



The Spanish River Papers
SPRING 1984



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I first met Theodore Pratt in 1968 after Judge James R. Knott had asked him to write the Foreword for the manuscript I had edited of early pioneer life in southeastern Florida written by Charles Pierce. As Geoffrey Lynfield points out in the following article, Pratt used the Foreword of what became **Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida** (University of Miami Press, 1970), to "recognize a most excellent piece of Florida history," and to "acknowledge a debt." The debt was the use of the original Pierce manuscript, then called "On the Wings of the Wind," in gathering material for his best known Florida book, **The Barefoot Mailman.** Although we only talked a few times, usually in the Theodore Pratt Room of the Florida Atlantic Library, I quickly came to appreciate his serious interest in Florida, and particularly, southeast Florida, history. How he gained this interest and came to write the "Florida Trilogy" is detailed in Mr. Lynfield's article.

The two short articles by Professor Daniel F. Austin of Florida Atlantic's Department of Biological Sciences recount the story of two natural "landmarks" in Palm Beach County. Certainly this is the first time that I knew a mountain existed in the county.

Donald W. Curl,
Editor

THEODORE PRATT (1901-1969)

A REASSESSMENT

by GEOFFREY LYNFIELD

Theodore Pratt lived in the Old Floresta section of Boca Raton from 1946 to 1958 and then another twelve years in Delray Beach. He was the author of some thirty-five books of which seventeen had a Florida setting. Five of his books were made into Hollywood movies. His most famous contribution to local history is his trilogy: **The Barefoot Mailman** (1943), **The Flame Tree** (1950), and **The Big Bubble** (1951). As Pratt based these novels on detailed research, they are of great interest to the local historian.

Pratt also wrote a large number of articles and short stories, many about Florida. At the time of his death in 1969, Pratt was well known locally and heralded as the "Literary Laureate" of Florida. Four of his books are still in print today and reassessment of his life and work is overdue.

Theodore Pratt was born in Minneapolis in 1901, the son of Thomas A. and Emma Pratt. His father was French-Canadian and his mother Irish and German. His family moved to New Rochelle, New York, where Pratt attended high school. At the age of sixteen he secured his first writing job on **The New Rochelle Daily Star** producing a column entitled "The Poor Fish." (A check through the microfilm at the New Rochelle Library failed to turn up any examples of "The Poor Fish" column and it is possible that this was written for the school paper.)

From New Rochelle, Pratt went to Colgate University for two years and to Columbia for

another two years but never received a degree. Following college, his literary career started in earnest and during his first working years he held at the same time the jobs of play reader, staff reader for a movie company, and columnist for **The New York Sun**.

In 1929, Theodore Pratt married Belle Jacqueline (Jackie) Jacques, having met on a blind date. From his freelance magazine articles, which started appearing in **The New Yorker** and other national publications, he had saved some money and the newlyweds left for Europe where they remained for the next four years, Pratt serving as European correspondent for **The New York Sun**.

In this way, he came to the Spanish island of Majorca where he wrote notes for **The Daily Palma Post**, published locally in the English language. In 1933, Pratt wrote an outspoken article which appeared in the July issue of H. L. Mencken's **American Mercury** entitled "Paradise Enjoys a Boom." In the story, Pratt accused the Majorcans of unspeakable cruelty to animals, dishonesty, ignorance, insular prejudice, and other such delectable qualities:

Mallorcans are among the cruelest people to animals extant in the civilized world. They think nothing of skinning a rabbit alive or plucking a chicken before it has expired. They kick harmless dogs to death and put out the eyes of cats from pure malicious sadism. . . . The natives of the Isle of Light are nearly 70% illiterate. . . . They will press their noses to your bedroom window and stare in for hours. . . . They make inept servants, and when not shirking their work from pure laziness or contrariness, they are stealing food to take to their own homes. . . .

The issue of the magazine somehow found its way to Majorca. The Pratt article was partially translated and reproduced in a local rival Spanish language paper **La Ultima Hora**.

Pratt's local popularity at this point took an understandable slump. The Pratts were living in a rented cottage in the small village of Puerto de Pollensa where Ted was known as **El Sadalio** (The Sandalled One.) The events which followed are clearly set out in a letter dated July 22, 1933. This letter and related documents were located in the National Archives, Washington, General Records of the Department of State (File 352.112). Pratt's statement reads as follows:

On July 16th 1933, in Puerto Pollensa, Majorca, two members of the Spanish National Guard appeared at the residence of my wife and myself and requested to see our joint passport, no. 48, issued at Seville about June, 1932. The passport was found in order. It was then stated that the "government" in Palma wished to see the passport. I gave it to the Guardias and they gave me a receipt for it.

On the night of July 17th, a demonstration was made outside my house by a well-organized mob of about three hundred people, natives, from Puerto Pollensa and the Town of Pollensa. In the morning friends of ours brought us food, saying that they had heard there was to be a boycott against us not to sell us food. On the house I found a sign stating: 'Indecent spy, paid by the National Board of Tourism of the U.S.A.' Later that day we were informed by the Guard that we could not leave Pollensa without their permission. This was changed still later and we were given a chance to go to another part of the Island for the sake of safety. We chose the capital, Palma, and a single Guard officer accompanied us at the Hotel Palma and were then given to understand that we would no longer be welcome there and that we could stay at no other Palma hotel. We then moved to the home of

an American friend, where we are now residing.

The above actions against us are clearly the result of an article of mine called 'Paradise Enjoys a Boom,' published in the July, 1933, issue of **The American Mercury**, in New York, N.Y.

I wrote to Mr. Dawson, our Consul in Barcelona, on the 18th, explaining what had happened, requesting the return of my passport and expressing my wish to leave Spain immediately. On the 20th I interviewed Mr. Dawson in Palma and he said that he had not received my letter before leaving Barcelona. I gave him a copy of the letter. He at first stated that he could not aid me without consulting the Embassy in Madrid. He stated that in a talk with the Governor of Mallorca, my name had been brought up in connection with a possible action to be taken by unknown persons against **The Daily Palma Post** which it is alleged had been attacking Mr. Dawson.

Claude Dawson, the American Consul General in Barcelona, filed his own report in which Mrs. Pratt comes out rather well as keeping her "cool" in a difficult situation.

Pratt agreed after leaving Spain "not to write any untruth or any libelous attack against Mallorca or Spain." Their passport was returned and on July 29, the Pratts were allowed to leave the island on the steamship **Exochorda** bound for Boston.

While the Pratts had been overseas, the depression in the United States had deepened. Many writers and artists were out of work. The Pratts first went to stay briefly with Ted Pratt's parents in New Rochelle and then proceeded to Florida in their Ford car, which Mrs. Pratt recalls

had a rumble seat at the back. From 1934 to 1946 the Pratts lived in the City of Lake Worth, first at 1428 North Lakeside Drive and later at 313 Third Avenue, South.

His first novel **Spring from Downward** came out in 1933 followed two years later by **Not Without the Wedding**. The novel **Big Blow** (1936) was dramatized and a play under the same title opened in New York on October 2, 1938 under the WPA Federal Theater Project. Mrs. Pratt remembers a near-hurricane hitting New York that night.

The play was well received by the **New York Times'** theatre critic ". . . a lusty melodrama, of life in the Florida crackerland, were the wind is wont to blow with a terrifying howl . . . If **Tobacco Road** accepts the Georgia cracker for what he is, Mr. Pratt is no less considerate of such kinfolk as destiny chanced to place further south." The play ran for six months and firmly established Pratt as a literary figure. In June, 1950 **Big Blow**, as many of his other books later, was reissued in pocket book edition and was renamed **My Bride in the Storm**.

Theodore Pratt came to love his adopted state and made a point of leaving the tourist coast to travel inland. He relates in **Florida Roundabout** (1959) how he attended every Cracker Holy Roller meeting he could find, every cockfight, and old-time medicine show. He went on fishing trips with the Conch people of the Florida Keys and snuff-gobbed on the steps of country stores. He journeyed to the mangrove coast, juke joint on a "high" night, he attended the back country barbecue and any other manifestation of native Florida to which he could gain entrance. When he wrote **Mercy Island** (1941) he lived in the Keys in order to truly depict the life of the island dwellers.

His many writings and frequent appearances on television and radio did not go unnoticed and a

commentator in **The Miami Herald** wrote in January, 1951: "Most amazing thing about Mr. Pratt, from the viewpoint of native Floridians . . . is how this comparative newcomer (he's just been here since 1935) has managed to catch the real spirit of Florida."

During his exploration of Florida, Theodore Pratt--as he liked to recall when interviewed by newspaper men--had several near brushes with death. On one occasion, he was on a trip exploring the Everglades by boat with members of the Audubon Society when the boat carrying the party ran out of gas and was stranded for a day and a half in the mosquito-laden wilderness of the Glades infested with alligators and water mocassins (**The Miami Herald** May 28, 1967). Much of the material for **Escape to Eden** (1953) was gathered on this trip through the Lost Man and Shark River Country, which is now the Everglades National Park.

Writing candidly about the rural life in magazines and books, Pratt received many letters of protest. Pratt's article, "Land of the Jook," in the April 26, 1941 **Saturday Evening Post** told of the incredibly dreadful housing conditions and cheap skin-game gambling joints of the itinerant laborers of the winter vegetable-growing section around the south-east shore of Lake Okeechobee. "Many of the migrants, white and black, continue to live in indescribable squalor in ramshackle camps, boardinghouses, tin and burlap shacks, brokendown trailers, trucks, old automobiles--and the screaming jooks." The people of that section were so incensed that Pratt was warned to stay away to avoid trouble. The Belle Grade people eventually forgave Pratt after the story had been made into a movie but it was some years before Pratt dared to revisit the area. Pratt characteristically embroidered this story and goes as far as saying that there was "wild but seriously meant talk of coming in and lynching me" (**Florida Roundabout**, p. 7).

Based on the "Land of the Jook" article, in 1940 Pratt wrote the screen play for the motion picture **Juke Girl** produced by Warner Brothers and starring Ronald Reagan. The publicity material stated that before becoming a screen star, Ronald Reagan was a lifeguard and sportscaster. "His voice won him a chance in the movies . . . good looks and ability made him sure-fire star material . . ." The movie opened in New York on June 18, 1942. Pratt later complained that when Warner Brothers made **Juke Girl** they shot some Florida scenes out in the San Fernando Valley and showed mountains in the background.

Whilst at Lake Worth, Pratt wrote four murder mysteries under the pseudonym Timothy Brace (Timothy was the name of Pratt's dog but Mrs. Pratt does not recall where Brace came from): **Murder Goes Fishing** (1936); **Murder Goes in a Trailer** (1937); **Murder Goes to the Dogs** (1938); and **Murder Goes to the World's Fair** (1939). He also completed his most famous book, **The Barefoot Mailman**.

The first three mystery novels have Florida settings. In **Murder Goes Fishing** which is subtitled "Anthony Adams' First Mystery," Adams, an amateur criminologist, yachtsman, and big game fisherman, discovers Lonzo Cayberry, the wealthiest winter resident of Palm Beach, strangled to death in his deck chair on the Palm Beach fishing pier.

In **Murder Goes in a Trailer**, the setting is a trailer park modelled on Briny Breezes. The Pratts stayed at this camp for a while to get the feel of trailer life. Anthony Adams, the suave detective, is called upon to solve the mysterious murder of a retired army general who was found dead in his pajamas with the door, windows, and sky light of the trailer all closed and locked from the inside.

When Lake Worth began to expand, Theodore Pratt and wife Jackie moved to the then secluded

area of Old Floresta in Boca Raton. They first lived in a house rented from Fred Aiken where Pratt finished **The Barefoot Mailman** (1943). After a brief stay in California, the Pratts returned to Boca Raton and in 1946 bought one of the Addison Mizner Spanish style houses from Hermann von Holst at 755 Azalea Street. They stayed there until 1958. This was one of Pratt's most productive periods during which he turned out **Valley Boy** (1946) and **Mr. Thurtle's Trolley** (1947). Pratt also completed the Florida trilogy with **The Flame Tree** (1950) and **The Big Bubble** (1951).

The Tormented (1950), a study of nymphomania, had been turned down by thirty-four publishers as too hot to handle. It eventually sold more than a million copies. Another sex novel, **Cocotte** (1951), a story about a sexually naive young American who falls in love with a Parisian dancing girl followed. **Handsome** (1951) and **The Golden Sorrow** (1952) were also completed during this period. **Seminole** (1953), about Chief Osceola, sold nearly one million copies and is still in print today. **Smash-Up** (1954) was about the aftermath of an automobile accident.

Pratt twice tried to get away from Florida. Although he spent some time in California and later in Arizona, he believed that both these western states were being ruined by too much commercial expansion.

The Pratts finally settled down in the piny woods west of Delray Beach and from 1958 to 1969 made their home on secluded Brady Boulevard, a short street off Barwick Road facing what is now Barwick Golf Course. When Pratt moved there in 1958 horses still grazed at the back of his house. Theodore Pratt continued to live in Delray Beach until his death on December 16, 1969.

Delray Beach at the time had acquired the reputation of an artists' colony. During the 1930s

of the Barefoot Mailmen of Florida. . . . I searched out the pioneers who had lived at that time. I talked with over a hundred of them. I managed to find two men then still living who actually had carried the mail. . . . The Garnett family of Hypoluxo was extremely helpful in showing me a handwritten account about James Hamilton, the Barefoot Mailman who lost his life swimming the river at Pompano whilst carrying the mail.

He also explained how he had arrived at the name of the fictional hero in the book, Steven Pierton. He used the first part of the Pierce name (Charles Pierce was one of the barefoot mailmen) and the last part of Hamilton to make up Pierton (A full report on this talk is to be found in **The Lake Worth Herald** of January 6, 1958).

During his frequent interviews with newspapermen--usually at the time a new book came out--Pratt touched upon the question of priority between the author and Steven Dohanos who painted the murals in the West Palm Beach Post Office depicting the saga of James Hamilton's last trip on six beautiful panels. Pratt then averred that: "Steve Dohanos and I, each unknown to the other, were working on the projects at the same time. Only after both were finished did we learn this, and then we beat our heads for we could have saved ourselves a lot of research by pooling our data." Pratt makes a similar assertion in **Florida Roundabout** (1959), see p. 6. "In the West Palm Beach Post Office there are six very excellent murals (painted by Steven Dohanos at *the same time* (italics added) I was writing my book) depicting the barefoot mailman."

This writer has gone through the author's notebook on **The Barefoot Mailman** in the FAU collection page by page. None of the material in this folder is dated before 1941. Pratt's interviews with the pioneers were around 1941 but apparently not earlier. On April 18, 1941 he

wrote to Charles (Chuck) Leon Pierce, the son of Charles W. Pierce who authored **Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida**:

Since you kindly talked with me for a few moments I have decided to enlarge on this subject and investigate it for a larger work of fiction . . . I would like to take advantage of your previous offer to read your manuscript about your father . . . If your manuscript is definitely helpful, and my ideas work out . I would be glad to make an acknowledgement in the prestatement to my work, of your cooperation.

Pratt duly perused the manuscript but in the "author's note" of the **The Barefoot Mailman** there is no reference to the Pierce diaries. This omission may be one of the reasons why Mrs Lillie Pierce Voss (the sister of Charles W. Pierce and the first white child born in Palm Beach County) was so upset about Pratt when she made a tape recording (in the possession of Professor Curl) and came out in rather harsh language against Pratt: unusual for this usually placid and agreeable old timer. Pratt wrote the foreword to **Pioneer Life**. He used this opportunity, twenty-seven years later, to thank "unfortunately in postmortem fashion" some members of the Pierce family who had helped him with the book. As it happened, by the time **Pioneer Life** came out, Pratt himself had died.

The six murals in the Palm Beach Post Office had been installed by March 1940 and the favorable publicity which they received must have given Pratt the "push" to get on seriously with his research although he may have thought about the subject earlier.

On August 4, 1943 Pratt wrote to Mr. Dohanos from Hollywood, California: "I started collection back in 1935 and needed more detail for the general life of the people. When I got discouraged I would go in and look at your pictures. Then I'd go on again." The interviews

with the various pioneers and the letters in the FAU collection are all dated after the installation of the murals.

Mr. Steven Dohanos of Westport, Connecticut has kindly furnished this writer with a detailed chronology in a letter dated February 8, 1984:

I was contacted to do the murals on April 3, 1939 and visited the Florida area to seek out helpful data from surviving people such as Chas. Pierce who was my greatest source of information. He knew it well and remembered James Hamilton and the legend that began when he lost his life at Hillsboro Inlet. Pierce was well in his eighties but seemed to have total recall and was a very alert person and immensely helpful to me.

I was assigned to this mural project by the Section of Fine Arts, Treasury Dept., Procurement Division, an agency set up in Roosevelt's time and headed by Edward Bruce, a close friend of his.

Edward Bruce was aware of my art and believed me to be the proper realistic (representational artist) to take this assignment. I might add that they gave out several hundred contracts to artists in every area of America to record folk art and decorate public buildings with painted murals.

The subject was spelled out in the contract as six 4' x 8' 'Legend of James Edward Hamilton, Mail Carrier.' No reference to **Barefoot Mailman** was in the contract. . . I believe it was Mr. Pierce who used the phrase first with me when I had arrived to interview him. From then on the phrase "Barefoot Mailman" was carried forward by all involved.

Steven Dohanos's first visit to Florida on this assignment was probably in February of 1939. Dohanos was then thirty-two years old and had already exhibited widely in the United States and in Europe. The six murals were actually painted in Westport, Connecticut later in 1939 and then delivered to the West Palm Beach Post Office.

In 1939, Charles W. Pierce was still Postmaster at Boynton Beach and he wrote to Dohanos on March 15 and April 8 of that year in regard to some old photos taken in 1887. These showed James Hamilton wearing the same kind of clothing and the same kind of hat which he wore on his mail carrying trip.

The earliest published use of the term "Barefoot Mailman" this writer was able to find was in an article by Hustin McMillan in **The Palm Beach Post-Times** of March 31, 1940 which appeared following the installation of the murals. This precise phrase is not used in the Pierce diaries. Therefore it would seem that Theodore Pratt did not first use the term "Barefoot Mailman." Pratt having made this assertion so many times it is not surprising that some local historians have accepted this as a fact (see for instance Mary Linehan in **Early Lantana, Her Neighbors--and More** (1980, p. 20).

Donn Curl in editing Pierce's **Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida** has used for his Chapter 7 the heading "New Settlers and the Barefoot Mailman." Pierce himself however used the term "Barefoot Route" (p. 194). "On my return I found a number of important changes had taken place. First and foremost of these was the establishment of a mail route from Palm Beach to Miami by way of the ocean beach. It was called the barefoot route because the mail carrier went barefoot. . ." Pratt never met Charles W. Pierce who died in 1939 but did manage to talk to Dan McCarley of Lantana, "the only real barefoot mailman I could find at that date still living." (This seems to conflict with Pratt's statement at the Kiwanis

Club Dinner December 28, 1958 that he found "two men still living who actually had carried the mail, and from them I obtained much material."

In an article which appeared in "Lake Worth Notes" of **The Palm Beach Post** (June 23, 1943) Pratt is reported as saying that several barefoot mailmen still lived and that he "talked with dozens of pioneers and every former barefoot mailman he could locate." Apart from Dan McCarley of Lantana, Pratt never identified in any of his articles or notes any other mailman. Having seen the **Post** article, Mrs. Lillie Pierce Voss, whose brother Charles W. Pierce was one of the last carriers, wrote to Pratt from Hypoluxo on June 27, 1943 at the age of sixty-eight:

I was the girl of twelve years who took the mail carrier, Ed Hamilton, over to the ocean beach with his skiff (boat) at the starting on that fateful journey of his where he met his death at a day or two later, and it was my brother who went to look for him. . .

I do not know who you contacted as former mail carriers over the "Barefoot Route" as at the present time there is only one of them living (if he is). My brother Chas. W. Pierce, one of the carriers and the face of the murals in W. Palm Beach Post Office, has been dead for four years.

Mrs. Voss concluded her letter by asking Pratt for an autographed copy of his book.

On July 6, 1943, Pratt replied to Mrs. Voss from North Hollywood, California:

Your nephew, Charles Pierce ("Chuck"), was one of approximately 100 people I talked with in getting material for the book. As I wrote to him recently it is impossible for me to send copies to all my references, and it would be unfair to send it to anyone in this case. There are, by the way, several men still living who carried the

mail for short periods of time, these I talked with at great length. (Italics added) For the greater part of my background material however, I had to rely on research work on my own, due to the fact that the stories of the pioneers differed so much in fact and fancy. . . .

The tone of this letter and Pratt's refusal to give her a free copy of the book rather annoyed Mrs. Voss who replied to Pratt on July 12, 1943:

. . . There may have been many who on account of advanced age and thinking may have told you that they "carried the mail," certainly a number still living walked the barefoot route with the mail carrier.

Dan McCarley of Lantana may have carried it a few trips. There are no others except a man who may be living in Miami at the present time.

You see, I personally knew all these men; have been President of our Pioneers Association for two years. . . . I wish to apologize for assuming that you would gladly give your book to one of the central figures of the tragedy.

I did not know that you were in such financial straights. You see I just did not comprehend, as we are those who raise vegetables, fruits etc. for a living, but although this is true, and my husband is in his 79th year, still in addition to what we sell for subsistence we annually give away, to our friends quantities of oranges, grapefruits and vegetables and I hope the time will not come when we feel that we cannot do this. I believe this concludes our business.

Pratt promptly replied to this letter on July 20, 1943 again from Hollywood:

I spent nearly two years of work and travel getting the material for my book all the way from Coconut grove

to New York City. It cost me something over \$2,000 simply to get this material and purchase old books, pamphlets, and for library research work.

I have received the munificent sum of \$2225 from my publishers in payment. The reason I did not give copies to the nearly 100 people who helped me with material is that each copy would cost me about \$2. And if I gave to one I feel I should give to all.

In the circumstances, I did not feel, and still do not feel, that I should present a copy to you, who aided me in no way whatever.

Theodore Pratt recalls in **That Was Palm Beach** (1968) how Dan McCarley explained to him the curious technique of walking the beach:

McCarley demonstrated the special way of this to keep the legs springy and prevent them from tiring. It came from the fact that there is of course a slant to the beach, and walking on a slant is tiring. So the mailman, when walking south, made his stride of the right leg, the higher part of the beach, just a little quicker than the left, so that the steps were equalized. When going north he reversed the process.

When a carrier or a foot passenger had mastered this technique he was called a good "Beach Walkist."

In 1968, Pratt donated to Florida Atlantic University at Boca Raton, his collection of notes, manuscripts, records of manuscript submissions and rejections, and correspondence with his publishers. The Pratt Collection is now housed in a special room on the third floor of the S. E. Wimberly Library on the FAU campus. The collection contains Pratt's complete set of first editions of his books together with foreign editions and anthologies. Of great interest to the student are also many of his unpublished stories and

correspondence. There is a mine of information on Palm Beach history as Pratt interviewed many old-time residents and direct descendants of the pioneers. These interviews are recorded in his work books for the "Trilogy." The notebook on **The Barefoot Mailman** includes 230 single-spaced, typewritten pages of material.

In 1944, the Boca Raton Hotel was bought from the Geist estate by the Schine Hotel chain. Included in the deal was substantial acreage covering much of today's Boca Raton and practically the entire seafront property stretching from Delray to Deerfield. Mrs. Hildegard Schine was instrumental in making this acquisition for \$1.2 million and subsequently restored the historic buildings which had been occupied during the last war by the Army Radar School. During this period, Mrs. Schine and her husband, J. Myer Schine occupied a cabana on the hotel grounds.

At a recent interview at her spacious home on Spanish River Road, Mrs. Schine told us how she met the Pratts and eventually arranged for **The Barefoot Mailman** movie to be produced by Columbia Pictures. According to Mrs. Schine, Ted Pratt one day appeared at the gates of the Hotel and asked to see her. He introduced himself and said, "Mrs. Schine, my name is Theodore Pratt. I am a writer and I would like to know whether you would let me have the use of one of the empty cabanas on the hotel property so that I can sit there and write." Mrs. Pratt could not recall this story and was sure Ted did all his writing at home. However, she was able to confirm that Mrs. Schine called Ted over to the hotel to meet Irving Thalberg and Sylvan Simon, producers of Columbia Pictures, who visited with the Schines at the hotel. Mrs. Schine had been reading an autographed copy of **The Barefoot Mailman** given to her by Pratt. She interested the movie people in the story of the mail carrier. They all read the book and that same weekend signed a contract with Theodore Pratt acquiring the rights to the screen play.

Pratt was consulted as to the location and during the shooting of the movie stayed at one of the Schine hotels in Miami. There was quite a problem to find an untouched stretch of beach without telegraph wires and high-rise apartments in the background. Pratt eventually thought of Key Biscayne which in 1950 had not yet been developed. Pratt gave detailed instructions to the movie makers where to take the different shots to make the movie look authentic--down to the shape of the rocks: "You can't find any large boulders on the southern Florida coast. . . You will find some outcroppings of rough rock. . . This rock is not high or pointed on top but usually flat with very rough small potholes worn in it."

In 1949, Bantam Books reissued **The Barefoot Mailman** in paper back with the title **Danger Trail** but this was later dropped. The paperbacks now on the market again bear the original title. It is not clear why Pratt had consented to this change of title. Was it to boost sales? Pratt always regarded **The Barefoot Mailman** as his personal trademark.

Pratt became very aroused when the producers thought of renaming the movie and he was asked to suggest an "action title." The **Miami Herald** reported in detail on Pratt's effort to retain the original name. In December 1950, Pratt got together a petition bearing some 175 names of prominent Boca Raton residents which was promptly dispatched to Columbia Studios in Hollywood. The petition included signatures from the mayor of Boca Raton, president of the Lions Club, commander of the American Legion, head of the Boy Scouts, all five city councilmen, the fire chief, city clerk, and an assortment of realtors and housewives.

In the author's note for the second book of the Trilogy, Pratt states that "very few liberties (were taken) with the actual happenings during the opening up of Florida around the turn of the century." **The Flame Tree** portrays the Palm

Beaches at the time Henry Flagler build the Royal Poinciana Hotel and brought the railroad down as far as West Palm Beach. Before starting to write, Pratt spend a year on research. Included in the research notes are plans for the Royal Poinciana Hotel, the largest wooden hotel structure ever built, and Bradley's famous Casino. On **The Flame Tree** notebook cover there is this typed notation:

Approximately 455 pages of single-spaced typewritten notes, over a quarter million words. . . Included are plans of Bradley's Beach Club and copy of the Rules.

The information of Flagler moving into the Palm Beaches in the 1890s and details of the Royal Poinciana Hotel, and life there, are believed to be the most extensive ever gathered.

There is no question that Pratt did quite a thorough job in researching the background for **The Flame Tree**. He interviewed a number of former employees of the hotel, including a former headwaiter who furnished many details of the interior and the "Cake Walk." This was a kind of minstrel show in which the black servants competed with the Afromobile operators. Pratt also interviewed the head electrician, the telephone operator, and the head housekeeper.

Pratt was meticulous in his research and made sure that the detailed description of the inside workings of the hotel were correct and did not contain any anachronisms. Thus, in January 1948 he wrote to AT & T in New York enquiring when the first switch boards with little indicator lamps went into service. AT & T replied: "If the Poinciana house board actually opened in 1894, it is most likely that the board had annunciator flaps but if the hotel opened in 1895, . . . then it is quite possible that lamps were provided." The hotel actually opened for business in February, 1894 so that either system could have been installed. Pratt got over the difficulty rather neatly by writing: "A small telephone system had been installed with old secondhand equipment. . ." (p.

151) (This seems rather unlikely as Henry M. Flagler was not one to save pennies in the putting up of the largest wooden structure in the world.)

The description of Bradley's Beach Club are equally authentic down to the initials "B. C." which were engraved in the frosted glass panels of the white wooden entrance doors to the club. When the Beach Club was being torn down in the 1940s (it had operated continuously since 1898) Theodore Pratt called his friend Waldo Sexton, who built the Driftwood Inn at Vero Beach. Waldo came down right away and bought both entrance doors. They are now in Vero Beach.

For background of the Beach Club, Pratt interviewed Thomas (Tip) Reece who had been Club Secretary for many years. In the research notes, there is a letter from Pratt to Tip Reece dated July 9, 1947 in which Pratt wanted to know: "Was bird game played around 1904? What did the various chips sell for around 1904? What was the cheapest and its color? What was the highest and its color?" Pratt cleverly weaved these historic data into the story of **The Flame Tree**. Thus we read on p. 266: "Choo Choo pedalled them up to the entrance of Bradley's. . . They descended from the wheel chair . . . and approached the rather narrow white wooden door. Its upper panel was of frosted glass in which were the clear letters "B.C." Here stood a tall, husky, keen-eyed white doorman, clad like themselves in full evening dress."

After "Timothy" had died, the Pratts got another dog, a dachshund and named him "Choo Choo" after the Afromobile operator.

In the research notes there is a newspaper clipping stating that the two boys who used to work the front gates of the Club made about \$14,000 in tips every winter. The man who used to supervise the little parking area behind the building used to average about \$8,000 in tips in a 90-day season. Gambling was illegal in Florida

but Col. E. R. Bradley managed to openly run his gambling casino from 1898 until World War II, but only allowed out-of-state visitors into the gaming rooms.

After Henry Flagler, Bradley was considered Palm Beach's most important figure. He certainly must have had one of the largest incomes in the country for anyone working from early in January, when he arrived in Palm Beach, to the end of March. The taking at the Casino enabled Col. Bradley to maintain a hundred horses on his thousand-acre racing stud at Lexington, Kentucky. Pratt in a few lines manages to draw a sharp picture of Colonel Bradley (p. 234): "A tall, dignified, straight-backed man, clad in faultless evening dress, appeared at the side of their table. Colonel Edward R. Bradley had icy blue eyes, thin lips and a severe expression. It was said that he preferred horses to men because he knew men so well. Now, frostily, he regarded the three of them. . . ."

The reviews of **The Flame Tree** were mixed. **The New York Times'** reviewer found the cast of characters pallid against the razzle-dazzle background of "The Ponce" as the Poinciana Hotel came to be called. "Veteran Floridians who remember the hotel in its heyday will endorse the picture Mr. Pratt paints in this excellent regional novel. . . . Once again we hear the hotel orchestra serenade the private railroad cars of the Belmonts and the Vanderbilts as they back across the Lake Worth bridge." The **Bookmark** review was less favorable. "The factor of overdramatization and overdrawn situations seems to be the major weakness of the book. This weakness is compounded by the hardly successful attempt the author has made to research fairly large chunks of America's last frontier. . . and by handling it fictionally to infuse the breath of life into the material."

In the third book of the Trilogy, **The Big Bubble**, Pratt takes up the story of Palm beach in the early 1920s when Addison Mizner introduced

his pseudo-Spanish architecture. "Adam Paine" is a thinly disguised copy of Addison Mizner. Adam, like Mizner, has a pet monkey and has a backer, Michael Sumner, modelled on Paris Singer. Michael lived in a tower apartment in the Flamingo Club. In real life, Paris Singer had a fancy apartment in the Everglades Club which he controlled. Michael introduces Adam to Mrs. Bradbury. In real life, Addison Mizner got his first big Palm Beach commission from Mrs. Stotesbury. In the book, Adam lived in the tower apartment in Via Paine. In real life, Addison Mizner had built himself an apartment on Via Mizner.

Pratt includes some authentic description of the Florida boom in 1925. Adam came to Roca Faro (Boca Raton) about twenty miles south of Palm Beach where he headed up the Roca Faro Development Company to build a dream resort. They run full page advertisements in the Florida newspapers with flamboyant statements which are almost word for word copies of the Mizner Development Corporation's publicity material.

Pratt is least successful with **The Big Bubble** which seems to have been written rather hurriedly and without the careful research which went into the other books. Margaret Montague in a Master Thesis "Theodore Pratt: The Florida Trilogy" (1978) analyzes in detail the faults of the book. To the reader familiar with the Palm Beach scene, the book is an amusing "roman a clef." Some entertaining hours can be spent identifying real persons and actual events which figure under a thin disguise in the book. Thus Adam Paine's second wife Mona does not give up her nymphomaniacal ways and seduces Gerry Vance (Wilson Mizner). In real life, Paris Singer brought down to Palm Beach Isadora Duncan, the dancer, who had a weakness for prizefighters and was found by Paris Singer with a muscular instructor from Gus's Bath.

There is no question that Theodore Pratt has preserved in his Florida novels with some

authenticity a little of the old and quality of the place before it was taken over by the developers. Pratt, in a number of interviews, made the self-serving assertion that evidence "was piling up" that his works started to become part of the culture, history, and literature of Florida. **The Barefoot Mailman**, which is still in print today, seems to have reached this goal. **The Big Bubble** is also on a Florida Book List prepared by a state librarian. It is doubtful, however, whether this is true for any of his other work.

We should like to conclude with this caveat. Within the scope of this article, already too long, a comprehensive analysis of Pratt's prodigious output and full assessment of the man has not been possible.

c H. Geoffrey Lynfield

A HILLSBORO RIVER IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Daniel F. Austin

Examination of any modern map will show that Florida has only one Hillsboro (also spelled Hillsborough) River. That river is now in Hillsborough County near Tampa. Further study of current maps will show that, between Broward and Palm Beach Counties, there is a canal that is called the Hillsboro Canal. Few people seem to realize that both exist and have a related history.

It does not take much searching through historical documents to find that the canal was formerly the Hillsboro River, and that it drained the Hillsboro Marsh (now the Loxahatchee Refuge). These names, however, have long and complex histories that date from the late 1700s.

Before the names came into existence the river that was to become the Hillsboro Canal of today was either unknown, or thought to be part of what was then known as Rio Seco. These names appear from the early 1600s on the Sanson and Ruesta maps as well as others. Some confusion occurred during the 1700s and the site was alternately called Rio Seco, Rio Nuevo, and New Inlet on the Gibson, Romans, and DeBrahm's maps. New Inlet was continued for this site at least until the 1790s when the Gauld map was published.

During the first three centuries of Florida's history few of the European explorers ventured inland in this region. On the available maps of that time, coastal features were emphasized. The maps were intended mostly for mariners and contained largely those aspects of the coasts that would be useful for determining their geographical location. Hills, unusual tree clusters, and most important rivers and inlets were common notations. Little detail was given for the inland parts of the peninsula.

Apparently the first application to any site in Florida of "Hillsboro" or "Hillsborough" came from the first English surveys in the 1760s. William DeBrahm first called the Mosquito Lagoon and Indian River branches the "Hillsborough Stream" in honor of the Earl of Hillsborough. This Irish gentleman, one Wills Hills, who became the Secretary of State for the colonies in 1768, was particularly interested in Florida. Indeed, he and DeBrahm may be counted among the first land speculators in Florida.

Most subsequent map-makers did not, however, like changing the names of those sites to honor Lord Hillsborough. So, the name was shifted about the peninsula. James Grant Forbes, who visited the area in 1803, was one of the first to apply Hillsborough's name to a bay formerly known as "Espiritu Santo" or what we now call Tampa Bay. Later both a river feeding into that bay, and the county surrounding it came to be called by the Irish Lord's name.

A third site also came to bear Lord Hillsborough's name in the 1820s. Charles Vignoles decided to retain older names for both Tampa Bay and the Indian River regions, but named the inlet on the southeastern coast as the "Hillsboro Inlet." In so doing he moved the original Hillsborough Inlet named by DeBrahm about eighty miles south down the eastern coast. Vignoles wrote on his map the standard usage of the time, calling the inlet the "Hillsboro or Middle River Inlet" and the stream feeding into it the "Potomac River." It was the late 1830s before the stream ceased to be called the Potomac and became the Hillsboro River. Of course, there were exceptions to these names. For example, the Baldwin & Cradock map of 1834 called the upper part of the stream the Potomac River and the lower reaches the Rio Seco. There were even some, such as the Mitchell map of 1831, that called it the "Sharkstail River," but retained Hillsboro Inlet.

With the first military maps of the Second Seminole War, such as the Poinsett/Hood map of 1838 and the MacKay & Blake map of 1839, the waterway began to settle on either "Hillsborough" of "Hillsboro" River and Inlet. This appellation was continued on the first State map, and the Bruff map of 1846, as "Hillsborough" and the Ives Military map of the Third Seminole War as "Hillsboro." This terminology finally settled, and was kept for the following decades.

With the upsurge of power of that political force known as Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, new plans began to be made for the Hillsboro River. In the first decade of the 1900s Broward campaigned for governorship on a drainage platform. He is said to have gone about the state armed with graphs, pictures, and maps of the Everglades as he argued for drainage of this vast marsh system. He won his governorship (from 1905 to 1909) and Fort Lauderdale (in what was to become Broward County on 30 April 1915), became the center of operations for draining the Everglades. By 1921 the Hillsboro River had been reduced to a canal, much of it having been dug by 1913.

Today there is little indication that the Hillsboro Canal was once a flowing river. The waterway is spanned at various points by bridges, and blocked in several places by salt-water dams. There is still a lighthouse near the Hillsboro Inlet, and a town named Hillsboro Beach, but the character of the area is drastically changed. Fishing may still be good, but it is rarely like that described for the inlet in the 1760s by Bernard Romans. He said that ". . . Jewfish are very abundant both within and without the river. . ." Similarly, the ". . . five tall cabbage trees on the pine land. . ." about two and one quarter miles south of the inlet are no longer in evidence to guide sailors.

Inland the story of change is similar. During the Second Seminole War Dr. Jacob R. Motte, a

physician attached to General Jesup's command, marched down the coast past the Hillsboro River. Although he did not mention the river by name, he described it as a series of ". . . cypress swamps with deep streams flowing through the center. . ." In truth, the Hillsboro River was one of the major places where excess water escaped from the Everglades. It still serves that purpose even though channelized, but the timing and manner has changed.

BLEACH YARD alias HOBE MOUNTAIN

Daniel F. Austin

From the ocean at the Jupiter Inlet one of the most remarkable natural features inland is a hill called "Hobe Mountain." This hill is within the Jonathan Dickinson State Park, and is presently topped with a platform that makes a convenient place to survey the surrounding countryside. Few who visit the site realize the role in history this promontory has played.

Although the naming of the hill dates from the first Spanish occupation of Florida (1513-1763), most of the early Spanish maps contain too little detail for this inland feature. Still, it was known at an early date to the Spanish mariners as an important landmark for determining their position along the coast. One of the first references to the site was given by Calderon, the Bishop of Cuba, in 1675. Yet, it was the maps from the English Period (1763-1783) that brought into common usage the name for the hill.

The first English surveys down the eastern coast of Peninsular Florida were made in the early 1760s by W. G. DeBrahm and Bernard Roman

While DeBrahm had a tendency to give sites new names, usually commemorating rich or powerful people in Europe, Romans attempted to retain the old Spanish place names. It is from the Romans' survey that we learn that the tall hill north of Jupiter was ". . . the hill by the Spaniards called **Ropas Tendidas**, and by us . . . (called) **Bleach Yard**." On their map of 1776 Sayer & Bennett wrote: "the Bleach Yard a High Hill full of white spots remarkable Land Mark." These commentaries are consistent with the later historical record that Bleach Yard was also the place called by the Spanish "Ropas Estendias." This idea, according to Vignoles in 1823, was ". . . from the large spots of land uncovered by vegetation, presenting to the coasting mariner the appearance of linen spread out on the hills. . ." Both the names "Beach Yard" and "Ropas Estendias" continued in use well into the Second Seminole War and appeared on the Hood map of 1838 and the Tanner map of 1839.

Another old name for the same site was apparently given first by Stork in 1767 as "Baldhead Mount." This appellation appeared sporadically on subsequent maps, as on the Jefferys map of 1792, and the Gauld map of 1794. Following this time period it seems to have been dropped. Even this descriptor alludes to a hill with areas open of vegetation so that it seemed bald.

These names give some of the natural history of this particular site. First, they all refer to a high hill which was either bare on top or had many open spots that showed between the vegetation. The vegetation of these high ridges and hills was then and continues to be scrub. This is a pine woods dominated by several plants adapted to living under stressful conditions. The trees are scrub pines (*Pinus clausa*), and the understory of shrub layer is made up of a variety of oaks (*Quercus* spp.), saw palmetto and a shrub called rosemary (*Ceratiola ericoides*). Some think that this habitat may have occupied these sandy hills for about 15,000 years or even longer.

One of the striking features of this hill today is that there are only a few open spots of white sand visible from any angle. Even from the ocean where early surveyors and explorers would have seen it, the site appears as a dark green hill. This suggests that it was changed markedly since at least the middle 1700s. The change has been a maturing of the scrub vegetation so that it has closed in the white sandy spots and made them green. A time-frame for the change is still not very good, since it is not possible to determine when the final shift occurred. Indeed, we do not know for sure that it has occurred only once. Still, the hill continued to be called Bleach Yard or Ropas Estendias in the late 1830s. Perhaps it was a change that occurred after that time.

Such an interpretation of the disappearance of the white spots is further supported by a shift in the location of a place called Bleach Yard. In the 1840s a place on Lake Worth began to be labeled "Bleach Yard Haulover." Other sites in the region were not named with anything resembling this. Through the Third Seminole War the Lake Worth site continued to be called "Bleach Yard Haulover" and appeared, for example, on the Ives Military map of 1856. On later maps the terms Bleach Yard and Ropas Estendias finally disappeared.

Although it has not been possible to pin down the time "Hobe Mountain" began to be used, it possibly dates from near the beginning of Jonathan Dickinson State Park. The first part of this name is clear enough in its origin, having come from the Indians the early European visitors found there--the Jobe. This name has seen various renditions on maps, from Hobe to Hoe-bay. English map-makers saw this as a reference to the Greek Diety Jobe, and Anglicized it to "Jupiter." The name Jupiter is now applied only to a town and inlet.

The second word "mountain" may seem out of place in the flatlands of peninsular Florida, but

historically it is not. Many of the early 1600s and 1700s Spanish maps depict a range of mountains down the center of the peninsula. While these have been shown to be fictitious, the elevation of Hobe Mountain does make it distinctive from the surrounding lands. Although an average elevation in that part of Martin County may be about 20 feet, Hobe Mountain reaches up to 86 feet. Surely this seemed like a mountain to people more familiar with elevations ranging from sea level to about thirty feet.

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