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History of Brevard's South Beaches

By South Brevard Historical Society

Seeking a quiet place to settle and begin a new life after fighting in the Civil War, former soldiers traveled along the Indian River Lagoon seeking to settle along its shoreline on land that they thought would serve them well. Of the many sites developed during the late 1800's two of the more interesting sites are known today as Honest John's Fish Camp and Oak Lodge.

Leaving Georgia for Florida in 1887, brothers Robert Toombs Smith and Charley Smith spent the last leg of their trip sailing along eastern shore line of the Indian River Lagoon to the mouth of mullet creek where they laid claim to 159-acres. The brothers cleared the land by hand for a house and for an area to grow produce which would be their business. Using local materials such as heart pine for siding and floors and coquina for pilings, they built a 2-story house which still stands today. The family grew and shipped produce until Robert's third son, Honest John, changed the family business to commercial

fishing. Today the homestead is known as a great place for fishing and kayaking (<http://www.honestjohnsfishcamp.com/>).

In 1800-1801, Oak Lodge was built on the eastern shore of the Indian River Lagoon (opposite of what is the city of Grant today). Charles Latham purchased the 164-acre property and then had a ten room wood structure built to



house scientists who came to the area to study the plants and animals. He and his wife Frances lived on the property and often participated in the research. A fire destroyed the building in 1893. The second building burned during the night in May of 1910 which was especially memorable as Halley's comet was visible in the sky above the burning building as one looked from the western shore.

Please visit the South Brevard Historical Society's website (<http://www.southbrevardhistory.org>) for further information about Brevard's history and local events. ©