorts.

In 1920 Sebring had a census of less than 900. In the Boom years, 1924-26, the population soared toward 7,000. Everything was headed skyward.



HIGHLANDS COUNTY COURT HOUSE was completed in 1926, five years after the county was formed. The question as to when to build a court house was an issue in the election to name a county seat; Sebring favored construction "as soon as possible". It is a tribute to the workmanship of this building that in a recent study engineers found the structure to be in good condition. Plans are now being laid to remodel the interior of the court house to modernize it and make room for the larger offices needed to serve a growing county.

The Birth of Highlands County



Highlands County was formed in 1921 by Special Act of the Legislature. Shown here is Governor Carey A. Hardee signing the bill in the presence of a delegation from Highlands and DeSoto Counties.

1962 COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

Board of County Commissioners



CECIL SKIPPER
Chairman



CARL McINTYRE
Vice Chairman



J. G. CREEL



GENE HAMLIN

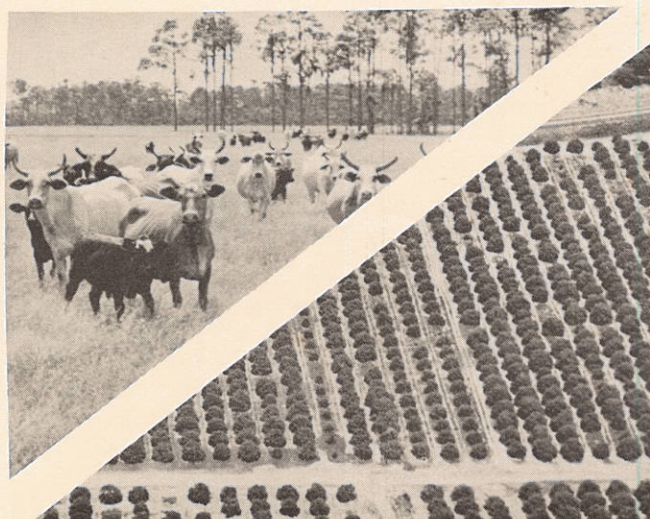


BEN MCGEE

THE GROWING HIGHLANDS

Land of C

ITS BUSINESSES



CATTLE, CITRUS, AGRICULTURE

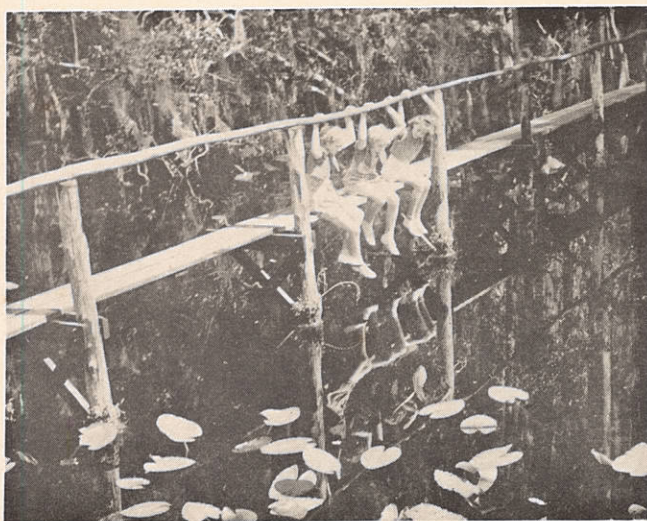


INDUSTRIAL PARK

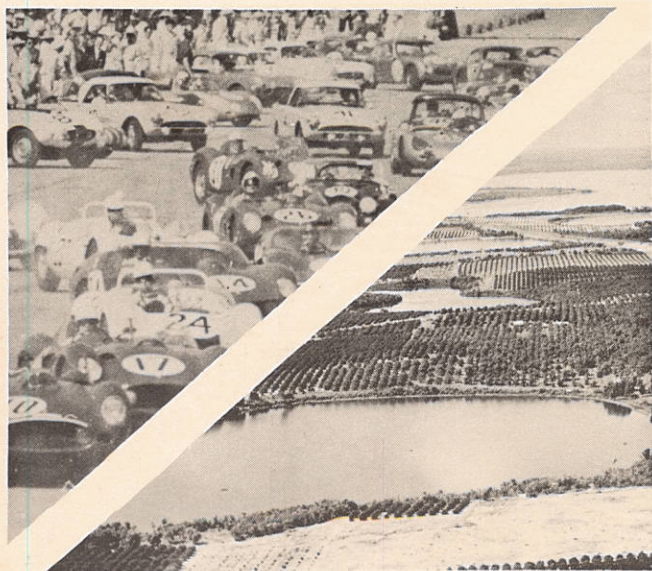
GROWTH OF FLORIDA COUNTY

Opportunity

ITS PLEASURES



HIGHLANDS HAMMOCK



GRAND PRIX, WATER SPORTS

ITS POTENTIALS



BEAUTIFUL HOMES



VACATION, RETIREMENT

*The Future of
Highlands County*

YOU

KIWANIS CLUB

Three Years Old

Salutes

SEBRING

50 Years Old

America's greatest land rush, a movement which is more astonishing and dramatic than any other in the history of the United States, is at its height. Compared with it the gold rush into California, the mad dash into the Klondike, the swarming of humanity in the opening of the West and the Northwest, the Cripple Creek stampede, the race of the thirty thousand into Oklahoma when the Indian Territory was thrown open to settlers, and the oil boom rushes at Bakersfield and Burburnett, seem puny affairs.

A million and a half persons (some estimate more than two million) are joined in the rush from all parts of the United States and Canada. It is a rush de luxe; the hardships of the covered wagon days, the scurvy of California camps, the frozen death of that terrible stampede for gold over the White Horse pass, are missing. In this great rush the million or more are moving on more than twenty de luxe trains, by steamers, in thousands of automobiles, in private yachts, and even in airplanes.

This rush is the result of the discovery, by the rest of the world of the state of Florida, that queer, reefbound, lake-dotted, southern exposure sun of the United States. Ponce de Leon tried to promote it as a youth restorer four hundred years ago. After his efforts to persuade the world he had discovered a fountain of youth, Florida basked inertly in sunlight for four centuries. Old ladies and male antiques went there to winter resorts, but Florida stood still.

Then, about eight years ago, began a boom, due to the discovery of the fact that land which appeared worthless might be rich in potential wealth. Land on which settlers had half-starved trying to raise one crop, began to produce wealth in some other crop. Land which wouldn't sprout peas was yielding \$1,500 to \$2,000 a year in celery. The responsibility for the boom really lies with the Department of Agriculture at Washington, which discovered and continues to discover strange things about Florida. It is well to warn those who join the rush that Florida is much like a gold mining district; you may strike it anywhere, or may not. But there is this difference: if your land will not grow one thing, it may grow something else better than any other land in the world.

The boom, gaining with each year, reached its highest peak this winter—and accompanying it was the greatest developing era in America's history and the wildest land speculation. With more than a million and a half persons rushing in, and with the whole state land-mad, with values soaring, new towns springing up the population (and they are remarkable good counters) enumerators can count. Almost everyone has made money (on paper at least) and with more than \$100,000,000 pouring in from tourists and land seekers alone, independent of their purchases (Florida officials say fifteen to twenty per cent of all visitors invest in property there), the Florida craze is approaching a climax. What the end will be is hard to tell.

"Overnight Millionaires of Florida" Reads Like Fiction Story

From
Highlands American
March 3, 1925

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BUST

A Receding Prosperity

"Bust" is not an accurate description of the condition that overtook Sebring in the late 1920's. "Creeping paralysis" more closely conveys the feeling of the times at the onset of the Great Depression. Unlike the Crash on Wall Street, no one day or month can be pin-pointed as the "black day"; rather, the Boom ebbed away very quietly.

Sebring Historian Altvater describes that ebbing: "Sales slowed. Friends quit asking if you had any good lots for sale. Word got around that things were going badly at the 'hot spots' on the coasts. This gave rise to more uncertainty in Sebring trading.

"The developers, operators, and high pressure men of the Chamber of Commerce continued to give out interviews revealing plans of new construction running into millions. They predicted that Sebring would be a city of 25,000 or more by the end of the following year.

"They weren't fooled, and the public who read the articles wasn't fooled. Everyone knew—and everyone was trying to keep buying interest alive long enough to salvage everything possible from the piles of paper they had accepted in lieu of cash. Everyone wanted to sell whatever interest he might hold in land for cash—any cash at all.

"Some of the more prudent folks had foreseen the end and had taken shorter profits by selling for cash only. Many of these people took their cash and went back North. Others settled down and waited.

"New construction slowed to nothing. Homes, hotels, business blocks were left partially finished. Workingmen, who had thought the flow of gold would never stop, had 'lived it up' while money

was plentiful. When work gave out, they found they hadn't any money on which to live and certainly not enough for fare 'back home'.

"The 'bird dogs' and 'binder boys' a few months previously had scoffed at any thought of a steady job. Some left town; others accepted almost any kind of work that was offered.

"The effect was much like that of a tide going out and leaving life on the beach floundering."

Shattered Dreams

The half-finished homes and business buildings were evidence of the hopes left floundering. A few newspaper clippings are evidence of the dreams that were stillborn in 1926.

On June 11, 1926, the **Sebring White Way**, carried the following item: "Windmills of Holland may soon be turning the now useless Florida Everglades into rich agricultural lands.

"The picturesque power pumps that are always associated with that dyke-preserved country of Europe may some day be relied upon to

PROGRESSING with SEBRING

Abstracts — Title Insurance — Searches

Safety and Protection

For Your Investment

South Ridge Abstract & Title Co.

JERRY BEELER, President

204 South Commerce

Sebring

"'PA LION' AND HIS 'OLD LADY', Highlands County's Largest Family", proclaimed this early Lions Club picture.



drain millions of acres of land in the Everglades.

"Such is the conviction of certain engineers who are endeavoring to solve the problem of making the vast tracts of dormant land into resourceful farm territory." No further mention was made of the project.

When the City of Sebring was still a dream, George Sebring had spoken in terms of a settlement which would be a "cultural center". This goal seemed a step nearer in mid-1926 when the **Sebring White Way** reported, "Construction of the South Florida Baptist Junior College, at DeSoto City, about four miles from Sebring, will be started January first, according to plans formulated yesterday at a conference of Baptist leaders held in Lakeland . . .

"Starting shortly after October 1, a state-wide campaign for a fund of \$350,000 will be started by the Baptist Church, the conference decided . .

"When the college is completed, its first president will be Col. F.N.K. Bailey, present superintendent of Highlands county schools. Col. Bailey was elected to this office by a unanimous vote of the conference."

These seemingly concrete plans appeared in the **White Way** on September 16, 1926, and then dropped from view. Older residents remember that much of the needed money had been pledged but as the tide ebbed still more, pledges could not be met. Despair-ridden Baptists returned the gifts that had been given.

R. A. FELKNOR

J. A. CARRAWAY

KING HARDWARE

General Hardware

Sherwin Williams Products
House Wares Builders' Hardware
Fairbanks Morris Cattle Scales
Homelite Saws Pumps and Generators

39 North Ridgewood

"Same Location Since 1925"

Valuable By-Products

More than wreckage was left behind by the out-going tide. Always friendly to churches, Sebring in Boom time had given birth to four new churches and to two of the service clubs which are still prominent in civic affairs.

The Sebring Rotary Club was organized on September 8, 1924. Within a year the club had become interested in Boy Scout work. Today the club sponsors Scout Troop 141.

Another early interest of the club was music. In 1927 Rotary appointed a committee to confer with Professor P. J. Gustat, then director of Sebring

High Fashion — 1926



BEAUTY PAGEANT on July 4, 1926, attracted hundreds to Sebring. Above are six of the lovely winners. Among those identified are, third from left, Lois Starbuck, and fourth, Virginia Woods.

For

High Fashion
in 1962, It's

Corner Casuals

The Smart Women's Shop

OWNERS:

Helen Weinell
Doris Whitaker

**SOUTHGATE
SHOPPING CENTER**



CIRCLE PARK reflects the progressive clean-cut lines of the city in 1926—just as Boom days ebbed and the community began to feel the affects of the Bust.

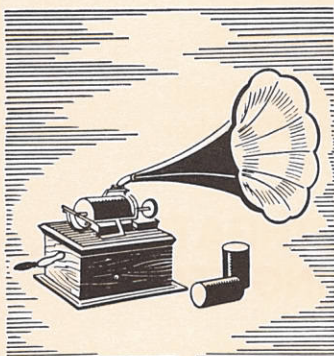
Municipal Band. With the club's backing Professor Gustat broadened his work and organized the Sebring High School Band.

The city's early interest in tourism was reflected in the activities of the Sebring Lions Club in its "cub" days.

Lions Club was chartered on July 10, 1926. One of its first activities was erection of a Lions Recreation Center for winter visitors.

Palmetto-thatched huts were built on what is the present location of the Tourist Club. Checkers, dominos, cards were played in the huts. The Lions sponsored the building of the first shuffleboard courts at the Center.

Early Sebring promotional literature boasted of the wealth of "time-killing amusements", and even proclaimed that Sebring was the "Coney Island of Florida".



WELCOME

HENRY CRUTCHFIELD, INC.

CITRUS CARETAKING SERVICE

34 EAST CENTER

HENRY CRUTCHFIELD

EV 5-0721

EARL CRUTCHFIELD

OLD-TIMERS

Serving Sebring 36 Years

LIONS CLUB

ORGANIZED 1926

Interests Include:

- Sight Conservation
- Civic Improvements
- Wheel Chairs
- Recreational Facilities
- Glasses for Needy
- Eye Operations
- Christmas Clothing and Gifts for Needy
- "Blind Stand" at the Courthouse
- Trips for High School Band



A 1930 PARADE featured a real live lion in the cage and 16 real Lions as escorts. Driver, Jim Bogle; back row, left to right, Ray Paschall, Gerald Bee, Jack Park, A. B. Wilhite, J. M. Berriman, George Whitehouse, Doyle Schumacker, Ed Hasti, P. G. Gearing; front row, unidentified, Ray Morgan, P. A. Naylor, Joe Lighthouse, Elton Weaver, Amos Cook.



THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL PARADE, October 12, is sponsored by the Lions. Part of today's Lions Club is pictured above in front of the new community club sign the Lions Club spearheaded obtaining. Complete membership is as follows:

LIONS CLUB MEMBERS: Albert Allen, James Alderman, Henry Bailey, Elmer Black, Bradford Bowen, Rex Bond, Donald Branch, H. E. Brummell, Frank Bryant, Adam Bair, Ted Cason, Ralph Clements, Broward Coker, J. D. Creel, Paul Campbell, John Carson, Billy Cason, Stanley Davis, Henry Dembitz, George Douglass, Fred Fields, Jonas Foy, P. G. Gearing, Ray Graddy, Donald Hansen, B. J. Harris, Jr., Steve Heffner, Rudolph Hetu, Jack Hughes, Robert Ingle, C. G. Jones, J. T. Jones, Tom Jones, Howard Johnson, A. J. Kahn, Marvin Kahn, Clifton Kelly, Leland Keck,

Jr., Harold Lawton, Harry Lee, Robert Mason, Herman Martin, C. C. Miller, J. M. McAdams, R. E. Mayhew, Robert Ortt, Frank Osborn, Sam Polston, W. H. Prescott, Clifford Price, Walter Rebman, Gustav Reschke, Ralph Richardson, Carl Riggs, Grant Rust, John Senkarik, Lamar Simpson, Dan Stevenson, Daniel Sherwood, Fred Trippensee, Wayne Taylor, Alec Ulmann, R. A. VanNess, John Walters, E. A. Warren, Elton Weaver, Frank Walker, Fred Zeigler.

Pioneer Personalities

**Thomas
Whitehouse, Sr.**



Family came to Sebring before town was a year old, immediately established one of the first mercantile businesses, took an active part in the Board of Trade, served one term as city clerk and six years as city councilman.

Several Churches Founded

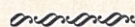
The ebbing tide of the Boom found the town's spiritual life enriched by churches of four differing traditions — Baptist, Christian Science, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and Episcopal.

Within the first half-decade of its history, five churches had been established within the city. Then came a lull in the establishment of new congregations. From 1916 until 1922 no new churches began. Then on February 11, 1922, the congregation which was to become First Baptist Church met for the first time.

In May, 1922, the Baptists obtained permission to use the facilities of the Presbyterian Church. Later the same summer, the new group moved to the hall at Tusawilla Park. In August a building site was purchased, and a church building was completed in 1923.

First Baptist Church is now housed in a new building, of modern design, erected on the original church site. The first unit of the present building was erected in 1957.

K A H N ' S DEPARTMENT STORE



SERVING HIGHLANDS COUNTY

SINCE 1923

First Church of Christ Scientist had its beginnings in 1925. For three years services were held in the Masonic hall. From 1928 to 1950 the Society met at the Woman's Club Building on Oak Street.

The present building, located at the corner of Pomegranate and Franklin, was started in 1949. In keeping with the tradition of the Church of Christ Scientist, the building could not be dedicated as a church until it was debt-free. The Sebring church was dedicated in 1950.

The Christian Church and the Episcopal Church were begun in the closing days of the Boom.

First Christian Church began holding services at Tusawilla Park in the spring of 1926. Later the same year the first unit of the present church building was constructed at the corner of Poinsettia and Eucalyptus—making use of lumber which had first been used in scaffolding at the newly erected Highlands County Court House. Another unit was added to the building in 1957.

The Episcopal Church, first known as the Church of the Good Shepherd, began meeting December 29, 1926. At first the Circle Theatre (at the rear of what is now the Circle Sweet Shop) provided a place for services.

In March, 1929, the congregation purchased a duplex apartment building on Hickory, which had been one of the Boom structures. The Episcopalians remodeled the building and within a month began meeting at the new location.



EV 5-8744

Sebring

ROBERTS MOTOR CO., INC.

500 North Ridgewood

Serving Your New and Used Car
and Service Needs
Since 1950

Studebaker: Lark, Hawk, Avanti, Truck
Hillman and Sunbeam



BOB POLLARD
Sales



JACK ROBERTS
Service

REMEMBER THIS?

from
Sebring White Way
April 18, 1924

William Jennings Bryan, candidate for delegate to the National Democratic Convention, spoke in Sebring last Friday night, to an audience of about a thousand people.

He spoke at Avon Park at 6 o'clock and in Sebring at 8 o'clock. He was met by Hon. John A. Taylor and escorted to Tusawilla Park, where the local municipal band had been playing in anticipation of his arrival, and the park was loaded to its capacity with persons anxious to hear him.

AND

REMEMBER US . . .

. . . for everything in
INSURANCE and REAL ESTATE

HOWARD A. MADDOX, INC.

13 North Ridgewood

EV 5-0335

With the change in location, also came a change in name—to St. Agnes. One further move was made by this congregation when a complex of new church buildings was dedicated at a West Lakeview Drive site in January, 1960.

In the post-Boom days despair settled about Sebring. In that atmosphere it is amazing that so many of the new churches and organizations survived to continue their contribution to the community.

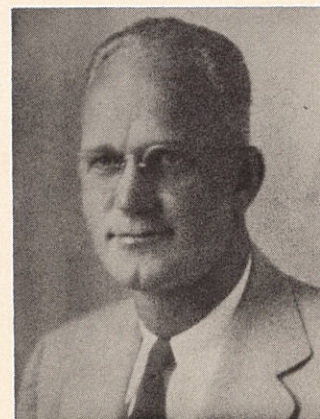
A Staggering Legacy

Besides a harvest of beneficial groups, the city found that the Boom left behind substantial improvements and conveniences, which under normal circumstances, it might have been over a generation in obtaining. If this was a silver lining to some of the clouds of those years, few saw it.

The improved streets, expanded utility services, and enlarged recreational facilities left a crushing bond debt. Dozens of vacant houses and store fronts echoed defeat and hopelessness.

The already discouraged city now suffered another blow—perhaps the most serious. Before the end of the decade death took several of the most able leaders who could have done much to bring order from the chaotic times. In but a short period George E. Sebring, E. O. Douglas, and W. J. Amy passed away when their wise counsel was most needed.

Pioneer Personalities



Payne M. Sebring

Son of George E. Sebring, was a realtor, city tax collector, member and president of City Council, mayor, member of school board, member of original utilities commission, owner of fruit packing and shipping company, president of Lions Club, president of Sebring Firemen, Inc., secretary of Elks Lodge, assistant fire chief, holder of Firemen's most valuable award, finest work was in the field of promotion for youth activities, especially athletics and high school band.

BOOM – 1925

SEBRING POPULATION

January.....1200

June.....1847

August.....4400

(Source: 1926 City Directory)

**That's the Year
TOWNSEND SASH,
DOOR & LUMBER CO.**

CAME TO SEBRING

. . . and still growing with Sebring

347 Park Street

EV 5-0946

CHAPTER SIX

THE DEPRESSION

A Far Reaching Condition

As people look back they find it difficult to describe the economic situations that prevailed when the "Boom had busted". One immediately observable condition was the imbalance between jobs and workers. Before the Boom the supply of jobs and workers seemed about equal. But when the "tide ebbed" it appeared that jobs had been swept away leaving behind a surplus of workers.

Many who would have worked—willingly, gladly—could find no jobs. The abundance of labor drove prices down; wages were very low. Rents were low. Often property owners were willing to give free rent to reliable families in order to prevent the vandalism which became prevalent among the vacant homes in some areas.

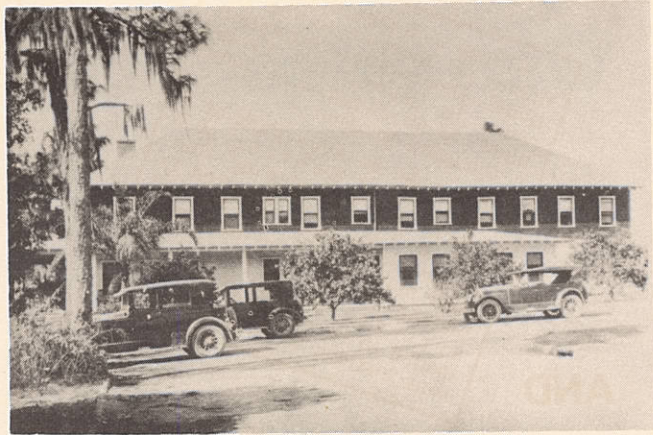
Sebring and, indeed, all of Florida, was caught up in the Depression of the early 1930's that was world wide. In 1928 Floridians had "flirted" with the Republican party, but in the presidential election of 1932 the state was once again solidly Democratic, joining with the rest of the nation to entrust leadership to a new president. Many can still recall the conditions which prevailed when Franklin D. Roosevelt took office. Vivid are the memories of the bank holiday and other economic upheavals of the time.

Sebring's plight may have seemed desperate to those living here, but conditions were far worse in many parts of the state. Even before the Wall Street crash in 1929, Florida was a "depressed area". Some cities became ghost towns in the late 1920's. Other communities found they had no tax income with which to carry on government. Since police and fire departments could not be maintained it was not uncommon to "sell buildings to the insurance companies"—a practice called arson in legal terms.

Down But Not Out

Sebring was more fortunate. The income from the city-owned light and water plant paid for a modest type of government which was successful in preventing fire losses and wholesale vandalism that plagued some cities.

Historian Altwater has written, "It is impossible to over-emphasize the fact that the public ownership of the utilities was a life-saving element in those dark, post-Boom days. Many cities went for months without street lights, garbage collection and street cleaning; but the City of Sebring continued to give these services, paying for them from the income from the utilities".



THE ARROWHEAD, built in 1914, was Sebring's second hotel. It stood at the foot of Center Avenue until about two years ago when it was torn down.

As depression deepened, even this income became uncertain. Citizens who could not find work could not pay for lights and water. Some parsimonious consumers, when they learned that services were being extended to those who could not pay, refused to meet their bills although they had the means to do so.

With income receding, the city began to fall behind with payments of its accounts. Municipal employees were able to collect only a part of their wages each month and material and supply accounts became delinquent to the point that suppliers placed the city on a "C.O.D." basis. At the end of 1932, more than one quarter of the city's accounts receivable for that year were uncollected. Every car of oil for the power plant came with the bill of lading attached, which meant that it had to be paid for before it was unloaded. The situation prompted some very drastic changes.

— Established 1927 —

SUNNY RIDGE GROVES

Packers and Shippers

Florida's Finest Fruits

811 Hawthorne Road
Sebring, Florida

EV 5-0784

Albert A. and Martha B. Allen

Recognize These Old-Timers

?



CIRCLE PARK in about the year 1926 found these Sebring citizens busy "jest sittin". Left to right: Bill Muff, Sheriff Bob Hancock, Marshal Ike Dottery, Horseshoe Champ Frank Brown, Mr. Fulton, W. W. Wright, Col. A. E. Lawrence.

For Recognized Value

LEARN TO SHOP
THE EASY SOUTHGATE WAY



Ralph & Ken's Barber Shop
Touhcton Rexall Drug
Hobby Hill Florists
Sebring Decorators
Salon de Coiffures
Corner Casuals
Davis Hardware
Publix Market
Bair Jewelers
W. T. Grant

City Administrator Appointed

The city council appointed a superintendent of public works with duties corresponding to those of a city manager. The appointment of such an officer was successful in accomplishing the results intended, although the position proved highly controversial. Historian Altwater reports, "There was no way to apply an anesthetic while the operation was being performed; and some of the cuts were, of necessity, very deep. The public's nerves were already ragged because of the collapse of the Boom, the stock market crash, the closing of the banks, and the lack of jobs . . . Naturally there was sharp reaction to the movement depriving many people of special benefits and unnecessary jobs. As a result, the town was divided for the first time into two political groups, each fighting for control".

At the end of the first year of the new type of management the faction that was opposed to the managerial form of government won the election. The city returned to the original type organization with a supervisory head for each department. During its brief tenure, the year of 1933, the "business type management" had succeeded in putting the city in the black. Operational debts had been paid, employees had received their back pay and were being paid each month on time, and inventories had been built up. Practices had been established (such as the enforced collection of accounts receivable) that have endured through many changes of administration until this day.

While the utilities company played a major role in cushioning Sebring's economic descent, it was not the only asset of the city in the early 1930's. Perhaps the most valuable resources—surpassing the utilities and even good city government—were people. The Boom had brought in a large number of exceptionally fine citizens who possessed independent incomes that were not affected by the collapse of the Boom nor even too drastically curtailed by the crash of the stock market.

Citizen Rex Beach

Among these new members of the community were Mr. and Mrs. Rex Beach. Only today the extent of their generosity is becoming known. They made substantial contributions toward the stabilization of the economy of the town. At one time, for example, Mr. and Mrs. Beach were paying utility bills for more than 30 families. Food and clothing were often furnished; many doctor bills were paid with Beach funds. Help was always given in such a way that the recipients had no way of knowing where it had originated. Those who did know were sworn to secrecy. Another form of the Beach aid was the erection of a market where local farmers could sell pro-



REX BEACH

duce. Mrs. Beach paid for the market's construction.

A grateful city, wishing to express its appreciation, attempted to do so by naming its best known body of water Rex Beach Lake. Sebring worked to establish the new name, but after some years the name was officially changed back to what it had never ceased to be on the public's tongue, Lake Jackson.

Pioneer Personalities

Chester B. Treadway



Registered on a homestead south of townsite in 1910, first attorney for Sebring, 1933-37, was chairman of State Road Board (Governor Sholtz administration).

Steps Toward Recovery

Citizens not so well known as Rex Beach also made their contributions. At times they disagreed almost violently about the means to be used, but each sincerely worked for the benefit of the community. The hardships, which in some ways were more taxing than those of earlier days, united Sebring in a new way.

Several groups were formed to study the complex tax situation and to suggest improvements. Other study groups made recommendations for more efficient operation of the city and county governments. Organizations aiming at the promotion of the general economic welfare sprang up and worked hard.

One of the hardest working groups was the Chamber of Commerce. The days of the high pressure Chamber secretary with a dozen stenographers was past, leaving in the wake a sheaf of unpaid bills. A group of volunteers stepped into this confusion and between 1928 and 1933 seemed to perform miracles.

The Board of Governors—Ada Rippberger, Julia West, Ruena West, Dorothy Doane, C. F. Saunders, P. G. Gearing, Mike Kahn, C. Elton Weaver, P. A. Naylor, and Ebb Gallaher — met every Monday night.

After they had paid off all financial obligations to which they had fallen heir, they worked out new schemes of advertising the advantages

Pioneer Personalities

C. B. and H. S. Jones

Brothers Brandon and Spencer came to Sebring in 1912 and proved up homesteads, have been in business together for half a century—for relatively short periods engaged in land clearing and grove development, draying, dry cleaning, dairy, real estate sales—and for the last 35 years have been engaged in wholesale gasoline products distribution, both have been volunteer firemen since first company formed, both holders of Firemen's Most Valuable Man Award.

of Sebring and enticing trade to the businesses of the town.

One of the innovations introduced at the time was the Tourist Club—a vital organization continuing into present day Sebring. Miss Ruena West contributed her entire time to organizing the Tourist Club, to providing entertainment for visitors, and to acting as a social hostess for the Chamber of Commerce.

S. J. RUDASILL

S. J. RUDASILL, JR.

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Sebring, Florida

(Since 1936)

International Harvester Products

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Irrigation Supplies

A SIZE AND
STYLE
FOR EVERY
BUSINESS



MOTOR

TRUCKS

TRACTORS
SALES — SERVICE

DEPENDABLE
SERVICE
AT LOW
COST



TUSCAWILLA PARK was the site of a gigantic Children's Day celebration on September 4, 1930. The above picture shows less than half the children attending. F. A. Sebring donated the land for the park and headed the financial campaign for the building. Seventy-five percent of the money was donated by firms and individuals, 25 percent was allocated from the city's publicity fund. Tuscawilla pavillion was completed in 1921 and became the town gathering place until it burned in the forties.

"Buy it in Sebring"

Dozens of trade-encouraging "gimmicks" were tried. A "Buy it in Sebring" campaign was inaugurated with tangible effects. In connection with this, a unique competitive check contest was carried on. Each of the civic organizations of the town wrote a check for two dollars in payment for some account. These checks circulated around town for a given period of time. A prize was awarded for the check which had, within the contest period, gathered the greatest number of endorsements, signifying the greatest number of payments made on merchandise bought in Sebring. Some residents recall seeing the "contest checks" circulating with extra sheets of paper stapled on to give more room for the large number of endorsements.

Street dances, a feature of the earlier days of Sebring, were re-instituted. A platform was built on the lot adjoining the Fire Station. Square dancing was popular, and Johnny Bill Schumacher was the principal caller. Several fiddlers contributed their talents. The dances were held on Saturday night, and residents flocked to the downtown area not only to dance, but to shop, visit, and simply to watch the crowds go by. Choice parking places were claimed before dark. As the crowd gathered, people went from car to car to visit. Merchants stayed open as long as any trade

was coming in, and it was usually well after 11 o'clock before stores were closed.

Among the early post-Boom ventures was a county fair. The first Highlands County Fair was held the week of January 13-20, 1927, at Lakemont, midway between Sebring and Avon Park. According to a newspaper announcement, admission would be 35 cents during the day and 20 cents at night, children 20 cents. The program included citrus, poultry and automobile exhibitions, circus side shows, a minstrel show, and "three fun rides". The fair preparations were headed by J. W. "Uncle Jimmy" Geary.

Serving Sebring Since 1925

McRAE'S 5-10-25c STORE

C. C. (Speedy) Miller, Owner

WHERE SERVING YOU IS A PLEASURE

Air Conditioned for Your Comfort

**Welcome back ole timers
Drop in and pay us a visit**

Saga of Highlands Hammock

One of the most effective factors in the area's economic recovery was the work initiated by John A. Roebling, particularly in the construction of Highlands Hammock, west of Sebring. This project has grown in value and occupies a unique place in the history of Florida.

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 non-existent, many picnics, hunting parties, and sightseeing 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.

Increased Interest in Park Area

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)

HIGHLANDS HAMMOCK UNDER CONSTRUCTION



SEBRING'S NEWEST — LARGEST — MOST
MODERN — SELF-SERVICE DRUG STORE

TOUCHTON'S Rexall Drug

Southgate Shopping Center

EV 5-0557

COMPLETE PRESCRIPTION SERVICE

FOR ALL YOUR NEEDS

Drugs — Cosmetics — Personal Gifts
Films — Sundries

Beautiful Modern Soda Fountain

BREAKFAST :: LUNCHES :: DINNER

7 A.M. TO 9 P.M.

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 the local public raised relatively minor amounts to prove that it was a project in which the people of Highlands County were genuinely interested.

Building of Park Begins

One of the greatest contributions that Roebling made to the progress of the park project was the lending of the services of his chief engineer, Alexander Blair, to serve as planner and builder of the park. Blair was intensely interested from the beginning, and his enthusiasm has continued.

He is still associated with the park as chairman of Highlands Hammock Advisory Council, a group that acts as consultants in matters pertaining to the maintenance and operation of the park. Roebling made available more than \$400,000, and without this money, progress would not have been possible. However, it is generally believed that the persistence and encouragement of Blair is largely responsible for the success of the project.

Highlands Hammock was formally dedicated to public use on March 15, 1931. The dedication ceremony attracted state-wide attention and interest. However, it was soon evident that the matter of providing funds for maintenance was a very serious one, not easily solved. No state organization or bureau was authorized to handle such affairs, and it was not feasible to raise funds by public subscription year after year. At one time proposals were made that Highlands Hammock become a county park with a place in the budget of the county commissioners.

Late in 1935 the Forestry Department of the state accepted responsibility for the administration, maintenance, and operation of the park. On November 21, 1935, Highlands Hammock became the first Florida State Park. Senators Henry Murphy and Spessard Holland, State Forester Harry Lee Baker, Alexander Blair and many less well known citizens combined efforts to bring about state acceptance. This move, incidently, led Florida into

HAPPY TIMES...for your family include



SUNDAY AFTERNOONS for many years in the Thirties found families attending the vesper services at the amphitheatre at Highlands Hammock. Programs featured many famous speakers and were well attended.

Happy Motoring

with



CROWN GASOLINE

ATLAS TIRES

ESSO MOTOR OIL

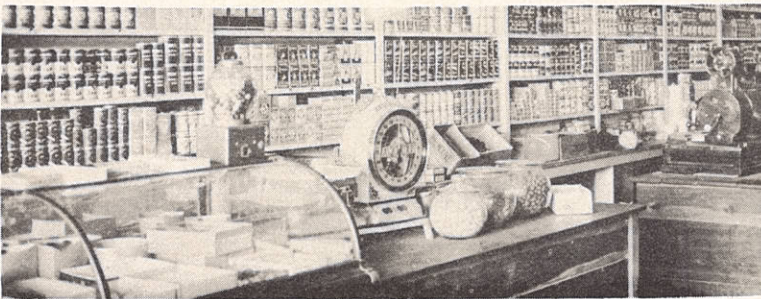
J. M. STILES, Agent

Serving Highlands County Since 1931

Recollections of the Spooners



ARMISTICE DAY, 1920, A. F. and son, Josh F. Spooner, arrived in Sebring, where they purchased the grocery store of P. L. Vincent. They opened for business the following day. After 10 years in the same location, they built next door and moved. Hudson's and Wilson's are now in the original building, seen above. Later a second store was opened on Lemon Street.



JAWBREAKERS, all-day suckers, coffee grinder, hand-cranked cash register—all reminiscent of the first store as seen here in 1921. In 1930, A. F. was elected to his first of two terms as county commissioner, and later served a term on the city council. Josh was elected to the first of six terms on the city council in 1930. In 1932, Spooners took over operation of the Lemon Street market. Many were the \$9.00 WPA checks cashed there through the depression.



ARBUCKLE CREEK was the site of this 1933 alligator ride. Daughters Shirley Sue, seated, and Mima Lee exhibit their bravery. The girls grew up and were both May Queens of Sebring High School. The downtown store was sold, and in 1945 the Lemon Street store was sold. For ten years the Spooners operated a nearby hardware and dry goods store. Then in 1957, they entered the real estate business.



INTRODUCED IN 1921, married in 1924. Cleora Burkett from Pennsylvania had wintered in Sebring with her parents and had attended school here. Josh and Cleora are seen here on the Model T delivery car.



MR. AND MRS. JOSH SPOONER again operate the Lemon Street Market. A. F., now 82 years old, still works three days a week in the real estate office.

the development of some of the nation's finest parks—ready at the time when the nation's interest in camping began skyrocketing.

Further Park Developments

The expansion of Highlands Hammock led to another of the major steps in the rehabilitation of Sebring's economy in the 1930's. In 1934 the federal government assigned to the Hammock project a camp of the Civilian Conservation Corps. In the same year a new organization was formed to develop a botanical garden and an arboretum on an area adjoining the Hammock. The Florida Federation of Garden Clubs and the Florida Board of Forestry were solidly behind this new movement. The botanical garden was to be an area for the development of horticultural and botanical displays. The arboretum would be used for experimenting with trees and shrubs to determine their values in the economy of the state.

Several millions of dollars and thousands of man-days of work were expended in the development of these plans. C. Ray Vinten, of the National Park Service, was among the directors of the work. The project held great promise and progressed very well until 1942. During World War II it was impossible to obtain the labor and materials necessary for maintenance of the garden and arboretum. A skeleton crew took care of the buildings and other physical structures, but the valuable collection of plants was either stolen or given away. After the war an effort was made to resume the botanical garden program, but sufficient funds could not be made available. The entire project was abandoned and all efforts were directed toward maintenance of the Hammock area.

Pioneer Personalities

J. B. Brown

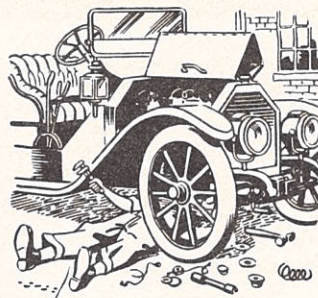
Served on city council, bought out the first hardware store and continued to operate the hardware business for some years (in a building which now houses a North Ridgewood Drive clothing store).



CCC PROJECTS at Highlands Hammock included forming and finishing concrete fence posts. Many of these are still in use at the Hammock.

Continuing Influence Upon the Economy

The Hammock has been one of the important factors in the economy of Highlands County. It began at the depth of the Depression, providing profitable work for many individuals who otherwise would have found scant market for their talents. Roebling and Blair, both mechanical geniuses, maintained a policy of using no mechanical devices where manpower could be employed. For example, concrete was mixed by hand and lawn sprinklers were avoided in favor of hand-held nozzles. In all matters, men were employed in preference to machines. However,



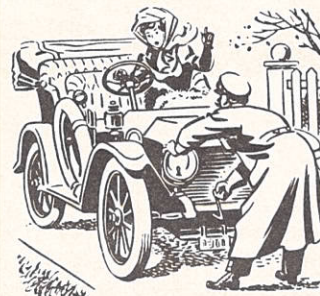
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GENUINE AUTOMOTIVE
PARTS and SUPPLIES

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North Main Street



CRANE**THE PREFERRED
PLUMBING**

by

TED SHOEMAKER

Repairs

Heating

Sprinkler Systems

Sebring Hotel Bldg.**EV 5-8642**

no money was wasted. Only the highest qualities of workmanship and service were accepted. One older worker recalls that Roebling "started the WPA before there was a national WPA—and the Roebling type was minus the 'boondoggling'."

The CCC camp was a boon to the merchants of the community. Many of the supplies for the more than 200-man unit were purchased locally, as were the building materials and equipment repair parts. This continued until the upswing of the economy of the nation at the commencement of World War II. The visitors who flock to the Hammock continue to make annual contributions to Sebring's economy.

JOHN A. ROEBLING made substantial contributions to the economic stability of Sebring during the Depression. His gifts of more than \$400,000 made possible the development of Highlands Hammock.



Cultural and Scientific Center

Highlands Hammock State Park's value as a cultural and scientific center is beyond estimating. It has always been the policy of the Hammock to avoid disturbing the natural conditions of the flora and fauna. Many student groups have used the park as a natural classroom. Prior to World War II it was customary to hold Sunday afternoon vesper services there during the Winter season. Nationally known leaders in politics and business,

W. W. HARSHMAN, President

F. M. SCHUMACHER, Secretary-Treasurer

Since 1937

Quality Fertilizer

Grove — Ranch — Farm

Twenty-five years experience in the manufacture of fertilizer for Highlands County and vicinity. Our quality, service and prices cannot be matched. Call us before buying.

HIGHLANDS FERTILIZER CO.

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as well as famed church leaders, accepted invitations to speak at these services.

Many elaborate and highly complimentary statements have been made about the beauties of the Hammock. The one that will probably be quoted most often was voiced by Col. Richard Lieber, recognized for four decades as the leading authority on state parks. This "Father of State Parks in the United States" said: "Highlands Hammock is one of the three outstanding natural parks in the United States".

Sebring in the 1930's may not have been the "City of Smiles" (as it had described itself in the '20's), but it did better than just surviving. The wholesale poverty and unrelieved hardship which darkened larger cities and some other areas of the country never gripped Sebring. A reasonably stable economy and community outlook had been established before the 1940's and world war hurled new challenges.



HIGHLANDS HAMMOCK STATE PARK in 1938 found Park Superintendent Hayden Williams, left, and Chamber of Commerce President Coy Welch examining a much publicized oddity, four live oaks growing out of one trunk.

Rainmakers

1939:

A SILENT VIGIL beside a body of water was the method of rainmaking used by the famed Miss Lillie Stoaate. In March, 1939, her methods were credited with producing drenching downpours in Frostproof. Immediately the parched people of Sebring sought to obtain her services. At the invitation of the Chamber of Commerce and grovemen, Miss Stoaate took up a vigil on Lake Jackson. For days she sat at the end of City Pier, but she never needed the umbrella she carried along. The day after Miss Lillie departed a very heavy rain fell, and many wondered whether Miss Lillie's powers were responsible.

1962:

YOU CAN BE SURE that your crops will have water when they need it if you use **WEBSTER IRRIGATION PIPE**. Our slogan is, "We make rain while the sun shines".

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Sebring Air Terminal Industrial Park

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Sebring

Aluminum Products:

Water-Master

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Economizer

—Founded 1947—



Newest Addition to Sebring's Skyline

SEBRING WILL GROW. Sebring must grow. Here is proof: I came to Sebring in 1955. I opened a New and Used Car lot at 212 N. Ridgewood Drive, on a 50 ft. lot with seven cars. Now, 7½ years later, I have a much larger lot and have sold over 1,800 cars. From the smallest dealer to one of the largest. I owe all of this to the many customers of Sebring and Highlands County and their repeat business. Let me say, "Thanks a million, everybody"!

**REMEMBER, JIM HAMMON IS NEVER SATISFIED
UNTIL YOU ARE. WE SELL TO SELL AGAIN.**

Jim Hammon—New and Used Cars

212 North Ridgewood

Phone EV 5-0841

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FORTIES

The Pace Quickens

As the thirties drew to a close the international picture was darkening. In Sebring, as in the rest of the United States, citizens wistfully hoped this country could avoid war and tried to ignore any considerations of the alternative.

At home the economic outlook gradually brightened, and spirits lifted. For the first time since the "ebbing" of the Boom, major construction was started. The year 1940 saw the completion of the present post office, an addition to the high school building, and construction of a recreation building (now the Tourist Club).

For the Chamber of Commerce the thirties concluded in crisis—but not so severe as the problems at the beginning of the decade. One of the major difficulties in 1939 was the dissension over the best location for the new highway (now U.S. 27). Merchants wanted the road routed through the business district and complained loudly that any other route would result in the city's "drying up". Home owners were equally certain that the road should skirt the city.

In spite of its financial difficulties at this time the Chamber continued to work at promoting tourism. In 1940 Sebring brochures were mailed out in unprecedented numbers.

New Government Project Sought

The Chamber of Commerce and city council in mid-1940 gave joint endorsement to a controversial project. Four of the town's civic leaders—City Attorney Joe Kinsey, Highlands Hammock Superintendent Allen Altwater, Ford Heacock, and Payne Sebring—made a trip to Washington, D. C., to lobby for an army camp.

As war broke in Europe and America increased its defense preparations, the Civilian Conservation Corps program withered. Finally the CCC camp located at Highlands Hammock was closed. Although the camp had never been large (about 250 men at the most), its termination left a gap in Sebring's economy.

About the same time, Congress passed the Selective Service Act. The armed services were quickly opening camps where draftees would receive their year of training.

The city owned a square mile (about 640 acres) along the road leading to Highlands Hammock and a second plot about half that large in the area now known as Highlands Homes.

Late in July, 1940, the city council decided to offer its land to the federal government for use as a training base. On a Friday afternoon the council appropriated \$150 for a committee to

go to Washington. By Monday morning the Kinsey, Altwater, Heacock, Sebring team was in the Capitol interviewing senators and congressmen. The committeemen said the interviews went along so well that hopes were high. When the group arrived at the office of Florida Senator Claude Pepper they found they had been preceded by a telegram of inquiry from Sebring's newspaper, the **Sebring American**. Senator Pepper had wired the newspaper, "Regret to advise that Army does not contemplate locating defense army training camp at Sebring".

The newspaper headlined the Senator's reply and added, "No announcement of the committee's trip was made hitherto as it was decided not to publicize the matter and the **American** was not called in or even advised of the meeting, which was held in council chambers . . .

"Despite efforts to prevent publicity which might furnish an undesirable 'tip' to other possibly competitive towns, the news leaked out . . . bringing forth the following comments by citizens . . .

"1. An Army camp in Sebring would promote an influx of 'ladies of the evening' or 'fille de joy' as the French say.



THE LIONS' DEN, built in the late 20's served for many years as a downtown recreation center. It was located on the site where, in 1940, a permanent Recreation Building was erected. This structure now houses the Tourist Club and Chamber of Commerce office.

"2. It would make Sebring the center of Fifth Column or spy activities in Florida.

"3. It would establish Sebring as a 'military target' in case of war.

"On the other hand there were many favorable comments which concerned the extra business that would be brought to merchants in the added payroll . . .

"Some criticism was heard as to the provision

for . . . expenses of the committee coming from the municipality . . . Others . . . observed that the committee went off 'half cocked' and that in view of the quick announcement by the war department, it was evident Sebring could never have been seriously considered . . ."

Sebring Chosen For Air Base

Eleven months later it became obvious that Sebring's offer had received consideration. The **Sebring American** for June 12, 1941 announced, "With a blast of the Sebring fire whistle early this morning residents of Sebring sent up a cheer that sounded like an early victory against Adolph Hitler. The blast, however, was a response to a flock of telegrams sent to Sebring by Congressman J. Hardin Peterson".

The Peterson telegrams said, "Am authorized to announce area in Highlands County near Sebring of 9,200 acres selected as a basic air corps training school with approximately 1,500 men and officers with 250 cadets to be trained at a time. Construction of the camp will be under a U.S. District Engineer and operation of the camp will be under the U.S. Air Corps".

This telegram was not a complete surprise to the city. The **American** reported, ". . . the notice is only one of many indications of the War Department's decision to establish a Flying Air Base in Highlands County".

The first announcement was in the form of a legal advertisement for "bids on the BASIC FLYING SCHOOL at Sebring, Florida".

A few months after the flying school bids had been advertised, the United States entered World War II. Men and women left Sebring to train and fight all around the globe, and people from all corners of the nation came to Sebring to train at Hendricks Field.

At the height of the war about 9,000 men were stationed here. Hendricks Field became an "assembly point" where specialists from a half-dozen types of training schools were brought together to form airplane crews.

Like the Boom, the war years were a time apart in the history of Sebring. Dreams of a happy community devoted to growing citrus and enjoying health water were laid away "for the duration". The Recreation Center and City Pier were turned over to the USO.

The time had one other resemblance to the Boom: it brought to town many fine people who liked what they saw in Sebring and later made it their permanent home.

Hendricks Field was de-activated in 1946. The war was over. Servicemen returned home, and aided by the ex-GI's who had adopted Sebring, the task of dusting off and re-evaluating dreams began.

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McHargue Furniture Store

30 SOUTH COMMERCE

SEBRING, FLORIDA

Enjoying Our 16th Year Clothing the People
of Sebring

WILSON'S

(HENRY DEMBITZ)

"Outfitters for Entire Family"

Three Churches Built

The forties were a time of religious expansion in Sebring. Three new churches were constructed within the decade.

The Church of the Nazarene began with a tent meeting in 1943. Two years later the congregation was able to dedicate a debt-free church at the corner of South Commerce and Pine Streets.

Southside Baptist Church had its beginnings in a tent, too. The Gospel Tent was first erected in the Highlands Home area in 1947. The name Highlands Home Baptist Mission was adopted by the new congregation.

Within 1947 the tent was moved to a new site on Orange Street, and in 1948 the church acquired its present property on South Commerce. The name of the group was changed to Southside Baptist Church. In 1948 the first unit of the new church building was dedicated.

An educational wing was added in 1954. Southside Baptist's interest in Highlands Homes has continued, and in 1961 the Calvary Baptist Chapel was begun as a mission church in that area.

The Church of God edifice on North Ridgewood near Dinner Lake was erected in 1948. Although this was its first church building, the congregation was much older. It was the only new church founded in Sebring in the 1930's. At first, cottage prayer meetings were held in homes, but in 1934 the congregation was formally organized. Services were held for some years in a bakery on Magnolia.

School Program Expanded

The Sebring schools took giant steps in this decade. In 1940 a large unit—including 19 classrooms, library, auditorium, administrative offices, and band room—was added to the high school building.

An agricultural department building was completed in 1942, and a year later a frame building was purchased to house the industrial arts department. In 1946 a gymnasium was constructed.

Dramatic changes were made in the curri-

culum. In 1947 Highlands County Board of Public Instruction agreed to help finance a pilot program in exceptional child education.

Special classes, study materials, and especially trained teachers were made available for children whose intellectual abilities were limited to the point where it was difficult, if not impossible, for them to keep pace with the normal flow of class work.

Several years later the exceptional child program was expanded to include the gifted children. Before Russian space achievements aroused national interest in accelerated education for bright children, Highlands County had a well established program to provide the extra challenges for the more capable students.

A unique feature of the Highlands County exceptional child program is the placement of students. The board of public instruction adopted a policy abandoning the old idea of assigning all bright students to one class and all slower pupils to another.

The board's policy calls for homeroom units to be maintained as representative cross sections of the school's student body, including children with wide ranges in ability and even physically handicapped. Assignments to special classes for several hours each day are made on the basis of individual needs and abilities.

This newer approach to exceptional child edu-



QUALITY HOMES

By HILLCREST

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FREE LOTS WITHIN THE CITY, OR BUILT ON
YOUR OWN LOT IN THIS AREA.

50 YEARS AGO

*... this city was perfectly planned in
a beautiful natural setting. Every home
that we build is designed to preserve
this tranquil setting, and help to make
Sebring an even better city in which
to live.*

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE & INTEGRITY
BACKED BY
38 YEARS OF CONSTRUCTION EXPERIENCE

G. & E. DUNDAS

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EVergreen 5-8572



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EV 5-8542

Third Floor

Court House

cation is being copied across the entire state.

The school program was also enriched by the addition of a summer recreational program in 1947, and driver education in 1949.

On the athletic front the Sebring High School baseball team rode high. In 1940, '41, '42 the Blue Streaks were Ridge Conference champions.

Highlands County Fair

One pre-war project which resumed was Highlands County Fair. The first permanent fair building was completed in 1949.

In the late 1920's County Agent Louis Alsmeyer and Commissioner A. L. Butler had promoted the first Highlands County fairs. These fairs, held at Lakemont, were excellent programs but probably were not self-supporting and required tremendous amounts of work from a few active sponsors. In the early 1930's no fairs were held.

Sponsorship Assumed By Firemen

The Sebring Firemen during the Boom had sponsored a carnival on the block where the Tourist Club now stands. Later the Firemen refused to sponsor this type of project which they said "performed no beneficial service to the city even though the public seemed to patronize them generously, thereby indicating that they wanted something of this type of amusement".

Late in 1936 a carnival company had con-

tacted the Firemen and stated that if the Firemen did not sponsor a carnival, the company would operate here independently.

At this point the idea of reviving the county fair was considered and in due time the contracts signed. The carnival then became attached to a worthwhile program instead of operating as an end in itself.

According to the **Story of the Sebring Firemen**, the first fair staged by the Firemen, in 1937, is remembered within the organization as something of a nightmare: "As the men were all inexperienced in this line of endeavor, it is understandable that some mistakes should be made.

"The carnival company had been investigated properly and appeared to be reliable but . . . they failed to meet . . . financial responsibilities to the local group and left town without settling . . . obligations. However, Elton Weaver followed them doggedly from one location to another until he collected the money due . . ."

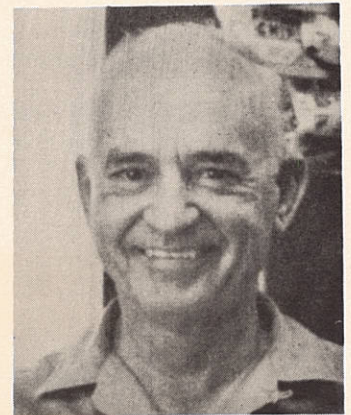
Whatever the Firemen lacked in skill and "carnival type" acumen, they made up in enthusiasm; and the public responded. The fair was a success.

At first the rejuvenated fair was held at the northern end of Ridgewood Drive. After two

Pioneer

Personalities

Ted Cason



Came to Sebring with his parents within the first year

of the town's history, mayor, president of Merchants Association, member of Lions Club since 1936, member of school board, engaged in business on the Circle.

years it was moved to the corner of Lemon and Orange Streets—a location that proved inadequate because of limited parking facilities.

At the end of World War II the Firemen acquired a permanent fair ground by buying many small parcels of land in an old sub-division lying between Kenilworth Boulevard and the Firemen's baseball field.

Leaky, flapping, but nonetheless expensive exhibit tents were the next problem. A step toward solving this was the construction of the first permanent building. A 40 by 200 feet concrete

Page's Standard Station

BILL PAGE

Serving Sebring With
STANDARD OIL PRODUCTS
Since 1935

block structure was completed by the end of 1948. With financial assistance from the state legislature, two metal buildings were constructed in the fifties. A fourth building was completed in 1962.

In 1962 the county fair program was ex-

panded to include the exhibits of the annual Highlands County Schools' Science Fair.

The sponsorship of the fair has broadened, too. At the present the Firemen sponsor the fair along with the Cattlemen's Association and the county agricultural extension office.

Sebring Firemen, Incorporated

Sponsoring the county fair is only one of the "non-fire-fighting" jobs which has been taken on by the Sebring Firemen, the community's "work horse" organization.

Serious organization of the Firemen began in 1925. Prior to that time some training had been carried out, and the volunteers performed well in real emergencies; but the overall spirit was playful and organization rather casual.

During the Boom, interest dropped so low that fire trucks often ran out of gasoline when



THE FIRE HOUSE completed in December, 1927, was carefully planned to serve the city for generations. Firemen and Architect William Heim studied many suggestions and new fire houses throughout Florida before coming up with the plans for this building.

SEBRING FIREMEN, INC.

THERE IS AN OLD MAXIM to the effect that the "First Thirty Years Are The Hardest." This maxim may be applied in fact to our department which has its share of pleasant memories. The department experienced the usual hardships in its infancy but early found the combination of hardwork and high interest to be the ingredient necessary for success.

Never in the history of Sebring or Highlands County has such a devout group of men persisted in developing an organization to such peak efficiency as these dedicated few have for the Sebring Fire Department.

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, way back in 1913 until the present time, this group of men has devoted time and talents in the service of the fire department and the promotion of a better community through their interest and active leadership in

worthy community projects and in their primary objection of saving lives and protecting property.

From an humble beginning in a tin shack housing a hand pulled chemical fire cart, the department has progressed to modern radio equipped fire engines of today. Times have changed since firemen were summoned by the blast of a shotgun. Firemen are given accurate and prompt information now by means of a modern Gamewell alarm system.

EACH FIRE CHIEF has contributed to the effectiveness of the department and should be remembered for his service to our community. Aaron Withers was the first official fire chief serving from 1913 to 1920. He was followed by Walter Zackery 1920-25, Allen Altvater 1925-34, Hal Long 1934-41, Austin Heacock 1941-42, Forest Howard 1942-61 and Thurman

Haywood, the current chief, became chief in 1961.

THE SEBRING FIREMEN ASSOCIATION has grown with the community. They have spearheaded the drive for better athletic facilities, a vigorous county fair, and sponsor of the Sebring International Grand Prix Sports Car Race. The membership has also grown but still numbers among its active members some of its original charter members.

The history of the Sebring Firemen is one of service, not only to Sebring and Highlands County, but to the entire state of Florida, as the Association has worked diligently to promote similar organizations in our area and throughout the state.

With a strong sense of responsibility to their fellowman, and with God by their side, they shall march through time ever striving to be of greater service to their community.



SEBRING FIREMEN, INC., officers: front row, left to right: Errol Lanier, secretary; Jack Hancock, treasurer; Russ Albritton, vice president; Gene Sauls, president. Back row: Woodrow Harshman, trustee; Eldridge Pollard, assistant chief; Henry Bailey, trustee; Pink McAdams, trustee; G. T. Haywood, chief; C. B. Jones, Jr., chaplain.

enroute to fires. Chief W. B. Zachary moved away from Sebring, but it was several months before the town realized that it was without a fire chief. When the mayor realized there was no fire department he brought the situation to the attention of the town council. On June 30, 1925, 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".

The council followed this suggestion, and Allen Altvater was appointed chief. Under Altvater the department re-organized around a nucleus of ten veteran firemen. A little later Sebring employed two full time engineers—Eph Sidders and Harry Kline—the first professional staff for the Fire Department.

Training was consistent and intensive. As the city's water system expanded, so did the network of water mains. The fire department achieved a new level of efficiency, and fire losses dropped. A record low was established in 1937 when total fire losses for Sebring came to \$175.41.

Scientific Fire-Fighting Instruction Given

A scientific study of the causes and nature of fire was instituted in 1928. Harry K. Brown, a retired professor of chemistry then living in Sebring, gave his Sunday afternoons to conduct these classes.

The classes were so popular that the Sebring Firemen had the lectures published. Almost 400 requests for copies were received—from universities, libraries, industrial companies, as well as fire departments.

Spurred by this response, the Sebring Firemen, with cooperation from such groups as the National Board of Fire Underwriters and the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, worked out plans for a Florida Fire College. The first session of the College was held in Daytona Beach in May, 1930.

The second year the college was held in Sebring. The Sebring Fire Department may take pride in its part in initiating the Fire College. Florida went on to become one of the leaders in establishing a state-wide system of training in

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Communications?

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fire suppression. The Sebring department was the real founder of the Florida Fire College.

Even with state-wide and national recognition, among the residents of Sebring the Firemen have always been best known for their variety of "non-fire-fighting" activities.

Recreational Activities Begun

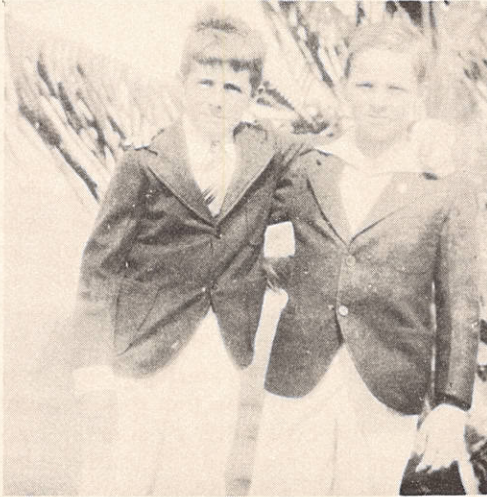
The Firemen's first venture in promotion of athletics was made in 1927 when a basketball team was organized. The Firemen cagers became well known across the state and piled up impressive records against University of Florida, University of Miami, and House of David teams.

In 1928 the Firemen shouldered the responsibility of directing the recreational program for the whole city. Teams sponsored by many organizations and businesses entered volleyball, diamondball (now called softball), horse shoes, and shuffleboard competition. The Firemen's athletic committee handled scheduling and sometimes arranged for prizes. The ball field at Tusawilla Park was developed at this time.

The recreational program offered activities for all ages. Before the development of American Legion, Babe Ruth, or Little Leagues for school-boy baseball—Sebring Firemen organized and financed a "Junior Firemen" baseball team. The Firemen now sponsor a team in Little League.

Firemen provided the initial funds for a Se-

SEBRING HERO



THE SECOND RANKING ACE in the Pacific Theatre of World War II was a Sebring man. Tommy McGuire (left) is shown here with a Sebring classmate, Clarence Campbell. As a fighter pilot Major McGuire was credited with shooting down 38 Japanese planes before his own plane went down somewhere over the Pacific. Campbell, now Dr. Campbell, is state veterinarian for Florida.

bring High School baseball team. For the basketball team, they furnished the first warm-up clothes and kept the playing floor in condition.

Sports Lead to Incorporation

Sebring Firemen's keen interest in athletics led to the organization's becoming a non-profit corporation. In 1930 the Firemen went deeply into debt to acquire a permanent baseball field. To protect individual members, the corporation was set up.

The articles of incorporation were approved in July, 1930. The firemen had become Sebring Firemen, Incorporated.

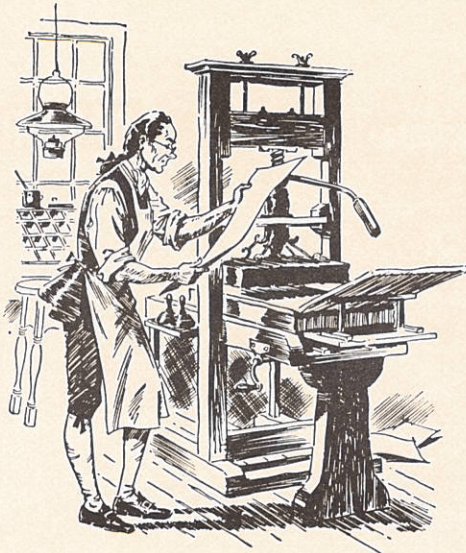
The playing site obtained by the corporation was an abandoned orange grove at the foot of Magnolia. Within months, old trees and rubble had been cleared away, and the first unit of Firemen's Field was dedicated in 1931. Lights were added in 1939.

As interest in scholastic football grew, the Firemen added a gridiron to the Field. A separate football field with independent lighting system was finished in 1960. One year later a permanent grandstand of concrete and steel—complete with locker rooms—was built.

Between 1929 and 1955 Sebring Firemen contributed to the town's recreational program by staging variety shows. An old-fashioned minstrel format was followed for these tremendously popular entertainments.

Fair, athletics, minstrels—Sebring Firemen had a hand in them all; and when the 1950's rolled around, the Firemen would play a leading role in Sebring's most famed activity—the international sports car races.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FIFTIES

The 12 Hours of Sebring

A chance observation from the air played a decisive role in the establishment of Highlands Hammock. Two decades later another chance aerial observation led to the beginning of sports car racing in Sebring.

A group of American sports car enthusiasts had been hunting a suitable site for racing. The Collier brothers—Sam and Miles—and Phil Stiles—noticed the maze of roads at Sebring Air Terminal (formerly Hendricks Field) and sought permission to stage a sports car race there.

These "car connoisseurs" had no interest in the administration and promotion of racing as a spectator sport. Sebring Firemen, Inc., agreed to assume that responsibility.

The first Sebring sports car race was staged on New Year's Eve, 1950. A three and a half mile course was laid out for the six-hour race. About 3,000 fans came to watch the race and spend the day wandering on, off, and across the track.

The Sports Car Club of America sponsored the first race here, but this organization withdrew when a controversy arose over the development of the Sebring race. Some of the early backers, including Alec Ulmann and George Huntoon, saw in the air base an ideal site for a 12-hour "road race" of international importance.

In the infancy of the auto industry proud owners had engaged in races on the open highway. Gradually an elaborate set of rules grew up to govern this type of competition, regarded by some as the most difficult in auto racing. Crowd control is always a major problem in road racing, and lack of adequate controls led to the banning of races on American highways.

The air base roads located in the midst of a relatively isolated area met the requirements for a road race and the possibility of spectator control.

The second race, run in 1952, had the backing of the Internationale de l'Automobile and the

Ralph & Ken's

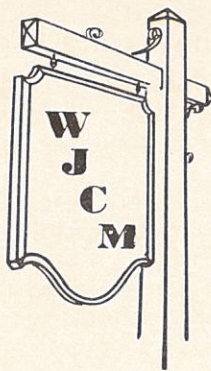
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DRIVERS RACE BEFORE CARS DO as The 12 Hours of Sebring opens with the colorful Le Mans Start. The Sebring race, from its beginning in 1950, was modeled after the famed 24-hour Grand Prix at LeMans, France. To be on hand for the LeMans Start, fans attending the Sebring race rise long before dawn, to make their way to track where the race begins at 10 a.m.



1000 WATTS

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Radio Station WJCM was established in May, 1950 with 100 watts of power. Under the present ownership, the power was increased to 250 watts in 1953. In February, 1957, WJCM moved to their present frequency of 960 K. C. with 500 watts and by April, 1958 was serving the Ridge Area with 1,000 watts of power.

WJCM is owned by a Pennsylvania company, the Progressive Publishing Company of Clearfield, and its owners and executives come from Clearfield, Huntingdon, Beaver, Kittanning, to name only a few.

WJCM's owners are active in their communities and have always urged their Sebring associates to follow a similar course.

WJCM has primarily been operated over these 12 years by Sebring people—not transients who are here today and gone tomorrow.

For over 12 years, WJCM has served the Highlands County schools in broadcasting a children's music appreciation hour, conducted by Mrs. Frank Morgan and at the present time, WJCM is serving over 100 churches, civic, fraternal and veteran groups on WJCM's regularly scheduled "Community Bulletin Board of the Air".

WJCM has received awards from the United Press International, American Red Cross, Florida Highway Patrol, Goodwill Industries, American Legion and many other organizations in recognition of outstanding public service. WJCM is always prepared to be of service in cases of emergency as they were during Hurricane Donna, being the principal source of up-to-the-minute hurricane information.

WJCM, your "Good Music" station, is proud to be part of the Sebring community and pledges its continued efforts to serve you to the best of its ability.

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American Automobile Association. This was the first 12 hour race and initiated the now famous 5.2 mile course. For several years the race was entitled "International Grand Prix of Endurance". It is now known as "The 12 Hours of Sebring".

The first race drew 28 entries. The field is now limited to 65 cars. Since The 12 Hours of Sebring counts toward the world championship for both cars and drivers, every major and some minor sports car producers of the world have entries. The drivers come from many countries and are acknowledged as the elite of the racing world.

The number of spectators has increased from year to year, and in 1961 about 40,000 fans from many nations and every part of the United States attended.

Alec Ulmann, president of the Automobile Racing Club of Florida, and Reginald Smith, vice president, carry on a vigorous world-wide promotion of the annual race.

"Race Week" in late March is a special time for the whole city. Providing housing and meals for fans and race officials, as well as performing many duties at the track, involves virtually the entire population in the race. A carnival spirit prevails throughout town.

This race seems somehow appropriate for Sebring—for the town has been the site of specialized racing since its beginning.

Pioneer

Personalities

Fred S. Bee

Merchant and realtor, superintendent of Methodist Sunday School, member of city council.



The Racing Rage

The first automobile racing in Sebring was a type of road race. The Circle was starting point, finish line, and principal spectator area for these races.

Although cars were scarce in pre-World War I days, it usually was possible to muster a field of five or six entries. That many cars could not be lined up and started down the same street—the unpaved thoroughfares had only one or two sets of ruts each—so a unique system was worked out.

All entries started from the Circle, but on different streets. The total course was the same for each car, but the plan eliminated the need to pass. Each car came back to the Circle several times, and since few buildings had been erected in the heart of town, the spectators on the Circle could see each car a large part of the time. Grand prize for this forerunner of the Grand Prix was a 30 by 3½ tire.

Another type of race was held at the Circle one Thursday. Sebring's Negro men staged a marathon race—64 times around the Circle. The most remembered feature of this race was the wild betting which sprang up among the spectators. The wagering fans "took to the field" to shout encouragement and special bonus offers to the racers.

Sometimes mule team races were staged.

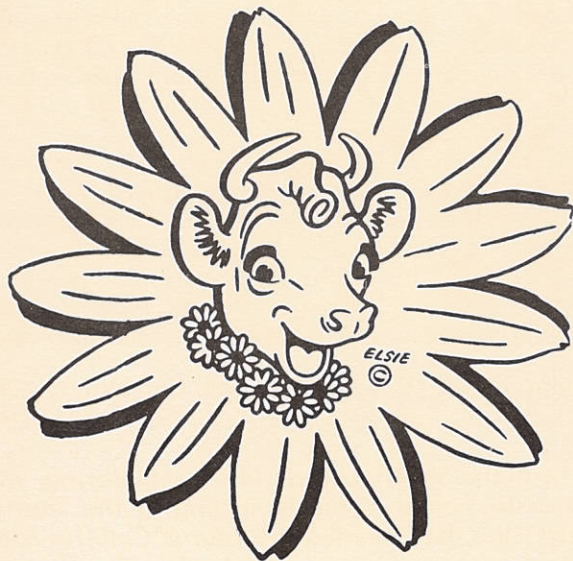


Niagara Cyclo-Massage Equipment and Furniture, seen above with **Helen Erdman**, authorized representative. Phone EVergreen 5-8691.

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The best remembered of these races was the one when Charlie Well's wagon came apart. In spite of this handicap, Well finished well, running with only his team and front axle of his wagon.

When the Thursday holidays passed away, the races, too, were laid away, but just before the sports car event began, the whole city joined in another light-hearted competition. In the 1940's residents staged a series of Gopher Races.

Enthusiasts captured gophers (a type of land turtle) and kept them from year to year, claiming that they fed their "racers" special diets and trained them. The training was not too evident for the gophers retained their tendency to "close up".

A large part of the time involved in each "race" was spent in tapping on the gophers' shells, trying to persuade the racers to extend head and feet and to make some movement toward the finish line.

In the midst of an age of speed, the gopher races drew wide attention and commanded considerable attendance.

Pioneer Personalities

George N. Capwell



Came to Sebring in early 1912, engaged in construction work, best known structures are the Sebring home, the old Hainz home, First National Bank Building, which is now the City Hall, Salvation Army Hall, established first brick manufacturing plant in Sebring, member of city council for eight years, a ardent and faithful member of the Salvation Army.

High School Accomplishments

High school athletic fans fared well in the fifties. Sebring Blue Streaks brought home a half-dozen Ridge Conference titles. The baseball team won the conference championship in 1950, 1958, and 1959. The football team won the Ridge title in 1958 and 1959. The basketball team ranked first in the Ridge in 1959.



FIRST HIGH SCHOOL BAND pictured in Miami before playing at the 1928 Elks National Convention. On the far right is Director P. J. Gustat.

At the beginning of the decade the Sebring High School band changed directors and continued in the high tradition set by the band's original director, P. J. Gustat.

In 1927 the Rotary Club had sponsored the formation of a high school band with Sebring Municipal Band Director Gustat in charge. By 1932 the Sebring band was earning superior (first) ratings in state competition.

In 1936 the Sebring band, although coming from a school rated Class C by enrollment, transferred to Class A division. Competing against much larger schools, Sebring succeeded in capturing its fifth consecutive state championship. A year later the whole town helped the band to make a trip to Rock Hill, S. C., to play in a regional contest. In South Carolina the band won another superior rating.

One of its outstanding trips was made in 1949 when the Blue Streak Band went to New York City to play in Madison Square Garden at the convention of Lions International.

When P. J. Gustat retired, in 1950, he was succeeded by his son, Paul. The band has continued to amass superior ratings at district and state contests.

The fifties marked the beginning of new achievements in the vocal music program at Sebring High School. For the first time large numbers of boys were enrolled in the chorus, and choral representatives began to bring superior ratings back to Sebring.

Tourist Club Reaches Stride

The Sebring Tourist Club hit new highs in the 1950's. The club had begun in the Depression, and in 1941 had been strengthened by mer-

ger with the Shuffleboard Club. J. B. Boring, who was instrumental in the launching of the Shuffleboard Club, had headed the Tourist Club for some time.

During the 1958-59 year the Tourist Club membership was 1,292, ranking second in the state. Only the St. Petersburg club was larger. Membership in the 1961-62 season was 1,102.

The Tourist Club was one of the first organizations to undertake a project in behalf of the new county hospital. The club raised \$1,052.85 to be used toward furnishing a room in the hospital.

New Churches in the Decade

Three new churches were launched in Sebring in the fifties. The old Woman's Club Building, which had sheltered many churches, was the first meeting place for Faith Lutheran Church. The congregation was organized in the spring of 1951. In 1956 a new church building was dedicated on North Lakeview Drive.

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Atonement Lutheran Church, which began in 1956, dedicated a new building on South Lakeview Drive in 1962.

The First Assembly of God Church began meeting in Highlands Homes Civic Center in 1955. Four years later, the congregation erected a new church at the corner of Kenilworth Boulevard and Beverly Ave.

Sebring and the World Scene

The fifties were a peaceful time in Sebring. The town grew, but more quietly and slowly than many parts of Florida. Some of George E. Sebring's aversion to "dust and noise" seemed to have been transmitted across the years and reasserted influence on the town.

At least two world events, however, intruded into the pursuit of peace and pleasure. A conflict in Korea resulted in the call up of many armed services reservists and enlarged draft calls for the younger men.

In Cuba a revolution was betrayed, and as the decade ended a trickle of refugees reached central Florida. Many of the Cubans who have come to the Sebring area have established homes and sadly declare that they will not return to Cuba. They are "putting down roots", participating in community life, and making their unique contribution to the life and color of the town.

Pioneer Personalities

Hardy V. Ryall

Brought his family from Barney, Ga. to Sebring early in 1914, planted many of the early groves and has continued his successful agriculture business, first home in Sebring was on North Ridgewood Drive where the Western Union office now is located.



This was the first time Sebring had offered haven for political refugees, but the history of the town is dotted with incidents of service to refugees, the victims of natural disaster.

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CHAPTER NINE

THE SIXTIES

In Like a Lion . . .

Donna. That's a name that strikes responsive chords in the citizens of Sebring, new and old alike. September, 1960, marks the time hurricane Donna swooped in from the Carribean. Only three other hurricanes in Sebring's history are comparable in size and fury.

Saturday, Sept. 9: the morning was warm; the sky was overcast. Radio and television were giving storm information and civil defense instructions—as they had been for two days. A total of 1,600 evacuees had fled to Sebring from Okeechobee County. Relief and rescue groups bustled about finishing their preparations. Most normal activity came to a halt and Sebring waited for Donna.

Like a turtle pulling itself slowly into its shell as it eyes an approaching enemy, Sebring pulled within itself when the first warm, sultry rains fell early in the afternoon. For most citizens activity for the next few hours consisted of glancing furtively through windows at the sky. At 4 p.m. the turtle winced under the crash of the leader winds. The sky grew black; wind gusts mounted in excess of 75 miles per hour; houses began to tremble. By 5 o'clock Donna was here.

Telephone and electrical facilities were cut off immediately. Until the next morning, Sebring was in complete darkness, save for a few flickerings from candles, oil lamps and flashlights.

At the Tourist Club and high school gymnasium hundreds of refugees lay exhausted from their journey. Red Cross and Civil Defense volunteers distributed food, coffee, bedding.

The streets were deserted. Winds continued to increase. A few cars, driven by police and relief workers, moved cautiously through town. Winds reached a pitch of 110 miles per hour and maintained this blast for several hours, establishing the longest sustained hurricane wind ever reported in the county.

Roads, yards, and buildings alike were victims of flying debris. Tin sheds, tile roofs, and sidings were especially vulnerable to Donna's might. They were torn off and set sailing. Trees bent double under the fury, and many were uprooted. Telephone poles groaned above Donna's roar. Around them lines lashed the ground like an angry slave beater's whip. Lake Jackson resembled a rough Atlantic "with more whitecaps showing than there was water", one observer stated. Its shores moved 60 yards or more in some places as the wind whipped blankets of sand far over Lakeview Drive.

Although nearly six inches fell in two days, rain was almost negligible. Donna was what old timers call a "dry hurricane". The wind was king, and the king was angry; everything buckled under his wrath.

At 8 p.m. the eastern edge of the hurricane's eye passed over the Highlands—some 25 miles from Sebring. Within hours the winds diminished. When morning dawned, the skies were clear. People cautiously ventured forth to survey the damage and begin mop-up operations.

Over 1,000 volunteers served under the Red Cross, Civil Defense, and other organizations in alerting the public and caring for the evacuees. After Donna passed, leaving wreckage and debris strewn indiscriminately over town, another tide of volunteers devoted time and energy to the clean-up campaign which lasted for weeks.

The 1926 Hurricane

Twice before had Sebring coped with the housing of storm refugees on so large a scale. The first time was in 1926.



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SEBRING RESCUE CREW which served long and valiantly in Moore Haven after the hurricane of 1926 included (back row, left to right), Jack Cleaver, Nick Vann, Robert Hedtke, George Wyandt, O. C. White; (front row, left to right), Ernest Roberts, Glenn Skipper, Allen Altvater, Dr. J. W. Mitchell, Mike Kahn, H. G. Eastwood.

This bit of scoffing appeared in the **Sebring Daily American** just before the hurricane of '26: "An Indian may not have any more scientific sense than a jaybird—and probably hasn't—but the Seminoles are coming out of the Everglades and camping on high ground along the Scenic Highway from Sebring south, in preparation for something they do not understand but which they say means much water—water that will cover the glades and make the Ridge country islands."

But the Seminoles were not far wrong. On September 9, a storm which had been bubbling in the South Atlantic suddenly burst with full hurricane force on the east coast and snaked its way across the peninsula to Lake Okeechobee. In just three hours the water of the lake was a frenzy of roaring waves.

Unfortunately, when the eye of the storm passed, many people mistook the deathly quiet for the storm's end and went out to begin cleaning up. They were hit by the hurricane's tail.

News of the disaster reached Sebring early Saturday night. The Firemen, as the only organ-

ization with experience in handling emergencies, were immediately summoned. Under the direction of Fire Chief Allen Altvater, teams were organized. One rounded up all rowboats and kickers in the area; another prepared the necessary supplies; and another attended to miscellaneous items such as loading the train and assigning



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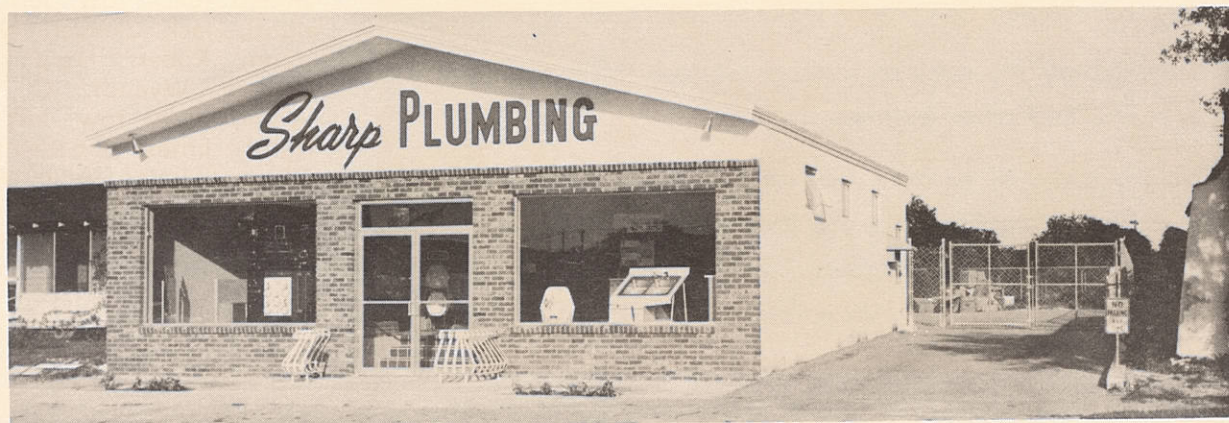
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personnel. By midnight a box-carload of supplies and a relief crew left on the Seaboard line for Moore Haven.

The train could go no closer than six miles north of Moore Haven. From there the Firemen went by railway handcars and boats into the city. For a week they worked without sleep, without drinking water, often without food. They literally took the shirts off their backs and shoes off their feet to give to the destitute hurricane victims.

By Tuesday, Sebring was full of evacuees. Hotels and other housing facilities were overflowing so that a "tent city" was erected near the Seaboard railway station.

Sebring had missed the brunt of the hurricane, but opened its heart to those who had been stricken—no one kept record of how many were aided. It was October 8 before most of the refugees could return to Moore Haven.

Disaster in 1928

Just two years later another hurricane struck the area. On Sunday, Sept. 19, 1928, a new hurricane took much the same path as the one in '26, but its force was deadlier. The circular winds pommelled the lake, creating a "wind tide"—a solid wall of water 12 feet high which swept over Lake Okeechobee, carrying all before it. Farmers on the southeastern lake shore suffered extensive crop and home loss. The death toll was very high—estimates ranged up to 1,000.

Once again the Sebring Firemen swung into action and spent several days in the disaster area.

On Monday the first refugees started pouring into Sebring. On Tuesday the first of the dead were buried in Pinecrest Cemetery. Trains from the North were constantly steaming through Sebring loaded with food, clothing, caskets, and relief workers. "Tent city" was again erected; hotels and boarding houses were packed.

Sebring suffered no deaths, but property took a beating. Public utilities, already pinched by the economic Bust, sustained more than \$20,000 damages from the storm.

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EV 5-7242

Sebring Board of Realtors

The National Association of Real Estate Boards of which the Sebring Board is a part, was founded in 1908, and adopted its Code of Ethics, to which all members must pledge themselves, in 1913.

The Code defines the rules of conduct that are to govern the Realtor in his relations with the public, his clients and other Realtors.

The Sebring Board of Realtors was organized and their Charter presented from the National Association of Real Estate Boards by the President of the Florida Association of Realtors on November 8, 1955 to the following members: Henry G. Bailey, Paul M. Collier (deceased), Harry A. Lee, Grayce McCoy, E. H. Norris, Virginia Rebman, Jennie Reninger, Ann Russell, Myrtle Skipper and E. C. Van Hoose.



Since 1955, the Sebring Board of Realtors has grown rapidly, there now being 26 Realtor members and 27 Associate members.

Only members of local real estate boards and the National Association of Real Estate Boards may display this seal. Membership in these organizations means that a broker meets the rigid requirements of knowledge, reputation and service they have established.

REALTORS

Maeblle R. Abney Sebring	Delbert B. Morris 106 Circle, Sebring
Roy P. Alexander U.S. Hwy. 27 S., Sebring	Frank J. Mraz Sebring Hotel, Sebring
Henry G. Bailey 17 N. Ridgewood Dr., Sebring	Edgar Nelson Interlake Blvd., Lake Placid
Paul P. Campbell 28 S. Ridgewood Dr., Sebring	E. H. Norris 8 Circle, Sebring
John E. Carson 4 N. Ridgewood Dr., Sebring	Virginia Rebman 9 W. Center St., Sebring
Beverly B. Cavender U.S. Hwy. 27 N., Lake Placid	Jennie Reninger P. O. Box 677, Lake Placid
R. P. Dunty Interlake Blvd., Lake Placid	Lawrence Roberts 112 S. 7th Ave., Wauchula
Norman L. Fitkin 213 Circle, Sebring	Myrtle Skipper 5 Mi. S. of Sebring on U.S. 27
Joseph D. Jarvis U.S. Hwy. 27 S., Sebring	James R. Tompkins P. O. Box 499, Lake Placid
Harry A. Lee 20 S. Commerce, Sebring	Edward F. Toomey P. O. Box 671A, Lake Placid
Grayce McCoy 4 Circle, Sebring	E. C. VanHoose 103 Circle, Sebring
Walter K. McGrath 4 Circle, Sebring	Charlotte Varena P. O. Box 344, Sebring
Howard A. Maddox, Inc. 13 N. Ridgewood Dr., Sebring	Pearl Yeager 67 N. Ridgewood Dr., Sebring

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EV 5-7141

Exciting Sports

AP News

Sebring

1949 Storm Strikes Sebring

Two decades passed with relative calm. Then on Friday, Aug. 27, 1949, a hurricane (unofficially dubbed "Louise") hit the lower east coast and wound itself up the state. The eye passed directly over Highlands County. Weather tracking stations were able to give adequate warning to residents in the Okeechobee area, and many fled to the Highlands before Louise hit. More than 600 evacuees were fed, clothed, and sheltered Friday through Sunday in the high schools. The Red Cross, with a formally organized disaster relief program carried out the chore with efficiency.

Late Friday evening and all day Saturday the storm raged overhead with 100 miles per hour winds and seven and a half inches of rain. The property damage, as reported in the September 1, 1949, issue of the **Sebring American**, was "... the highest recorded storm damage in Highlands County's history".

The hurricane had one good consequence. Florida Senators Spessard Holland and Claude Pepper obtained a Federal Flood Control Program for south central Florida. Flood damage has been at a minimum since then.

With adequate advance warning and flood control measures, hurricanes no longer hold the threat they once did.

Highlands Agribusiness

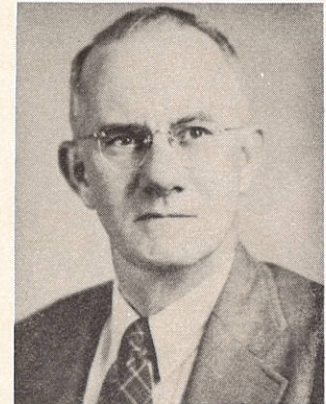
When a hurricane does strike, second only to reports on possible harm to persons is the accounting of damage to agriculture. This is true because, to a large extent, George E. Sebring's dream (of many people engaged in the "very, very remunerative" growing of citrus fruits) has been realized.

Perhaps even Mr. Sebring would be surprised to learn that citrus netted \$17 million for residents of Highlands County in 1961.

A few citrus groves were already under cultivation—some for as long as 40 years—when Sebring

Pioneer Personalities

Fairfax T. "Fax" Haskins



Active in community during summer vacations when he was home from Stetson

University law school, chose Sebring as place to begin practice of law, ace pitcher on first baseball teams, active in Masonic and Shrine groups, in Boy Scout work, sponsor and booster of athletic and youth activities, founder and first president of Sebring Rotary Club, active in War Bond drives, headed Selective Service board during World War I and II, refused to accept elective political office but served the cities of Highlands County as city attorney and county attorney, guided many candidates in successful political campaigns, personal friend of many governors, senators and representatives, died in Sebring in December, 1951.

WALTER O. McGRATH

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Sebring, Florida



Design
Building
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CATTLE HAVE BEEN ASSUMING A LARGER PLACE IN HIGHLANDS AGRIBUSINESS. Annual income from beef cattle runs over three million dollars. This is a sharp contrast to the first years of Sebring when Florida cattle often sold for \$10 a head.

RON'S SARASOTA MOBILE HOMES, INC.

**U.S. 27 SOUTH RT. 1—BOX 277B
SEBRING, FLORIDA**

BRANCH LOTS

Sarasota — Avon Park — Wauchula — Lake Wales

**LIBERTY — STEWART — GARDNER
PEERLESS — GENERAL — STAR — SUNLITE
ROYCRAFT — PALACE — CHICKASHA**

was founded. New residents hastened to plant fruit trees, and the planting has continued. By 1961 a total of 30,500 acres in Highlands County were in citrus production. Based on the rate of growth for the past decade, projections for 1975 indicate 50,000 acres in citrus.

Important as it is, citrus accounts for a little less than half of the county's \$33,000,000 annual income from agriculture (or what in newer terminology is "agribusiness").

Caladiums, Easter lilies, chrysanthemums, and truck garden vegetables are grown in quantity in the Sebring area.

One of the most rapidly expanding phases of "agribusiness" is production of beef cattle. In spite of the Depression and World War II, the 1930-55 period was a time of phenomenal growth.

In 1930 there were only 2,824 beef cattle in the county, and in 1955 the total was up to 51,773. In the same period the number of improved pastures rose from 54 to 33,778. By 1962 a total of 540,000 acres in the county were in pastures.

Last year there were 52,000 head of cattle in the county, and beef accounted for a gross income of \$3,500,000.

The growth has been in quality as well as quantity. By 1962 the percentage of cattle graded "good" has risen to more than 64 percent of the total, and the percentage rated "medium" has dropped steadily.

SEE THE FIREWORKS!

SATURDAY, 8:00 P.M.

Manufactured by

Ed and Florence Kolisek

Makers of Display Fireworks in Sebring,

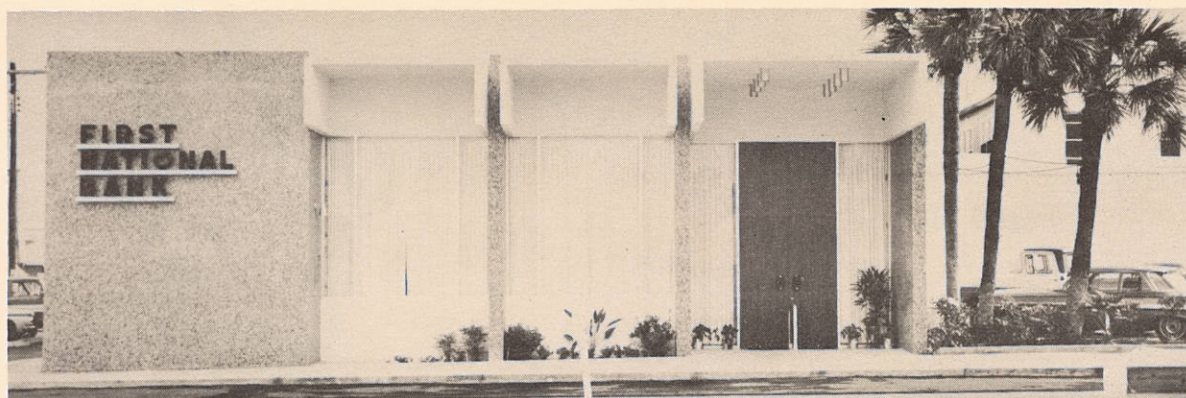
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First National Bank of Sebring



Represents Progress in Our Community

MEMBER: FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM
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Pioneer Personalities

William Schlosser



Cleared a homestead on the southern end of Lake Jackson in the spring of 1911, (the area was then 30 miles from a railhead and the town of Sebring not only heard of but not yet dreamed of), later helped other settlers clear their land and set new groves, owned a horse and wagon but often preferred to travel via rowboat, brought a bride to his homestead in 1923, the family continues to live on that land and maintain a ranch, although they are now almost surrounded by sub-divisions.

New Lease on the Land

During the Boom it seemed that the whole of Florida had been sub-divided. With the Bust many of the "subdivisions" died and eventually were returned to pasture or unimproved land status. However, subdivisions took a new lease on life in the post-war years. By 1961 Highlands County officials could count 525 active subdivisions. These areas account for 120,000 lots—or approximately five lots for each man, woman, and child living within this county. Tax valuations reflect the county's growth. In 1940 the gross tax valuations for the county were \$3,200,000. In the 1962-63 year the net valuations stand at \$42,109,000.

Compliments of

ART'S AUTO PARTS

217 North Ridgewood

A. C. WOLFE, Owner

Home Owned and Operated

Pioneer Personalities

A. E. Lawrence

Mayor, city attorney, county judge, charter member and first president of Sebring Lions Club, charter member and second Exalted Ruler of Elks Lodge, president of Chamber of Commerce.

Postal History

Another standard for measuring the growth of an area is by its postal receipts. Sebring Post Office records tell a dramatic story. The receipts have advanced from less than \$500 in the first year to almost \$130,000 in the last year.

The first post office in Sebring was located at the rear of Milt Baker's store. Service began on April 29, 1912. By the end of the year the post office had taken in \$482.76.

By 1920, receipts for a year were topping \$6,000, and within a decade the total grew by \$10,000. As might be expected, the growth in the 1930's was slower, and when the war years approached, the Sebring Post Office was taking in just over \$22,000 per year.

In the 1940's receipts more than doubled, and in 1944 Sebring passed the \$40,000 mark which raised the post office to the highest, or first class, rating. The most dramatic period of growth has been the decade of the fifties when receipts rose from less than \$52,000 per year to a level just under \$130,000.

Sebring was 14 years old before city delivery service was instituted. In December, 1925, this

A "Young" Pup



W. G. "Bill" YOUNG

Building Contractor

110 Bellevue Avenue

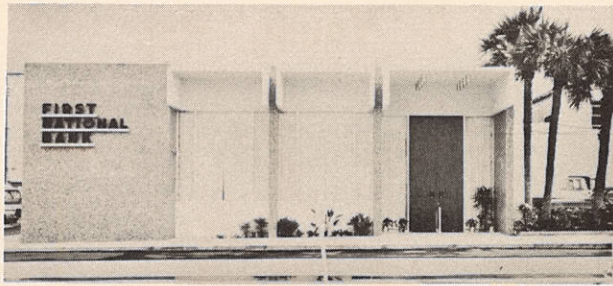
EV 5-7840

service was begun, and although this was the heavy Yule season postal records show only 83 hours of service for deliveries in December!

Sebring's first postmaster was J. D. Harrison. He served in 1912-13. The present postmaster, Ray T. Graddy, a career postal employee, was elevated to his position in 1961.



YOUNG AND OLD line up at the post office to await the distribution of mail. Many of these people probably were at the depot to see the arrival of the mail by train a few minutes earlier. This was Sebring's third post office location and was on North Commerce Street.



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A very unusual and beautiful residence

Choose Experience and Quality

K. D. GRUBB

Building Contractor

EV 5-7148

Sebring

Industrial Potential

Across the half-century since its founding, Sebring has attracted several small industries. As the second half of its first century begins, the city is giving new emphasis to the establishment of industry. Particular stress is being given to Sebring Air Terminal Industrial Park.

At the close of World War II the city "inherited" the facilities of Hendricks Field Air Force Bomber Base. The former government buildings are being used for several light industries, and the Chamber of Commerce believes that other companies can be interested in locating plants in the area.

Such manufacturing as there is has made little change in the pattern of life that was cast when the Sebrings came to the shores of Lake Jackson.

Churches, Clubs, Schools Surge Forward

The achievements of the later decades may be described in terms not greatly different from those of an earlier day. New clubs have been formed, new churches and schools constructed.

The Church of Christ, which had for many years hoped for a permanent church building, began construction of its new church in 1960. By January, 1962, the congregation was able to hold an open house to show friends the new

Pioneer Personalities

P. G. Gearing



Came to Sebring in 1913, proprietor of feed and furniture businesses, for many years was Mr. "Baseball" of the Ridge, early sponsor of tennis and other athletics and promoter of sports for youth, charter member and holder of every elective office in Sebring Firemen, Inc., charter member, Esteemed Leading Knight Elks Lodge, charter member of Highlands County Fair Association, member official board First Methodist Church, cited by Junior Chamber of Commerce for Good Government Award and by Sebring Firemen as Most Valuable Man, charter member, State Zone chairman, past president, life member and holder of Leo Award in Lions Club, assistant fire chief, Highlands County tax assessor now serving his seventh term and president of Tax Assessors Association of Florida.



MORE THAN HALF A MILLION ACRES of Highlands County are in pastures. Pasture Tours, like the one shown here, helped to spark interest in pastures and in the span of time from 1930 to 1955 boosted the number of improved pastures in the county from 54 to 33,778. The Pasture Tour shown here was conducted in November, 1939, by Louis Alsmeyer. More than 300 cattlemen and bankers from throughout the state participated in this tour. This stop was at the Jesse Durrance ranch, where Alsmeyer is showing a 300-acre field of para grass, most of which had been planted the previous June. Alsmeyer was county agriculture agent from 1926 through 1942. He led in the developing of improved pasture land, and he originated the pasture tours in 1936. These were held several times a year for seven years. Alsmeyer was the only Florida agent to win the Southern Soil Improvement Association meritorious service medal.

sanctuary at the corner of Orange and Nasturtium.

Kiwanis Club was founded in Sebring in 1960. Beginning with 28 members, the club has grown to 43. Among the club projects are many to aid young people, including sponsorship of the Key and Keyette Clubs at Sebring High School.

Highlands Garden Club was formed in 1961, an offspring of the older Sebring Garden Club.

In the years since the latter club was formed in 1934 a fantastic amount of beautification has been carried out by Garden Clubbers. Among the projects have been the purchase of trees and flowers for the lawns of Sebring High and Fred Wild Schools; landscaping of Four Oaks Parkway; and special plantings for Firemen's Field, the Sebring Woman's Club Building, and the City Pier.

The Memorial Garden, near the light plant, was planned and planted by the Garden Club members. Sebring Garden Club has requested permission to begin a beautification program for the Circle Park.

In the sixties Sebring added a new elementary school. Although a large school, Woodlawn Elementary, had been built in 1954, classroom space was short when the new decade began. Fred Wild School was placed in use at the beginning of the 1961-62 school year.

At Sebring High School the band, athletic teams, and chorus continued the winning ways that have become traditional with the Blue Streaks.



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QUALITY and ECONOMY

SEE THE BEAUTIFUL NEW HOMES IN

Sebring Shores

WOODED BUILDING SITES

LAKEFRONT LOTS

CITY WATER and ALL UTILITIES

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Sebring's Most Popular Residential Suburb

Drive North Lakeview to Fairmount

On your way to U.S. 27 and see

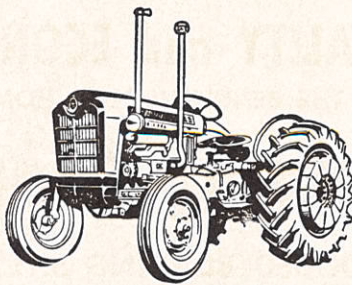
Robert Sherwood — EV 5-0837



"TACKY PARTY" brought the above members of the Staff & Book Club together for a meeting in May, 1946. Standing, left to right, Mrs. Allen Altvater, Mrs. Gerald Bee, Mrs. W. H. Percy, Mrs. M. M. Ferguson, Mrs. Mabel Degering, Mrs. Elton Weaver, Mrs. R. O. Turner, Mrs. M. R. McDonald, Mrs. J. Clagett Taylor, Mrs. P. J. Gustat, Mrs. S. J. Rudasill, Sr., Mrs. P. G. Gearing, Mrs. F. W. Heacock, Sr., Mrs. W. J. Layton, and kneeling, Mrs. Ruth Sebring and Mrs. W. J. Post.

The basketball team won Ridge Conference crowns in 1960 and 1961; the football team led the conference in 1961, and the baseball team went on to play in state tournament semi-finals in 1961.

The E. O. Douglas baseball team capped a successful 1962 season by bringing home the state championship for Negro high schools.



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45 Highway 27 South

P. O. Box 820, Sebring

EV 5-8952

WILLIAM H. SEBRING, Manager

BAGWELL LUMBER CO., INC.

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FROSTPROOF - - 635-2606

WINTER HAVEN - CY 3-3139

Exit: the Historian . . .

. . . Enter the History-Maker

All histories share two characteristics: they omit far more than they tell, and they are unending.

The sixties are yet a new decade. The spirit of Sebring as it faces the future is not determined. Some outlines are emerging. The dream will be unending. Yet the broad implications of the space age will touch the town.

It will be a time of construction. New churches have been finished, and more church building is being planned. More schoolrooms are on the drawing boards. The streets within Sebring are undergoing a major face-lifting. Before another year is out a new hospital will rise on Sebring-donated land south of town. A courthouse annex is being considered.

History is still being made. Men and women, boys and girls, each day are busy putting their imprints on the sands of time. The historian's moving finger writes; and having writ, moves on . . . to new chapters. And in truth, this is only . . .

THE BEGINNING

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IN MEMORY OF MY HUSBAND
HOMER J. STEWART

JOSEPH P. TISO
IN MEMORY OF MY WIFE
GERTRUDE TISO

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