



South Brevard Historical Society, Inc.

Founded 1966

P.O. Box 1064, Melbourne, Florida, 32902-1064

www.southbrevardhistory.org

May 2011

PLEASE JOIN US

**Saturday, May 14th
3:00 P M
Melbourne Public Library
540 E. Fee Avenue, Melbourne**

The Diary of Rufus Beaujean

A presentation by Melbourne Beach Historian Frank Thomas

Our well known residents Dennis and Ron Meehan of Melbourne Office Supply fame are direct descendants of Rufus W. Beaujean, the leader among Melbourne Beach's four Civil War veterans who qualify as Town Fathers. Rufus took a chance, a gamble, as all 19th century pioneers did in leaving hearth and home, kith and kin, to seek his fortune. Rufus's quest brought him to the mid-reaches of Florida's Indian River, to the few-dozen resident community on Crane Creek known as Melbourne. In 1888 he permanently left Chautauqua County (Jamestown area) in western New York state. The family is still in this area.

Most pioneers did not find their Eldorado. Rufus was no exception. On the beach, after helping hew and dig a 100 foot wide strip of mosquito-and rattlesnake palmetto scrub that is today's main street, he drew a breath to await investors, construction, visitors, and prosperity.

Rufus's ambition for a Winter Resort was not beyond reason. Daytona Beach, Ormond Beach, and others became successful as the railroad stretched down the east coast from Jacksonville. It had reached Titusville, 50 river miles north, in the mid-1880's. The 50 to 100 residents of the Melbourne area loved their colorful steamboat *Rockledge*. The fact remained, however, they were only too happy to give up watery transportation to points north (and south). They were Progressive!

So, anticipating a boom, Rufus, wife Adelaide, and nine and twelve-year-old sons Claude and Don, settled on the riverfront, on what is today Ocean Avenue.

Among other talents a fine carpenter, Beaujean ended up building several of the 19th century houses still standing on Ocean Ave, including the Community Chapel in 1892. Did prosperity ever come? The answer is No. As son Don Beaujean told me many years later in a recorded interview, the family barely "eked out a living."

This Diary, 1888-1895, is a delightful, yet realistic, recording of these first Melbourne Beach years.....Frank Thomas

S.B.H.S. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & RENEWAL

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(Please include your email address.)

This is a gift membership from :

Membership Levels:

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Senior (age 65)	10.00
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Please make checks payable to South Brevard Historical Society and mail to P.O. Box 1064, Melbourne, FL 32902-1064.

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SOUTH BREVARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. Box 1064
Melbourne, FL 32902-1064

DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS....

April 2013 marks the 500th year of Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de Leon's historic exploration, footfall on the North American continent and his naming of Florida. For most of our history the city of St. Augustine has claimed the honor of being the site of Ponce's landing on our soil.

In 1990, historian and navigator, Douglas Peck set out in his sailboat to reconstruct the 1513 voyage of Juan Ponce de Leon. His research and conclusions led him to construct a navigational course of the voyage based on his navigational expertise plus his technical recalculations and interpretation of the 1513 voyage account found in the 1601-1615 published history of Spanish new world exploration and colonization written by historian Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas.

Peck's experiment led him to a landfall along the Brevard County coast south of Cape Canaveral in the vicinity of Melbourne Beach. As a result of Peck's findings, Brevard County has a beach park named Juan Ponce de Leon Landing and a state historical marker there to commemorate the 1513 voyage and naming of Florida, possibly the first European name on a map of North America.

This 500th anniversary has set the stage for celebrations all across Florida including Brevard County. Plans are underway for programs and special events that will recognize and celebrate Spanish social, cultural and political contributions that are part of Florida's heritage.

Melbourne Beach historian Frank Thomas has presented a resolution to the community to name Brevard's barrier island between Cape Canaveral and Sebastian inlets after Ponce de Leon. The town of Melbourne Beach has voted to support the resolution. It is to be passed along to the other beach municipalities, Brevard County and Patrick Air Force Base for their concurrence.

(continued next column)

SBHS CALENDAR

June 11th 3 PM

SBHS Board member, Jill Berry presents the stories of Isabel Clohecy and Madame Campbell, two of Melbourne area's women pioneers.

Around Brevard

FPAN and the Florida Historical Society

Friday, June 7th 7 PM

“The Emanuel Point Ships: Florida’s Earliest Shipwrecks” a presentation by Dr. Della Scott-Iretton, FPAN Regional Director, North West Region

“In August of 1559, a fleet of Spanish ships on a colonizing mission were sunk by a violent hurricane in Pensacola Bay. This presentation will describe this little-known enterprise, as well as the archaeological investigations of two of the ships, discovered by the State of Florida and the University of West Florida.”
(FPAN website)

Free to the Public

Florida Historical Society headquarters
435 Brevard Avenue in Cocoa Village.

For more information call Gregg Harding
321-690-1971 ext. 223

Melbourne/Eau Gallie

Historic Rossetter House Museum & Gardens

First Friday Ghost Tours Continue

5:30 PM \$10 per person

1320 Highland Avenue Eau Gallie

phone: 254-9855 (Ghost Tour reservations required)

Dear Members continued.....

The island naming is up to the people of Brevard County to decide. If you are interested in reading the proposal you can access it through the Melbourne Beach website:www.melbournebeachfl.org. Public input is welcome through Florida Today website comments, letters to the newspaper and participation at scheduled public hearings.

Carol Andren, SBHS Co-President
725-4115

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER.....Frank Thomas

Originally from North Carolina, Frank Thomas moved to Melbourne Beach in August 1961 with his bride, Annie Hellen. They immediately set out to explore both the history and the terrain of their new home. They have their own great tales of auto and bicycle trips in and around Melbourne Beach.

Frank attended East Carolina University and the University of North Carolina, with additional work at Stetson University, University of Florida, and Appalachian State University. He taught high school English as well as history and also served as adjunct in the English departments of BCC and Florida Tech.

In his 1968 book, “Early Days in Melbourne Beach 1888 - 1926”, Frank shares the results of his early research and interviews. In 1999, Frank produced the *Images of America Melbourne Beach and Indialantic* with wonderful photos and commentary about these two linked communities.

Melbourne Beach's Centennial book (1983) was republished twice, before he updated it to include the past 25 years. It continues to sell quite nicely, with all money going to the Town History Center.

His most recent book, “Melbourne Beach Memoirs from Coastal Florida” is more about his love and appreciation of his life and home in Melbourne Beach. He shares some of the more colorful anecdotes of the town's history.

The current edition of the *Indian River Journal*, a publication of the Brevard County Historical Commission, includes Frank's interpretive essay on the Beaujean diary. Copies of the *Journal* will be available at our May meeting.

(Frank Thomas contributed to this article)

UPDATES

BCC TV to broadcast our May program

If you missed last month's program, “The Japanese Colony in Eau Gallie” presented by Sandy Wilson, you have a second chance to hear the story. The program was taped, edited and will be broadcast on the Brevard Community College TV station, channel 68 (channel 5 on Bright House). Watch closely for it's showing

Historic Preservation in Melbourne: GREEN GABLES

Things continue to move forward for the Green Gables/Wells House project. The support group, a Florida Not for Profit Corporation, is Green Gables at Historic Riverview Village, Inc is preparing the application to become a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt organization. If you know of an organization interested in history and historic preservation you can contact John Daly to book his program on Green Gables and the Wells family.. He can be reached at 321-482-6818.

The SBHS thanks **AAA Malabar Mini-Storage**, located across the street from the Malabar Town Hall, for their generous donation of air-conditioned secure storage for the Society's collections and archives.