

1965?
P.O. Box 201
Blountville, Tenn.
37617

Jim;

Received your letter and was much surprised to get an answer back so darn quick. You must really be on the ball down there. So we have a little control now....eh? Thasallrite! You did a good job. But the question in my mind is this.....where does absolute control step into the picture? How many do we have to have on the board to gain a majority rule?

Jim, you worry me a little. I don't know if you are missing something or if I am overlooking a detail I hadn't noticed before. You referred to the distance between Immokalee and the river as being over eight miles. Go back and check the topographical grid and run the miles off in direct distance, not by road or trail, but by a direct line which Ray would have certainly taken if possible. If you use a road map, you will come up with a scale of 23 miles from Immokalee to Bonita Springs. I charted it out by topographical charts and found it to actually be a much shorter distance. The lady I am renting from now knows horses inside and out and she says a horse, in good condition, could cover 50 to 60 miles in one day with very little trouble. This is if he has good footing and where sand is involved, this will slow him down only if the sand is above his hoofs. So it would definitely be possible for this trip to be made in one day.

Mrs. Summerfield said she saw Ray, on numerous occasions, ride out of Immokalee very early in the morning on horseback and he would always return late in the evening. This would certainly indicate a long trip by horseback unless he was stopping and spending time with someone. At this time, Richard Demilton was dead and if I were in Rays boots, I don't believe I would have spent anytime with anyone at this point. The reasons are quite obvious.

To begin with, we thought Ray was walking and didn't know about him being crippled. Later, the facts came to light that he was crippled as a result of the accident that killed his parents on the old Plant Railroad and also that if he took any kind of trip at all, even a short one, it was necessary that he travel either by buggy or by horseback.

Now, Jim, let's assume you're a dying man and know it. You only have a few days, possibly a few hours to live. You know where a fortune is hidden. You also know it is well enough hidden that the family that took you in as a boy when your real parents were killed could never possibly find it unless you took them to it. You have made this trip many many times and know the trail like the back of your hand. Would you leave this laying around for someone else to pick up?

You must also realize that Ray was an unusually tough man at this time, which is proven out by the fact that he knew he was dying when he came into the Sellers cabin that evening. Yet he had walked many many miles just to get there after seeing a doctor and knowing he was suffering with double pneumonia. He was travelling in the middle of a storm. Why? Why not stay with a doctor where he could be helped possibly? Why leave this security to get to Joe Sellers? The comforts of home possibly. But why try to literally force the Sellers to leave that cabin and go back out into an even worse storm once he did make it there?

And also Jim; I was referring to the mileage from the augerhole to Bonita Springs as being approximately eight miles, not that from Immokalee to Bonita Springs. This was probably my error.

Jim, I talked to a doctor up here and came up with a few answers which had puzzled me. He said that if this boy had double pneumonia and knew it, he also knew he couldn't live for long. Even today, if double pneumonia develops in a hospital, there is very little they can do about it. He further stated that sheer instinct would drive him, or any man, back to the most important thing in his life if it was still existing. I inquired of him about the possibility of Ray being delirious. He said cases of delirium with double pneumonia are extremely rare.

We know he had revolted against Joe Sellers in his early years and turned to Richard Demilton, with whom he seemed to be very contented. He had married a girl up around Tampa and took off out west with her and her six kids. She got him out there and when he woke up one morning, her, the kids and all the money he had with him was long gone daddy-o. At this point, he turned for home and began making his way back. Judging from what the Sellers said, he had to hitch his way all the way from Colorado. This was probably the very thing that broke his physical resistance to pneumonia down and was the beginning of the end.

From what I was told, the events of that night went something like this: He entered the Sellers resident that evening a little before sundown. Joe hadn't seen Ray for some time. He was, at this point, about twenty-two to twenty five years of age. He told them quite a bit of his trip and life since he had left the area but immediately began probing them to go with him to relocate this cache so they would not be without it. He knew he was dying at that time. I would say it was between eight and nine PM when they finally began their trip out. The indications thus far are that they travelled in excess of an hour and possibly two before the tree finally blew down in front of them. Ray insisted that they could walk the rest of the way on foot rather than give up at this point. It was here that he further insisted that they would never find this cache unless he took them to it.

This was precisely what the doctor up here said he would have done, despite the dangers involved which would have definitely seared the Sellers, but would not have phased a dying man in his condition. In his frustration, he would have totally disregarded the welfare of the Sellers because they weren't the most important things left to him. This treasure would have been the most important and he wouldn't even have had a second thought about their lives. In all probability, if they had gotten to it, he would have died right there and no where else!

So let's assume they travelled for two hours, which was indicated by the Sellers involved. This sets the time up to about 10:00 P.M.. Ray died about three AM. This is further born out by the fact that 90% of all deaths due to natural causes occur between midnight and 5:00 A.M.. Two hours out and two hours back.....approximately midnight. Ray died about three hours later.

I have meant to do two things. The first is to scrutinize the records of that hurricane. You have those papers with you. Next, I would like to talk with some of the forest rangers in the big cypress and see just how much high land exists in line between Immokalee and Bonita Springs. The topographical chart showed a path leading between the two. If you'll pick one up, you can trace it.

But yet something else bothers me Jim. From what I have been able to find out, Joe Sellers was running the store in Bonita Springs. Just how was he getting back and forth from Immokalee in time to open up the store and close it of the evening and yet be able to be at home in Immokalee during the night. There may have been a shortcut or something we don't know about. It could also have been that Joe, at one time or another, actually lived in Bonita Springs. I did not have time to dig any further than their residence at Immokalee. And Ray is buried there in Immokalee we believe. Could Joe have lived in Bonita Springs BEFORE moving to Immokalee? That was an awful long trip to make every day for an old man.

As far as being on some other river, I would rule this out for many different reasons. The cabin remains; the augerhole which the old fisherman told us was the only one he knew of that had ever existed on the west coast of Florida; the description Ray gave which fit perfectly; the close proximity of the store in Bonita Springs which was sending gold coins to the Tampa Bank; the topography of the land around the river. We have checked every river out that could have possibly been the river. No other has the type of foliage and topography disclosed in the story and neither is there any possibility of any other river that would have been feasible having a cabin located as far downstream as was described. All the rest of the rivers from the Caloosahatchee south to the ten thousand island area harbor low swampy areas on which no man could possibly build a cabin. There are no oak stands on the other rivers. We made an intensive search of these rivers and found them to be totally different of what was described to us in the story. So I would very definitely rule out any other river.

Well, I'll close for now. Should be seeing you shortly. Write back to the new address though and let me know if you're able to find anything about the scopes or any new information on this situation.

Mac

Richard A. Johnson
1820 S. OCEAN BOULEVARD
MANALAPAN, FLORIDA 33460

Dear Mr. Warnke;

I recently read "More Florida Lore" by Vernon Lamme. I was very interested in your article in which you described some of the older wreck sites of Boynton Beach and surrounding areas.

I have been diving this area (Boynton, Manalapan and Palm Beach) over a 10 year period yet I havent seen or heard of any of the wrecks you mention. I would be interested in diving on some of these sites and was wondering if you or anyone you know of does any diving on them or if you have specific directions to these sites as I would like to see them first hand.

I know of only two older wreck sites in this area. One of which I have been on. One of the wrecks is at the Boynton inlet and covered by quite a bit of sand now and the other is marked on most charts off the curve off Manalapan and is also under sand now.

If you have the time I would be interested in hearing from you on these sites as this is a hobby of mine. I have enclosed a self addressed envelope for your convience.

Sincerely;

Richard A. Johnson

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March 19, 1974

Ghost Towns
Box 1408
Boynton Beach, Florida 33435

Dear Sir:

Please send me a reproduction of your 1890 map of Florida. I Have just finished reading your book, "Ghost Towns of Florida", which I enjoyed very much.

My Father-In-Law who will be 83 the 12th of July has been coming to Florida since 1910. He helped build a railroad from Arcadia to Sarasota. He said there used to be a place called Limestone that he can remember. It was over around Arcadia. When I saw your book I thought maybe it would be mentioned in it. He was born in Decatur County, Georgia in 1891, but he worked down in Florida a good bit of the time. At one time he lived in Coral Gables, in 1925, where the traffic circle is now. They lived in a house on the Old Cutler road where when you stood on the front porch you could look up LeJeune Road. After their 3rd child was born they decided to go back to Georgia and buy a farm. They left before the 1926 hurricane. I am sure he has seen many more changes than we ever will and I enjoy hearing him tell about things that used to be. We will be going to visit him in April and I am sure going to take your book along to read to him, he will enjoy it. At the time I bought your book I also bought a reproduction of a 1908 Sears catalog which is also very interesting. Thank you again for writing something of interest.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Maurice Strickland

5905 N.W. 39 ST.

MIAMI SPRINGS

33166

Encl. \$1.04

*X +
enc
3/23/74*

JAMES R. WARNKE

617 LAKESIDE HBR.

BOYNTON BEACH, FL 33435

HOME (305) 732-4567

May 17, 1983

Dear Mr. Johnson,

It has been several years since I have dived the waters in this area but I will try to give you some of what I know.

There are three wrecks that I know of off the point in Manalapan that I call Chillingsworth curve. Two of them are modern, steel plates, anchor chain (of which I have a piece of), etc. The other remains must be quite old as we found parts of Portuguese bottles, silver belt buckles, bronze spikes, etc. There is no wreck site per se. The artifacts are scattered along the shallow reef in only three feet of water.... just take a flipper and fan the hollows of the rocks. The anchor chain lies further out in about a fifteen foot depth.

There is also rumors of a wreck just north of the Boynton Inlet in twenty feet of water that the local fishermen call the featherbeds. Good spearfishing and some old artifacts have been found there. There are ribs of an old sailing ship exposed at times in sixty feet of water directly off the Boynton Public Beach. I have huge bronze spikes that may have come from that wreck that were taken from what I think was a keel. I had the wood dated by the Forest Products Lab. in Wisconsin and they said it was deal wood which was used for ships in the 1700's and only comes from England.

I have seen a small cannon and one or two cannon balls under a reef in ten feet of water off Adams Road in Ocean Ridge. This was covered up by a storm and I could never locate the site again. There is, of course, the large remains of a modern ship off of the south end of Delray Beach and just further south of that one in fifteen feet of water there is what I call the railroad wreck. It was a sailing ship that evidently went down in 1934 while hauling railroad spikes to the overseas RR in the keys. Spikes all over the place.

MAYOR OF BOYNTON BEACH
OFFICE (305) 734-8111

(over)

"Local Self Government Is The Keystone Of American Democracy"

To my knowledge, the town of Osceola was one of the first anywhere in this part of the state to have running water, electric lights, sidewalks, sewer lines, and a public school. It was still in existence until the early 1940's when the town was closed due to a lack of timber and the company moved its' operations to the present site at Port Evergladss in Ft. Lauderdale.

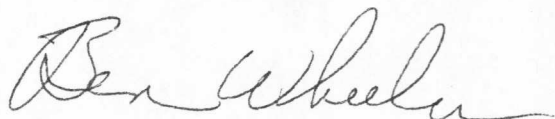
In the community of Geneva, there is a small museum of various artifacts which tell the story of early life in and around Seminole County, including among other things, some interesting photos and information about the town of Osceola. Also, I have an Uncle who lives near there who was an employee of the lumber company both in Osceola and after it moved on to its present location.

I think you would find our history interesting and I would like to extend to you an invitation to visit our county if it is possible in the future. As you can see, I live in Vero Beach which is where I work, but if you should happen to find the time or opportunity to be traveling in that area, let me know and I would be most happy to take you 'a-vistin' and show you what there is to see and let you talk to some of the old-timers who are still around.

You might also be interested to know that Geneva is located on Lake Harney and is the site of Fort Lane which was an army outpost in the pioneer days of the state. Some of the logs from the fort can still be seen on the shore of the lake.

Again Mr. Warnke, let me extend this invitation to you, and if you think this would interst you, let me know and we will work our time to a mutual convenience. I look forward to hearing from you regardless of what your answer to this proposal, as I am always interested intalking to those who are interested in Floridas' past.

Cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ben Wheeler". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Ben Wheeler".

Tuesday 16, 1990

Dear Joanne & Sam,

Would you believe that I had started you a note and my typewriter ribbon gave out and had to wait until yesterday to get another one. I had some information you might like to have.

Edna Pearce Lockett is in a nursing home.

I talked to J. C. Bass and he knew right where the property was. He knows a lot of history. He said you should have a map of the vicking property foir the ~~xxx~~ place you are talking about is right in the middle of it.

Otis Chandler and Zeda Hunt (she used to live in Boynton) would be two good people to talk with.

Directions as best as I could get from him

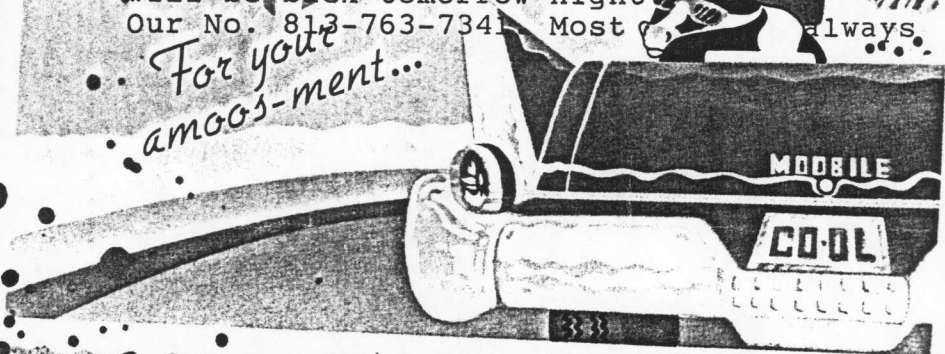
Take 98 to Bassinger--then 700A to 724
Turn Left on the county grade for about 1 mile
Take a Right on Peevine rightway on old R, R, grade. Thats the place. I didn't know there were so many little settlements named. He said this place was worse than the Wild Wild West in the early 1900 to 1920. Some of the off springs of the old timers refuse to talk about it. Any way J. C. said if he could help you in anyway, He would. He is interesting just to hear talk.

So when ever you know you can come, if we know a bit in advance, we can give him a call.

Ellwood went to Louisville, Ky this morning will be back tomorrow night

Our No. 813-763-7341 Most always

For your
amooos-ment...



Blue Heron
& west.

J.C. Bass
813-
-763-3662
Will call
collect.
Fort Brook

Sam Allen
734-2105

Harry Rainey, Jr.
1206 Ester Street
Groveland, FL 32736

Dear Jim,

Thanks for your latest book on "Ghost Town Locations", I hope it proves a winner for you. I'd like to pay you back with several ghost towns that I've uncovered while doing research on potential TH'ing sites.

✓ Lake Co. - Hawkinsville located 1 mile south of Crows Bluff on the St. Johns River.

~~Marion Co.~~ - Cotton Plant located on SR 40, west of Ocala.

~~Romeo~~ - est 1860, ^{10 1/2} miles ~~northeast~~ of Dunnellon, before curve on RR. *on 41*

~~Leroy~~ - est 1886, 7 miles east of Rainbow Springs on abandoned RR roadbed

~~York~~ - est pre-1890, northeast of Leroy, along the RR roadbed. *COVERED ROLLING HILLS DEV.*

~~Morganville~~ - located North of Dunnellon and 2 miles West of Pine Island Prairie, near US 41/SR 328 junction.

~~Chatmar~~ - circa 1890, located 1 miles Northeast of Dunnellon, on RR line.

~~Heidtville~~ - circa 1890, located near SR 484 and the Dunnellon Airport where schoolhouse still stands.

~~Fairview~~ - 1890, located 2 1/4 miles east of Camp IZARD Ferry, near SR 200.

~~Parkersburg~~ has been absorbed by Rainbow Lakes Estates, nothing remains.

~~Flying S Ranch~~ absorbed towns likes Heidtville, Leroy and much of Juliette.

Citrus Co:

~~Lecanto~~ - est 1858, located at junction of SR 491/SR 44.

~~Stage Pond~~ - 1880's, located in Citrus Wildlife Refuge, north shore of Stage Pond.

~~Mannfield~~ - est 1884, located near SR 491, near Mansfield Pond.

~~Fairmount~~ - est 1885 midway between Crystal River & Lecanto.

~~Viana~~ - est 1887, located near Hernando

~~Oakdale~~ - 1878, located 20 miles NW of Brooksville.

~~Rose Hill~~ - est 1843, located 8 3/4 miles North of Brooksville and 5 miles west of Istachatta.

~~Port Inglis~~ - est 1890 to 1915, located on Chambers Island, mouth of Withlacoochee River.

Hernando Co.:

~~Oriole~~ - est 1884, 1 1/4 miles west of Withlacoochee River, alongside lake of same name.

~~Bay Port~~ - 1860 to 1880's, SR 50 deadends at site, main port for county.

Hammock Creek Harbor & Indian Creek Harbor located near Aripeka, 1880's.

~~Crooms~~ - 1890's, located 5 miles North of SR 50, on Withlacoochee River.

~~Enville~~ - est 1898, located near Masarytown. Centralia replaced it further North.

~~Pemberton's~~ Ferry located at Istachatta at Fish Camp.

Riverland - 1880's, located in Richloam Wildlife Area, northwest of Richloam tower, south of SR 50. Turpentine village.

Brevard Co. -

These towns vanished in 1880's: Bovine, Goshen, Banyan, Bahia, & Brantley.

Columbia Co. : Mikesville had a general store, P.O. & grits mills. No location.

Manatee Co. - Indian townsite of Hirrihigua (Timucan), located off Tamiami Trail to the left of Rubonia about ten miles North of Bradenton, you'll find the great temple mound that rises up 40 feet.

Osceola Co.: Large Indian town located southeast of Kissimmee, near junction to SR 525/525A. Sec 29, T26, R30E. See 1858 topo's in courthouse.

Polk Co.; Lake Hatchineha Indian Town Sec 31, T28, R 30, see same topo's.

Tiger Lake Indian Village Sec 17, T30, R30, Ditto.

Brahma Island Old Indian town located in Lake Kissimmee, Sec 20, T30, R31, Ditto

X Putnam Co., Fort Gates: 1860's - located south of Ferry site, many buildings still intact.
That about cleans me out on old town sites

and I hope it can be useful for you. My friends who live on the Ethel City site have sold their property to developers who will build 2,000 homes over the area. So I guess Ethel City will end up like Parkersburg almost. We're going to take a 9 yard payloader and scrape 6 inches off the top and go over the site with metal detectors and scour the area for any caches that may have existed. If I find anything of importance, you can be sure that I'll write an article for a treasure magazine about it.

I'm still doing research on fort sites and I'd like to put out a little book like you did. Can you tell me the procedure or would you like a conglomeration and put our heads together. We live a distant apart but we could figure something out. Enclosed is an example of my research.

Good hunting,

Harry