

Communication

to the Historical Association of Southern Florida

It is most fitting that the extreme southern section of Florida should have a historical journal, and it is even more appropriate that the Historical Society of this area should publish it.

There are not a few who err in thinking that everything of importance in that part of Florida south of parallel 29 degrees north latitude has happened within the last fifty or sixty years. As a matter of fact history was being made in southern Florida long before the founding of Jamestown, in fact even prior to the birth of Shakespeare.

During Ponce de Leon's voyage in 1513 he discovered a group of islands on which were numerous turtles and gave them the name "Tortugas," which they have borne ever since. Later on Ponce de Leon sailed up the west coast and into Charlotte Harbor which long afterward was known as "the Bay of Juan Ponce."

On the mainland near this same bay in 1566 Pedro Menendez was married to the sister of the chief of the Caloosa Indians and as a result of the Spanish visit a mission was established.

Even prior to the coming of Menendez Spanish treasure fleets from Mexico had been wrecked along the islands and coast of Florida or grounded on its reefs, but there came a time when what were known as "the plate fleets" suffered more from pirates than from storms or treacherous coastal channels.

The most famous of these pirates was Jose Gaspar and many are the romantic tales concerning him. Many persons during the years have searched the islands and coasts of South Florida hoping to find some pirates cache or the gold from the wreck of a plate fleet. The story of the wreckers of Key West has been many times written, but it always has a new interest for us every time it is related.

The history of South Florida's part in the Indian wars of the State is particularly interesting, and I am glad that the names of such men as Dade, Meade, Worth, Eustis, Myers, Lauderdale and many others are perpetuated in your place designations. Many now living do not know why Eustis, Lake Worth, Fort Myers and Fort Lauderdale received the honored names they bear.

In bringing unknown historical material to light you are doing a good work. Your society will promote useful research and will be the means of illuminating your interesting history.

I not only wish you well, I believe your success is assured.

Signed: SPESARD L. HOLLAND