

Mayville, New York 14757
107 South Erie Street
November 24, 1980

Dear Mr Camp:

As it now appears doubtful I will ever get-it-all-together, the history of Pinellas Park. I am enclosing what I have collected it may be of some value to another researching.

I will also enclose a part of a letter written to me by a gentleman who is elderly but recalls the Saint Petersburg area. 1960's This also may be helpful to some one at a later date.

He writes;

You mentioned about Mrs Sperry and Herb that run the Beech Hotel on lower Central Avenue in St Pete. George Crosby built his house on 4th St. north, Mrs Sherry built a house on the southside of the same block, Herb bought a lot on the same block, so they all backed up to one another, the city classified George's house under Squatter's Rights, that's the last I heard of them, Mrs Sherry used to rent chairs on the hotel front porch to Brocton people to take in the big parade (I presume he means the Festival of States parade.) They tore down the Beech Hotel and built the Sorento, the next year I sat on the hood of my car to watch the parade. Mrs Sherry moved all the Beech Hotel furniture into the three houses on 4th street. Maybe, you know all about this, but anyway there it is for the record. (*It was before I was born) (This Mrs Sperry and Herb were from a village near here. I just remember my aunt speaking of them and wondered if he knew them. I believe this Mrs Sperry and Herb were brother and sister. I also think the name was Sperry and not Sherry, Herb was the Sir name.) *Prorand ERB.*

Anyhew, Happy Days,

Jill Yerraise

*P.S.
Nothing of the old town left. When I last visited the Park was hard for me to get my bearings. Only a few old timers left.*

Early History of Pinellas Park.

1900- Pinellas Park, began as a real estate developement. David R. Grace and Mrs Harrison McWhinney's father laid out Pinellas Park. Mrs Mc Whinney's family were from Wilington Del.

The DeHass family were Pa. people and had a sugar cane mill, and cane fields in outlaying areas, the mill was across from the old town hall and had it's own little railroad running out into the cane fields, the concrete base of the weighing scales in my childhood were still in evidence between the old town hall and the old four room brick school house. The syrup business gave out in the late 1900's and the mill blew down in the 1921 hurricane. (Mrs Gordon Dehass, now deceased, had in her family pictures, old photos of the mill and railroad.)

There were two turpentine mills or stills in the area in the early 1900's one towrad St Pete and the other about two miles north west of Pinellas Park, where the railroad crossed the Cross Bayou Canal. The one north of the Park had a convict camp to supply the labor. There was also a rendering plant in the same area near the tracks and canal, they rendered animal fat (hogs) to manufacture soap.

The first post mistress of Pinellas Park was Miss Bessie Bunn. Who later married Rev. Faber whom in my day was called Dr. Faber who was Vicar of an Episcopal church on Tangerine Avenue in the city. On one occasion she told me her father was a country doctor who traveled the bayou country by boat and around Pinellas county by horse and carriage.

She also related to me the following story of the Pinellas Park turpentine still. I have never been able to verify the tale, as all then living in the park have passed on. There would seem to be no

newspaper account of it. There are some discrepancies in the story, as others or the few who are still living born in the Park in the 1900's have no knowledge of the affair.

In back of the old Henry Lumber Co. building was the Royal Palm Hotel, owned by a Howard Reese, on the fenced in property was a house that had never been finished, and we school children referred to it as the "Haunted House." The story she related to me was;

She was post mistress at the time, a young couple from Ga. came to the Park, the young husband was to manage the mill, they had started to build a home (the building we called the haunted house that remained all my growing up unfinished) she said as post mistress she cashed the pay role for the workers who were negroes. (This does not correspond with convict labor) The young couple resided on Rock road some where near what was known in my childhood as the Bay Head, On this particular afternoon the Friday pay role did not arrive on the afternoon train from Jacksonville. The young man told the men "Not to worry, his pay role had not arrived, there must be trouble up the line, and the pay role would surely arrive the next day." Saturday came and went and no pay role arrived, she said " The negroes gathered around the post office and were sullen and sulky.

Next morning (Sunday) some neighbors of the young couple passing by thier cottage on the way to church, noticed the curtains hanging out an open window, the passing neighbor woman thought it odd. The young couple were not in church, and on thier return from church the neighbor woman prevailed upon her husband to stop and see any thing was amiss. The young man had been murdered, and his young wife alive but just alive. She also related in this story, the negroes carried lead pipes to kill snakes when they worked in the timber barefoot. She related the young wife had been reading to her husband when the attack occurred.

She said the irony of the affair was, the men of the town formed into a posse and out on the bayou, hung an aged and harmless negro who eked out a living cutting wood and making brooms which he sold in the city. The town passed an ordinance " No negro was to be inside the town limits before sunrise in the morning or after sunset at eveing. She said "Pa Pa was real sad about the whole affair.

If this story was told to frighten me, she succeeded ! Truth or fiction I have no way of knowing.

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Pinellas Park 1920- 1930-1940.

1926 Chamber of Commerce

President : P.J.McDevitt

Secretary: Joseph J.Goulet

* If memory serves me correctly Mr Goulet was from New York City, and built a little settlement east of the Park called Pine nell. In the 1930's these wood frame buildings were rented to tourist but many were empty. Doughlas, the ice man lived in Pine nell.

In the late 1920's and the 1930's people remarked, Pinellas Park would have to grow a lot to replace what had been torn down or moved away out of the Park. At one time there had been a catholic church and parish house, a gothic church, a movie house, whole streets of houses were sold and moved to the beach, you could roller skate all day on the sidewalks laid out on the empty streets. There two paved streets in the community, one was haines road through the town which was always referred to as the Blvd. and the short street the school was on that was in the center of town.

1930.

The town consisted of a four room brick school house, a town hall and club rooms, here was held dances, home talent shows, and the club rooms held meetings of the Sunshine Society that sponsored a public library.

Pinellas Park, had a fire dept. a village office, the railroad station which shipped cut flowers daily during the winter season. A lock-up for the unruly, the constable was a local man.

Pinellas Park, had two hotels the Royal Palm and the "Park View " which was on the Blvd. Operated as a hotel only in the winter months and hired a caretaker in the summer months. It had a white wooden fence around the premises and a covered trellis with benches at the sidewalk entrance, the hotel itself was a large wooden building. I never remember it being operated as a hotel. The inside was an intriguing place, I remember the winter Doc ~~XXXXX~~ Weidler and his wife and son they called Okay was caretaker, Mr Weidler published a weekly one sheeted newspaper called the "Pinellas Parker." Which was widely read and enjoyed. That winter, the hotel held seance sessions, drawing large crowds of persons. The inside of the hotel was all done in wicker, the dining room tables, the hotel desk clerk's room was a turret affair done all in wicker, each bedroom had a wicker desk, (just think if you owned all that wicker today at the current price of wicker) looking back I think it must have been in the era of the movie "The Sheik" as in the hall ways were vases in different hues, large enough so we children played hide-and-go-seek in them. I remember one in particular a large blue vase. For awhile it was winter quarters for retired ministers. (I might add, this game of hide-and-go-seek during the holding of the seance meeting, was the end of my playing in the old hotel.