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**Signs of Tomorrow—Concrete Billboards
Ponce De Leon Springs Attractions 1953**

Tourists were first lured to Ponce De Leon Springs in the late 1880s after Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West Railway were constructed.

The first big tourism surge started in the 20th century after the Great Depression, with another after World War II. Automobile traffic increased, replacing trains as the main mode of transportation. More visitors came to Florida for vacation and as a result the roadside attraction industry flourished throughout the state. Between 1929 and 1971, 130 attractions were established, along major routes as US 1, US 27 and US 41. Most of the attraction had a theme of Florida’s Natural resources or history



Billboard—De Leon Springs State Park, 2014(Advertisement reproduction painted in 2009)(Note the decorative urns on top of each column—this billboard only)

Albeit with a sometimes embellished version of facts to attract more tourists.

Less traveled roads such as St. Johns River Trail which guided drivers south from Jacksonville on US 17 also attempted to get a share of the tourist dollar.

With the success of Cypress Gardens and Silver Springs firmly established, Ponce de Leon Springs underwent major renovations in 1952 to make it a premier attraction to increase tourist dollars for the community. New owners C. Hayden Davis, his son T. Hayden Davis, and Ray A. Hose formed a partnership, investing \$1,000,000 in property enhancements and launched a major advertising campaign. In May, 1953, the gates of Ponce de Leon Springs opened, featuring water shows (daredevil skiing and water skiing elephant), exotic and native animals, jungle cruise, glass bottom boats, tram tour, scuba school, restaurant and cocktail lounge, 12,000 azaleas, a “2,173 year old cypress tree” called Old Methuselah, and of course, the Fountain of Youth.

To advertise the new attraction, sixty billboards, called “Signs of Tomorrow” were placed along main roads from the Florida/Georgia border south to Tampa and Titusville. The two-sided concrete block, steel-reinforced billboards was touted as fire, hurricane and termite-proof, measured approximately 30 feet in length, 11 feet in width, and 18 feet in height. Two columns supported the sign area that measured 24 feet across. Each column had curvilinear buttresses

on both sides for added support. A concrete block pier supported the sign. The only billboard that is filled in with block across the bottom of the sign area is at the entrance to De Leon Springs State Park.



Billboard—east side of Hwy 17, north of Lake Winona Rd., De Leon Springs, 2014. (Florida Master Site File, 8VO7664)

Advertisements were originally silkscreened on Masonite and fastened to the concrete using a gun that fired steel pins. The three remaining signs in the De Leon Springs area are painted on the concrete block with advertisements - *Go Back, You Missed; Glass Bottom Boats; and Swimming Boating Camping.*

With the development of Disney and interstate highways, many local attractions, such as Ponce De Leon, the flow of tourism began to dwindle.

In the early 1960s, the Ponce de Leon Springs property was sold and it became a private recreational park. Billboards are the remnants of the post-World War II economic boom and are part of the roots for today’s tourist industry.

The “Signs of Tomorrow” have withstood fires, floods, hurricanes and termites!

Wm. Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway - Educating St. Johns County

A key component of the recently completed WBS & HH master plan was to educate St. Johns County residents on the history associated with our byway.

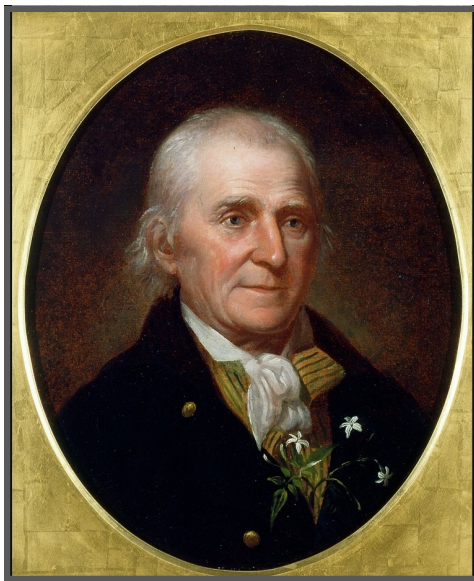
The development of a series of oral histories and a short video called "Up From the Roots" was one educational tool that was created. "Up From The Roots" highlights oral histories of long term residents and their life experiences growing up in rural St. Johns County long before State Road 13 was paved. They were transcribed, printed and are now hard cover bound and available at the Bartram Trail branch library and the St. Augustine Historical Library for a small donation. This oral history project won an award from the First Coast Chapter of the Florida Planning & Zoning Association.

Additionally the group decided to develop a series of historic lesson plans for the St. Johns County School District. They felt that bringing our history to the classroom would not only educate the school children but could also bring new information to their families and the general public.

With that encouragement, planning went into high gear - we developed a set of project specifications for an RFP that was eventually published. We hired a company that is experienced in historical studies and, in fact, are familiar with developing lesson plans. Common Core teaching standards was a hurdle to overcome but St. Johns County school district curriculum experts helped guide us through the requirements.

Three lesson plans have been completed and are ready for implementation in the classroom. The lessons are: The Adventures of Puc Puggy: William Bartram's Travels, Life in 1930's St. Johns County, and Gunboats on the St. Johns River.

Associated with these lessons is a lengthy Historical



Narrative tracing the history of Northwest St. Johns County from the 16th century to present. From the Timucuan Indians, through the Spanish/English/Spanish occupations, Minorcans settlers, Seminole Indians, the Civil War and Slavery, to the present, the team has done a superb job of research and bringing our history to life for the many new and future residents of St. Johns County.

A video of William Bartram's Travels was also produced and an Architectural Survey of numerous historic structures was completed. Unfortunately some of these historic structures no longer exist but photographs of some are pictured along with a treasure trove of illustrations and photographs making the narrative informative and a pleasure to read.

Lastly a series of suggested radio scripts for use by Florida Frontiers: The Weekly Radio Magazine of the Florida Historical Society, hosted by Dr. Ben Brotemarkle were drafted. These scripts relate to the history of Northwest St. Johns County and will eventually be heard on local radio stations..

Article prepared by: Albert Abbatiello

Tales Around the Byway

Spoonbills and Sprockets (A1A Scenic and Historical Coastal Byway)



As an avid cyclist always looking for an opportunity to ride on of our beautiful scenic highways I was excited about participating in this years Spoonbills & Sprockets.

As a believer in these types of community events I helped get the word out by accessing the FSHP web site.

To my surprise fifteen of my cycling friends made it to the start at Marineland, for their first Spoonbills and Sprockets cycle tour.

The tour consisted of three options - 100 miles or century, 72 miles and 36 mile rides. One of my cycling friends also has a hybrid bike so we decided to challenge ourselves and

Spoonbills and Sprockets *Continued*

do 36 miles. We were ready to fight Mother Nature and her brutal 45 degree weather and high winds, with layers upon layers of clothing.

We started with a strong headwind, and that continued to the first food stop. For every pedal stroke I took I felt like I was going backwards. I didn't think we would make it; at times it was a struggle just to keep the bicycle going forward. Luckily I had a fun companion who took many photos of the ride and sites along the way. She was not familiar with the area or the byway, and was like a kid in the candy store oohing and awing over everything along the way. Cycling across the Lion's Bridge in St. Augustine took on a different perspective when exposed to the elements as opposed to crossing it in a car.



We heard rumors that the more experienced riders had stopped at the Casa Monica for hot chocolate, must have been nice but we pressed on.

We removed some layers of clothing for the second half of the ride as Mother Nature started to cooperate in a very small way, thinking it could not get any worse than the first half. We rode around Plaza De Constitution, back over the bridge and straight back to Marineland. We just took our time, kept spinning our pedals, and enjoying the sites along the way. On the return leg of the tour we took advantage of an awesome tailwind and made up some time. Now sitting high and wearing a jacket was a good thing because we could catch the wind and our jackets acted as sails to help push us back to Marineland.

On our route back I noticed someone had a flat tire and Velofest was there for support. They changed the tube so fast they looked like NASCAR pit crew.

At the finish line in Marineland, we were greeted by a Tasty BBQ Lunch and a fun time touring the Marineland facility. We were treated to a fantastic show by the dolphins that was enjoyed by one and all.

It was a long, cool, and challenging but rewarding day of fun along the A1A Byway that I am glad to have been a part of. I'm also happy to have been able to share the byway and event with many people from Deland. This provided an opportunity to expose others to a



Kristee and Friends

scenic byway, show off some of its wonderful resources and educate them on why they deserve our continued support. I love scenic byways, will continue to spread the word and do what I can to support them.

Our goal was to finish, just not finish last, and we succeeded on a tough morning in early November.

Article/Photos Prepared By **Kristee Booth**

Jamboree !!!

One of the treasures along the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway (FBBSB) is the Barberville Pioneer Settlement for the Creative Arts in Volusia County at the intersection of State Road 40 and County Road 3.



The barn stage, one of 5 musical venues

Each year the Settlement holds its Annual Jamboree on the first full weekend of November. It's a great event for all, young and old. I know, because I usually volunteer at the front gate so I see folks coming in and going out. And when they leave, they're usually all smiling!

The Jamboree demonstrates old-timey crafts such as weaving, candle making, pottery throwing, blacksmithing, rope making, and many more. In the historic old Barberville School Building are antiques, dancing in the auditorium, delicious deserts in the old kitchen, and a silent auction where donated treasures go for the highest bid, often surprisingly low. The summer kitchen serves pulled pork and chicken, and the ice cream and kettle corn vendors always have lots of customers. There are five stages for Florida folk singers performing both days—it is the favorite venues for musicians who come from all over Florida for this event--and a storytelling tent for the youngsters. A big model railroad set up was operating in the depot a structure originally moved from the town of Pierson. Many vendors crowd the grounds, selling their crafts and wares.



Beth Ehrlich on pottery

The Settlement is a good partner of the FBBSB. They provide a meeting room for us in the Bridge House (which used to sit next to the old Astor Bridge across the St. Johns River). There, a 25-minute video loops continuously showing scenes along the Byway, our literature is available to those interested, and an oil painting of Uncle Ben, a Florida black bear, hangs on the wall.

Mark your 2015 calendar for November 7th and 8th, and try to make it. I'll be the guy at the gate smiling back at you when you leave, calling out, "See ya next year!"

Article/photos prepared by Tony Ehrlich

A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway

Fall is a busy time of year along the byway and Friends of A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway celebrated the season with a series of successful events. Starting with the International Coastal Cleanup, volunteers braved the rain to make a difference in their community. Led by A1A board member Mary Ann Ruzecki and Flagler Beach Mayor Linda Provencher, student volunteers from the Boy Scouts, S.W.A.T., the ROTC and Kiwanis Club collected several hundred pounds of trash and brought the beaches of Flagler County back to their pristine beauty. [Article on Cleanup.](#)

Wrapping up the month was the 6th Annual Super Scenic 72 Mile Garage Sale. The event was so popular this year that registrations nearly tripled over 2013. Hammock First Baptist Church, Ponte Vedra Concert Hall and the South Ponte Vedra Civic Association locations were filled with shoppers finding great deals along the byway. Special thanks to Danielle Anderson, Marge Rooyackers and Bob Samuels for all of the work put in to make the event a huge success!

A different twist to Fundraising



For hours, a large crowd of spectators watched her roam around the playing field, wondering when they'd get a show. Finally, five hours into the contest, she gave them a show never to be forgotten. The crowd erupted in cheers.

On November 8, 2014 Sumter Heritage Byway held a Cow Chip Bingo Fundraiser. One might ask, if one dares "What is Cow Chip Bingo"? Sometimes called "Bessie Bingo," is a popular fundraising event at county fairs. It is a fun way to earn money for an organization, provided you can persuade a farmer to

lend you some cows.

Instead of bingo cards and numbers, the game is played in a grassy field painted into squares and each square is then sold for a set price. The player who holds the ticket to the square littered by the bovine is the winner. Cow Chip Bingo can last a few minutes or the cow can meander for several hours before she decides to award the prize.

A tip to ending the event early is to feed the cow some laxatives as the high school students in Pennsylvania did. By the way they all won!

It was a fun way for Sumter Heritage Byway to raise 625.00 at the Beef and Boogy Festival.

Article prepared by J. Bernat

Kiosk Indian River Lagoon

On Friday, November 7th at 5:00 pm the Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway (IRLNSB) Coalition in partnership with the Eau Gallie Arts District (EGAD) of Melbourne and Kona Construction unveiled the first informational kiosk along the Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway at Pineapple Park in the City of Melbourne. The kiosk provided informational graphics about the EGAD section of Melbourne on one side and the entire 195 mile IRLNSB on the other side of the graphic. The kiosk is the first to be located along the Byway telling a story about the local intrinsic resources as well information about the entire byway. The EGAD sponsored the cost of the kiosk and Kona Construction of Melbourne donated their construction skills to install the kiosk. On hand at the unveiling was the Mayor of Melbourne, Kathy Meehan, IRLNSB Officers and Board Members, EGAD Board Members and friends of the Byway and EGAD.



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Around the Nation on a Byway

Scenic America is proud to announce the launch of ViewFinders, the first and only educational program aimed at teaching youth how to critically examine their city. It is designed to help children ask questions like: Do I like the way this city looks? What do I like or what don't I like about the view? What can I do to change it?

Would you like to see what it is like to be mayor of "Youville", here is your chance. You can decide how you want your town to look! By choosing from a series of different options you can watch the town change right before your eyes. Want to change the view? Just click "reset" and choose different options!

ViewFinders was developed to incorporate the digital age, resulting in a website that is fun, interactive and visually appealing. You can find ViewFinders online at [viewfinders](http://viewfinders.com).

Byway Tidbits

Paynes Prairie—Star Gazing

January 24, 2015 6:00 – 9:00 pm Paynes Prairie State Park

Alachua Astronomy Club offers a great opportunity to learn about the night sky while sipping hot cocoa, roast s'mores, enjoy a hayride, and more under a starlit sky. Paynes Prairie has one of the darkest skies in Alachua county, and astronomy club volunteers share their powerful telescopes with our guests, allowing you to see some amazing features of our universe. Bring friends, family, and chairs. Proceeds support Friends of Paynes Prairie. Tickets available on www.prairiefriends.org. To learn more about the Alachua Astronomy Club, visit www.alachuaastronomyclub.org

Misc Tidbits

Walk back in History—[Ross Allen Reptile Institute](http://www.rossallenreptileinstitute.com)

[River of Lakes Heritage Corridor](http://www.riveroflakesheritagecorridor.com)

[Scenic A1A Mountain Biking](http://www.scenicA1AMountainBiking.com)

Frank Lloyd Wright:

The longer I live the more beautiful life becomes. If you foolishly ignore beauty, you will soon find yourself without it. Your life will be impoverished. But if you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life.

Have a happy and Safe Holiday Everyone..

Website Information

Tourism Website: floridascenichighways.com

Program Website: floridascenichighways.com/program

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