

REMEMBERING RYE VILLAGE

& the Landscape in Manatee County, Florida



Alexis Santos
New College of Florida

REMEMBERING RYE VILLAGE

& the Landscape in Manatee County, Florida

© 2011 Alexis Santos

Printed by the New College Public Archaeology Lab



New College Public Archaeology Lab Research Report Number 1

Uzi Baram, Director

New College of Florida

Sarasota, FL 32423

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | I |
| Research Method | I |
| History | 2 |
| Geography | 9 |
| Rye in 2010 | 10 |
| Native American Site Features | 10 |
| The Rye Family Cemetery | 12 |
| The Rye Family Homestead | 15 |
| Possible House Site | 22 |
| River's Reach | 22 |
| Second Cemetery | 23 |
| Surface Finds | 25 |
| Trash | 29 |
| Subsistence | 30 |
| Health | 31 |
| Housing | 32 |
| Architecture | 32 |
| Industry | 33 |
| Commemoration | 34 |
| Maps | 35 |
| Acknowledgements | 37 |
| <i>Appendix A: List of Structures and Site Features at Rye Village</i> | 38 |
| <i>Appendix B: The Inhabitants of Rye at the end of the 19th Century</i> | 42 |
| <i>Appendix C: Content of cemetery sign at River's Reach</i> | 45 |
| <i>Appendix D: Urquhart and Mitchell Descendant Information</i> | 46 |
| Bibliography | 52 |

introduction

Historical archaeology aims to give voice to those who have been silenced, omitted or forgotten in recorded history and Rye is a perfect example as one of many settlements in U.S. history that have been largely erased from common knowledge and the landscape. It is difficult to believe that the only thing easily visible at a place where 72 families once called home is a cemetery with eight grave markers. While many in the 1930s remembered Rye as a flourishing village at the head of the Manatee River with the promise of growth, now most local residents know very little of it. What is occasionally remembered is a dying town, but not the lives of dozens of families that lived there over time. What was Rye's size? Where are the buildings located? Why did these families settle there? What was life like? Those and other questions were the focus of my historical archaeological research.

Research Method

Research on Rye included three major components: archival research, a visual field survey, and New College Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved interviews with descendants of those who lived at Rye and people interested in local history.

Archival sources are found in the Sarasota County History Center, the Manatee County Library, the Manatee County Historical Records Library, the Manatee County Historical Commission's Manatee Village Historical Park and the Palmetto Historical Park. Historical resources include census records, a cultural resource management report (Almy, et al. 2004), recorded interviews, land deeds, tax records, photograph databases, newspaper clippings and books on local history.

My non-invasive field survey was conducted at the Rye Wilderness Park and the adjacent areas. The foot survey included photographs and GPS coordinates of various points of interest. No artifacts were collected.

Research relied on interviewing locals and descendants of Rye using a focus on collaboration. It was by working with those interested in local history that the research broadened in a multitude of ways. One way was simply being referred to other historical organizations or people who may have had more information about the community of Rye. Collaboration also enabled a visual survey on land adjacent to the Rye Wilderness Park, under private ownership. Interviews with community members interested in local history also gave a clearer picture of what life was like at Rye: where structures were located, who lived there, what industries were around and even what they ate. This Report acknowledges the support of many people with connections to Rye.

History

After Florida had become a U.S. territory in Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819, tensions with the Seminoles were high. The Seminoles were not content with the reservations forced upon them and others were calling for their removal to lands out west. The areas of Tampa, Manatee, Kissimmee River and the Everglades were sites of sporadic outbreaks of violence culminating in the First and Second Seminole Wars.

In 1842, the Armed Occupation Act “stipulated that any family or single man over 18 able to bear arms could earn title to 160 acres by erecting a habitable dwelling, cultivating at least five acres of land, and living on it for five years” (Almy et al 2004: 4-3). The act was a way to speed the settlement of Florida and to simultaneously protect the frontier. The Armed Occupation Act left its mark on the area, pushing settlers to found the

areas which would later become Bradenton. In 1855, the legislature created Manatee county making the village of Manatee, located one mile east of present day Bradenton the county seat. That same year, tensions with the Seminoles rose to a boiling point and the Third Seminole War began.

Forced to leave their home on Terra Ceia Island when it was destroyed during the Third Seminole War (1855-1858), James and Mary Isibell Williams followed the Manatee River eastward and put their homestead on a deep creek that would later be re-named Rye Branch. Erasmus Rye, a Virginia native born to Scottish parents and Rye's namesake, moved to Florida and served in The Seminole War during this period. In 1861 Erasmus purchased 39.8 acres of land for his homestead at Oak Knoll along the nearby Gilley Creek and married Mary Lucebia Williams, daughter of James and Mary Isibell Williams, in November of that year.

One year later, Erasmus joined the Confederate Army along with his father-in-law James Williams. Soon after enlisting, Erasmus was captured by Union Forces at Missionary Ridge on November 25, 1863 and was held as a prisoner of war for two and a half years (Warner & Warner 1986: 144).

In April of 1865 at a prisoner exchange between the Union and Confederate armies in New Orleans, Erasmus was released and purportedly made his way back to the Rye family homestead in Florida by "walking back the entire distance because he had no money for transportation" (Warner & Warner 1986: 144). After Erasmus returned, the Williams moved to Frog Creek and the Ryes took ownership of the Williams' 119.58 acre homestead (Manatee County Land Deeds). Erasmus had 11 children with Mary before he died of a stroke on June 31, 1889. Mary Rye died the following September.

“By 1875, the attraction of living at the head of navigation on Manatee River had brought other families into the section. The site had promise of becoming a large community and had been named Rye, in honor of Erasmus Rye” (Warner & Warner 1986: 144). In 1879, the community had grown substantially and a bridge across the Manatee River was proposed to the county commissioners. Several months and \$150 later, Rye Bridge was completed and became the first bridge on the Manatee River (Warner & Warner 1986: 144). With the bridge, Rye became the first ford of the Manatee River used to reach areas further north such as Tampa. Rye Bridge would remain the only crossing of the Manatee River until the Gandy Bridge was built in 1920.

Although Rye may not appear to have been well connected to the world outside of the Manatee River, a closer look would reveal that it was politically connected. “On election day the voters came to Rye to cast their votes, that being the most important place in the county at the time. . . .The active minded men would put on horse races or some sort of sport as a celebration of the event” (Haines 1936: 1). Rye was even home to a representative of the Florida State Legislature, James Layne. The Governor of Florida Henry L. Mitchell (1893-1897) was the brother of Rye resident and general store owner Samuell Mitchell (Warner & Warner: 146).

Families continued to move to Rye as it held promise for being a crossroads at the head of the Manatee River. In 1882, Samuel Mitchell, a merchant who moved to Rye from Tampa, built a general store and a dock for ships to load and unload at the store. He also founded a second cemetery and platted a subdivision with 90 lots and five streets, which 25 families purportedly lived on (Warner & Warner: 144). When Mitchell established the local post office branch, it was proposed that Rye be renamed to

Mitchellville. According to *The Singing River*, the Rye Community was referred to as Mitchellville in documents by 1882. It appears that Mitchell had a profound enough effect on the community that an effort to rename it after him had begun.

However, the naming encountered a problem: there was already a Mitchellville, Florida that the postal service delivered to. Because of this, the community could not be renamed to Mitchellville and Rye became the official name. One thing that is peculiar however, is that U.S. Census Records refer to the area as Mitchellville well after the Post Office's opening, and cementing of the name Rye, on March 17, 1886. It appears that some still preferred the name Mitchellville to Rye.

By 1890, a second general store was opened by T.S. Browning. Rye even drew the attention of the River and Harbor Committee of Congress which had a six foot channel dredged in the portion of the Manatee River that led to it in 1909 (Warner & Warner 1986: 146). A celebration was held on January 5, 1910 with hundreds of Manatee County community members, even including the Manatee County Superintendent of Schools Leslie L. Hine, to commemorate the dredging of the river. "A crowd of 500 to 600 people were expected. Every available launch and the gasoline steamer, "Vandalia," brought passengers from Manatee and Bradentown. A long train of automobiles and carriages slowly made their way to Rye over dirt and shell roads" (Warner & Warner: 146). The dredging made Rye more accessible to steamboats, which bolstered its growth.

As more families arrived at Rye, the community grew to add a post office, saw mill, grist mill, school, church and even plans for a subdivision and 72 families in 1910 (Warner & Warner 1986: 146). One inhabitant of Rye was quoted in the *Manatee River Jour-*

nal saying that the people of Rye were “jubilant over the prospect of a railroad” (July 16 1891). Such a railroad would have increased Rye’s importance in the region further.



The Launch Sonia at Rye Bridge.

Despite Rye’s initial success and growth, a confluence of the Great Depression and the end of the steamboat era brought Rye’s demise. “Sadly, this was the end of the steamboat era, and within a few years the town became isolated once again. By 1929 even the post office closed, and the remaining settlers eventually all moved away” (Around the Bend Nature Tours: 2009). Other options of traveling north across the river became available and Rye became bypassed. In fact, a mill located at Rye provided the wood for the Gandy Bridge which connected Tampa and St. Petersburg over a three mile stretch.

The Singing River and newspaper articles written about Rye cite the rise of the use of railroads and the fall of the steamboat as a cause for Rye's demise but do not highlight the Great Depression enough, if at all. The Manatee County land Revenue Records show that during the midst of the Great Depression in 1932, and just 3 years after the Rye Post Office closed, most of the land in Manatee County was sold to the county government for failure to pay taxes. The image below shows that even the heirs of Rye were hit by the Depression since they sold 160 acres to the county for back taxes. In fact, by looking through Manatee County records it is clear that approximately two thirds of Manatee County's residents had lost their land.

| | | | STATE OF FLORIDA MANATEE COUNTY REVENUE FOR 1932 | | | | Value of Land Sold to the State for Taxes | Number of Acres Improv and Cultivat |
|---------|----------|-------|--|---|---|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Section | Township | Range | Number of Acres | Number of Acres of Land Sold to the State for Taxes | Name of Owner or Person in Whose Name Return is Made. When not Returned May be assessed in same name as for preceding year or as "UNKNOWN" | | Dollars | |
| 23 | 34 | 19 | | 439 | ROBERTSON | N G ET AL | 1320 | |
| 23 | 34 | 19 | | 80 | UNKNOWN | | 300 | |
| 23 | 34 | 19 | | 80 | SINGELTARY | J B | 200 | |
| 24 | 34 | 19 | | 160 | RYE | E HEIRS | 960 | |
| 24 | 34 | 19 | 60 | | ✓ HAUCK | MRS NINA F | 720 | |
| 24 | 34 | 19 | | 40 | CORBITT | LILLIAN J | 120 | |
| 12 | 34 | 19 | 280 | | ✓ | MANATEE COUNTY IMPROVEMENT CO | | |
| 12 | 34 | 19 | | 40 | KILBURY | ARTHUR | | |
| 12 | 34 | 19 | | 319 | SLADE | JAMES B | | |
| 13 | 34 | 19 | | 280 | SLADE | JAMES B | | |
| 13 | 34 | 19 | 40 | | ✓ | URQUHART | MRS J B | |

Although a few Rye residents such as Thomas Urquhart's wife, whose husband is buried at Rye, were able to keep their land (40 acres in this case), most were hit so hard by the Depression that they were not able to. The images on the previous page are pictures of tax records at the Manatee County Historical Library showing the entries for the Ryes and Urquharts.

Even as early as 1936, just four years after the county reclaimed much of the land at Rye, a news article headline proclaimed that "time erases pioneer town of Rye, but memory of it is fresh in minds of many" (Haines: 1936). The article continues that "though the town has vanished forever, and most of the early inhabitants have passed to their reward, the days when Rye was a flourishing village live still in the memory of Elijah Rye and his brother Will" (Haines 1936).

Although the 1936 *Bradenton Herald* article claimed that Rye was still "fresh in the mind of many," that quickly changed. Rye became a re-appropriated space, devoid of the meaning it once held for its settlers as early as a decade after it was abandoned. The shift in popular memory can be seen by the trash that is scattered throughout Rye today. Everything from an abandoned car to an orange traffic safety cone.

Many who visited the area where Rye once stood went there to swim in the Manatee River. Immediately to the left of Rye Bridge is a "watering hole" that has been used for decades as a place to swim according to Manatee county local Evelyn Hoskins (September 2010). Hoskins knows the area well not only because she is a local, but because she is the cousin of J.L. Harrison who worked towards preserving the Rye family homestead in the 1980s.

The space where the town of Rye once stood continued to be re-appropriated for use well into the 1980s by “vagrants” and others. “Although no one has been living in the house for (years), Johnson said he saw several mattresses on the floors recently. ‘It looked like the hippies were there,’ he speculated. ‘It was probably a marijuana smoking den for a while’ (Greenwald 1: 1988). Although the extent of how many vagrants stayed there and for how long is debatable, it’s clear that some were frequenting the area.

On May 11, 1988, the last standing structure of what was once Rye was set ablaze by, according to the popular understanding, the “vandals” who frequented it. Braden River Fire Chief Henry Sheffield, “. . . said the fire was probably deliberately set. He said that he found beer cans and other evidence that people had been using the house and surrounding property, which is owned by the county, as a place to have parties” (White 1: 1988).

Since 1988, 160 acres on the east side of Rye Road have been purchased by Manatee County and made into the Rye Preserve. The Rye family cemetery has also been restored through a cleanup by the Manatee County Historical Commission. Rye has gone through many changes since it was first settled in the early 1860s but not much is left of it on the landscape.

Geography

The Manatee River reaches approximately 20 miles inland from its mouth in Bradenton to the Lake Manatee Dam in the east. Rye Branch is located approximately 18 miles east of the mouth of the Manatee River. Those who lived at Rye owned approximately a six square mile area centered around Rye Bridge. The area near the Rye homestead has an elevation of 20 feet. The elevation on the river’s edge on Patrick Neal’s River’s

Reach development is 8 to 15 feet. Further away from the River, the River's Reach development has an elevation anywhere from 20 to 39 feet.

The area's elevation ranges from 15 to 40 feet above the sea level. The soil in the area consists largely of sand and varies from poorly drained to moderately well drained with "one to three feet of acidic sands generally overlying an organic hardpan or clayey subsoil" (Almy et al 2004: 2-1). According to ACI report on the area: "The natural vegetation associated with the parcel would have included bay, gum, ash, swamp maple, oaks, cypress, willow, and slash and longleaf pine with an understory of saw palmetto, wax myrtle, gallberry, huckleberry, pineland threeawn, vines, briers, various grasses and water tolerant plants." (USDA 1983). Hickory trees can also be found throughout the area. Part of the area inside the Rye Preserve managed by Manatee County is a scrub habitat for the Scrub Jay.

Rye in 2010

Despite the fact that the Rye family cemetery appears to be the only thing left at Rye, upon closer inspection, there is much more. What remains of Rye largely consists of artifact scatter: fragments of metal, concrete, glass, bricks and ceramics. Below, I have identified the areas in which scatter is largely concentrated and the few site features that still exist.

Native American Site Features

The Florida Master Site File (FMSF) lists a Rye Bridge Mound Site (8MA715) that, according to the Cultural Resource Assessment Survey done for Neal's River's Reach development, is not visible today (Almy et al 2004: 6-1). The mound was recorded as being in Section 13, Township 34 South, Range 19 East, exactly where the Mitchell-Neal

property is located today. While it was reported to be “just a little bit west of Rye Bridge on the Manatee River,” it’s not clear if it was on the north or south side of the Manatee River (Almy et al 2004: 6-1). The area near Rye was likely appealing to Native Americans because of its proximity to water and its relatively high elevation of 19 to 20 feet (Almy et al 2004: 5-1).

A site report conducted in 1988 by Jeffrey Mitchem noted that the Rye Bridge Mound site had glass bead assemblages indicative of two episodes of European contact in the early 16th, late 16th, 17th or even early 18th centuries (Almy et al 2004: 5-1). The site is also identified as a burial mound that fell victim to looting. The report notes that its condition in 1988 was one of “major” destruction. Mitchem’s report also notes that Ralph W. Burnworth had looted the site in the early-mid 20th century and sold some of his finds, although some of them ended up in the South Florida Museum’s collections.

Mitchem identifies the site and its finds as “possibly” part of the Safety Harbor culture. The artifacts found in the survey were the following: 4 Nueva Cadiz Beads (AD 1500-1560), Blue and White Seed Beads, Coraline d’Aleppo (post AD 1550, likely 1650-1750), silver beads (disc, drilled rod, olive shaped).

ACI was unable to locate the exact site of the mound and several test pits showed no sign of “prehistoric artifacts consistent with the Rye Bridge Mound site” (Almy et al 2004: 6-1). However, “two non-diagnostic lithic flakes were found in the general vicinity” of the suspected location of the mound. The mound has effectively been erased, much like the village of Rye. In addition to the Rye Bridge Mound site, there are five other sites located within the area of Rye that were recorded during surveys done for either Manatee County’s Route 64 and or the Lake Manatee Dam.

The Rye Family Cemetery

Currently, there are a total of eight visible grave markers in the Rye Family Cemetery, but there are at least four more graves whose grave markers are no longer present. An article which ran in the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* in 1986 states that there were 12 grave markers at the cemetery (White 1986). It's clear that as time passed grave markers were either vandalized or fell victim to natural wear and tear that has reduced their overall numbers.



One thing that is immediately noticeable upon entering the cemetery is the use of the shell motif. Seashells are not only carved into the grave markers themselves, but physically present in the form of grave goods (see left). An article on Rye that ran in the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* on Sunday, March 2, 1986 contains a picture of J.L. Harrison Jr. who was fighting to preserve the Rye homestead standing next to Erasmus Rye's

grave (see below).



After taking a close look at the photograph, one can see that there is an abundance of shells on the ground and a Horse Conch (the State Shell of Florida) atop the grave marker of Mary Rye. The fact that these types of shells are not found in the area and that they have been there for so long, it is clear that they had been intentionally placed there decades ago. According to Manatee County Historical Commission member Don Brainard, seashells were a common motif in Southern cemeteries, but he wasn't able to provide a meaning (Interview September 2010).

Although Manatee County Historical Commission's Don Brainard and Colonel Warren Johnson built a new fence around the cemetery in 2003, extant post holes filled with cement and metal rods, along with information from both Johnson and Brainard confirmed that there had been a historic fence (see image on next page). Preservation wise, the Rye family cemetery is in a good condition.



A historic post hole is filled with cement and has a metal rod within it.



The Rye Family Homestead

The most noticeable historic scatter in the area are those associated with the Rye Family Homestead, located approximately thirty feet south of the cemetery. What we know of the home comes from oral histories, *The Singing River*, pictures of the home and newspaper articles. Accounts of the house do not conflict with and seem to confirm each of their claims. In one article, the Braden River Fire Chief Henry Sheffield said “the house was built with real fat pine lumber ... and sat up on fat pine stumps. It was a peculiar arrangement but it lasted all these years” (Greenwald 1988: 1).

“There are five rooms downstairs and a sleeping loft above. The kitchen has two rooms and a storage area but the log smokehouse is now falling in” (Stewart 1964: 1). As for the contents of the house, it is likely that much of it was not historic as newspaper reports often cite that it was a place popular for people to frequent.

Another account from Manatee County Historical Commission member Colonel Warren Johnson in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune describes some of the house’s contents. “Although no one has been living in the house for years, Johnson said he saw several mattresses on the floors recently. ‘It looked like the hippies were there,’ he speculated. ‘It was probably a marijuana smoking den for a while,’” (Greenwald 1988).

The most prominent feature of the Rye Homestead site is the remains of the tin roof (see image on next page). While the pine stumps mentioned by Sheffield are not easily visible, it’s possible that parts of them may still be there below the surface or under overgrowth as Sheffield mentioned that they were “still smoldering” well after the fire had been put out (Greenwald 1988), (see image below). One particularly interesting artifact within the Rye Homestead site is a bed spring which has several pine trees growing



through it (see image on next page). If the trees that have grown through it weren't enough of an indication of its age, along with the accounts from newspapers of beds being in the structure before its demise, a picture from another article shows one of the mattresses in the background (see second image on next page).



Approximately 20 feet away from the bulk of the remains from the Rye Family Homestead lies some more of its rubble. While I initially thought this may have been the remains of another house, there are a few features and



artifacts that clearly show it is also remains of the Rye homestead. The first telltale marker is the charred planks of wood on the ground. Although partially obscured by overgrowth, it is clear that they were burned (see image below).



Although mostly obscured by leaves and overgrowth, there are several charred pieces of wood presumably from burned during the fire in 1988.

Another sign that these are the remains of the Rye homestead, or at the very least of a house, are the remnants of a chimney (see image on next page). From a historic photograph and one taken several years before the house burned, we can tell that it was built with the same kind of bricks found at the site today (see images on next page).





Other historical photographs show that there was a wealth of material culture within the homestead (see image below).



The pictures feature everything from what seems to be a stove to furniture. While most of those things were likely removed over the years, there are still some remaining where the homestead stood. One of the remaining objects appears to be one of the chairs seen in the bottom left hand corner of the historic photograph on the previous page. The chair now has only two of its feet visible as the rest is underground (see image below).



One can also see what appears to be a fire pit in the bottom of the photograph. The concrete blocks that composed it are still scattered throughout the area (see second image on previous page).

Possible House Site

On the North side of the Rye Branch lie four pyramid shaped cement posts. All four have a pipe running through them. It's likely that they were the raising foundations of a house. George Redding, an inhabitant of Rye named interviewed by the Warners in 1988, noted that there were two or three houses of Rye descendants. While it's possible that this site may not be that of a house, by Redding's description it seems possible that it was one of several houses he identified as owned by the Rye family.

River's Reach

Former State Senator and Land Developer Patrick Neal owns the land adjacent to the preserve on the West side of Rye Road. Neal's property was previously owned by both Samuel Mitchell and the Redding family in historic times. It is also possible that the Goddard family lived there as well since there is a creek named after them that runs through the property. Neal has noted the history of Rye and the area by erecting several signs throughout the development. There are signs that detail the history of the Goddard family and Rye as a whole.

Samuel Mitchell's general store stood on the riverside of Neal's property, but that area has yet to be developed. In fact, the riverside area of Neal's property has not been cleared. It is highly likely that the general store's foundations still remain by the riverside, but the overgrowth of trees and other plants have made it difficult to survey.

After conducting their cultural resource assessment survey, Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (ACI), found the following:

“ . . . window pane glass, iron hinge, wire nail, and sherd of metal oxide glazed earthenware. In addition, two pieces of brown glass fragments, two pieces of unidentifiable iron fragments, five cobalt glass fragments, six pieces of whiteware ceramics, 12 pieces of green glass fragments, 15 fragments of clear glass, 20 brick fragments and 29 pieces of solarized glass contribute to this historic assemblage” (Almy et al 2004: 6-6).

I saw no artifacts on the surface during my survey of River’s Reach.

Second Cemetery





Within Neal's property lies a second cemetery that is 300 feet east/west by 150 feet north/south with Rye Road cutting through part of it. The only grave marker still standing in the cemetery is that of Thomas Urquhart, father-in-law of Rye general store owner Samuel Mitchell (seen to the left). "The marker's iconography includes the column itself, which is complete, representing a full life, the clover symbolizing the Christian trinity, and the com-

pass and the square marking Mr. Urquhart's membership in the Freemasons" (Carmack 2001). The foot stone seen in the black and white picture of the grave marker (see previous page) is no longer present.

According to the Manasota Genealogical Society, 25 people including Thomas Urquhart are buried within the cemetery (Almy et al 2004: 4-11). "Mr. Hubert Rutland bought this cemetery, and there was discussion of moving the bodies to Fortner Cemetery. To this date [1982], the bodies have not been moved. Permission to move the body of Thomas Urquhart was denied. There are about twenty-five bodies that will be trans-

ferred to Fortner if plans materialize. As there are no markers, we were unable to identify these graves” (Almy et al 2004: 4-9). A ground penetrating radar (GPR) study was done on the cemetery and surrounding area when it was under ownership of Patrick Neal (Randy Olson, Personal Communications 2010).

Currently, half of Neal’s property is developed with single family homes within a development named River’s Reach. The other half of his property has yet to be developed, but is platted and scheduled for future development. Neal has built a fence around the area of the historic cemetery and there is a historic marker detailing Rye’s history in front of it (see image below, Appendix C for text on sign).



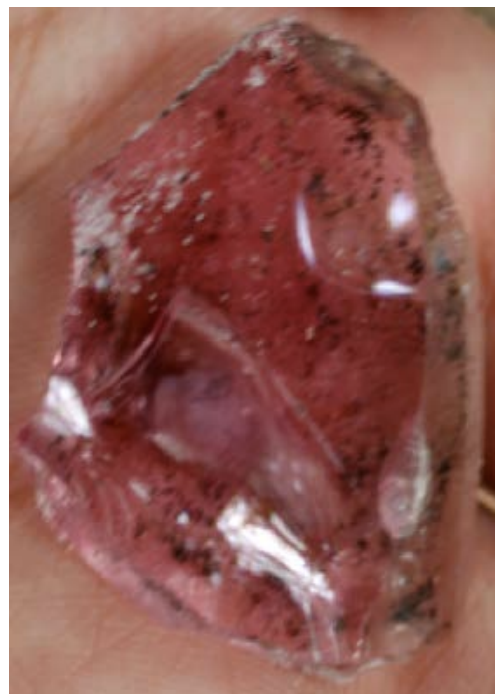
Surface Finds

Although the house foundations are no longer present at Rye, there is a fairly significant amount of artifacts on the east side of Rye Branch near the Rye Homestead Area.



The whiteware to the left is found scattered throughout a path leading up to the homestead. There are also pieces of porcelain that clearly came from bowls or cups as they are easily identifiable as rim sherds (see top left image).

There is also an abundance of glass scattered throughout the vicinity. ACI found a similar pink colored glass (see image at right) and identified it as “solarized or amethyst glass” (Almy et al 2004: 6-7). According to ACI, the glass receives its color from the manganese dioxide used as a clarifying agent. The use of manganese di-



oxide dates the glass to a period between 1880 and 1914, after which the chemical was required for the manufacture of steel and iron during World War I.



Pieces of glass bottles were also found in the surrounding area of the homestead. The neck of a glass bottle (seen to the left) was one artifact found on the surface. The bottle has an irregularly shaped rim suggesting that it is a bottle made in the late 1800's or early 1900's.



Several feet away from the remains of the chimney mentioned earlier, lay an up-rooted tree which had a brown bottle wedged in its roots. The pictures on the following page show the bottle and how it was situated. While it was found upright, it would have been on its side partially underground when the tree stood upright.

Prominently displayed on the bottle is the number "33" for 33 brand bleach. An antique bottle enthusiast website lists the same bottle as being from 1938 (Digger 2007).



The website also notes that the "33" brand bleach trademark was registered by Beacon Chemical Corporation Philadelphia, which coincides with the “Beacon Chemical Corporation Philadelphia” molded on the bottom of the bottle found at Rye. This bottle is likely from the very end of Rye’s occupation (Haines 1936: 1).

Trash

Because Rye has been abandoned since the 1930s, it has become a dumping grounds for many, accumulating everything from cars to safety cones.



The car chassis seen above is located approximately 60 feet from Rye Branch's west bank. The car seems to have been disposed of after its use many years after the the town had dissolved, which suggests that the memory of Rye had already faded by the time it was left there.

The tin can to the right is sign of Rye's use by those who later frequented it. The can is perforated with many tiny holes which is a way



some illegal drugs can be smoked. This evidence of drug use supports the claims found

in various newspaper articles that vagrants, vandals and drug users were using this place for their own needs.

Subsistence

One of Erasmus Rye's sons, Elijah B. Rye, was interviewed by the Bradenton Herald for an article on the town in 1936. The *Bradenton Herald* story describes Rye as a "hunter's paradise" complete with an orange grove. "Wildlife was plentiful and very often in the evenings, Mr. Rye has counted four or five deer grazing in the fields near the house. Wild turkeys and game of all sort made the spot a hunter's paradise. The larger seedling orange grove which now stands on the site of the town is over a hundred years old" (Haines 1936).

The Singing River provides a detailed look at subsistence at Rye noting that although they did hunt, much of their food was raised and substantial amount of gathering resources occurred.

"Most of their food was raised, but they did buy flour and coffee when available. Corn was ground into meal and grits. From a cane patch, syrup was made. This was used in baking cakes. Wild Hickory nuts were abundant in the woods for the gathering.

The nuts were very hard to open and had to be placed on an anvil and pounded with a hammer. Swamp cabbage was plentiful up and down the river banks and the game they could shoot in the woods" (Warner & Warner 1986: 143).

Pauline Chancey, who lived at a nearby settlement called Duette, described what a Thanksgiving or Christmas feast would be like in an interview with the Warners. "Stuffed quails, squirrels and whatever that would bring in. We cut swamp cabbage. That was the main bill-of-fare then. The women would go fishing if a fishing hole was near to the camp" (Warner & Warner 1983: 12).

George Redding who lived at Rye with his father, mother and brother described a life mostly based on agricultural subsistence when he was interviewed by the Warners.

“Our family wasn’t a hunting family. My brother didn’t care for it and my dad didn’t. I don’t think my dad ever fired a gun in his life. I don’t know that. There was some guns there. My brother had a shotgun and a 30/30 rifle, but as far as I know they never used them” (Warner and Warner 1988: 5) Redding said his family raised cows, pigs, horses and grew sweet potatoes, corn, cabbages. He also noted that his mother would sell milk from their cow in addition to making butter, cheese and creams from it.

What couldn’t be procured within Rye could be brought via the steamboats to the general stores. “Food, clothing, and all other supplies, as well as the mail, were brought up the river to Rye in a sail boat or a barge from Tampa” (Haines 1936: 1).

Health

The Singing River paints a relatively grim picture of health at Rye during the late 19th century. Mosquitoes were such a significant problem that “mosquito-bar(s) hung from the ceiling for protection at night” in order to guard against sores created by scratching mosquito bites (Warner & Warner 1986: 145). Medical treatment was also very rare and those who settled at Rye appear to have relied on natural remedies.

“Herbs gathered from the woods were the only medicine, as doctors were few and far between” (Warner & Warner: 145).

“Babies died from what was called ‘summer sickness,’ which could have been diarrhea. Many women died either from childbirth or from a combination of overwork and childbearing” (Warner & Warner: 45). Because of the high rate of death among women, social structures were modified. “It was not uncommon for a man to have to marry for a

second time to have help rearing his children after his first wife deceased” (Warner & Warner 1986: 145).

Housing

It appears that the Rye Family had a relatively comfortable abode. “There are five rooms downstairs and a sleeping loft above. The kitchen has two rooms and a storage area but the log smokehouse is now falling in” (Bradenton Herald: 1964). Although the Rye’s had 11 children in total, a house with 5 rooms seems spacious enough for relatively comfortable living considering the era and the conditions. It’s also possible that less than 11 lived in the house at the same time since they would leave their home as they married (Warner & Warner: 144). Unfortunately, the Rye home is the only one on which significant details have been recorded.

Architecture



Image Courtesy of Parks, John T., & Younkin, Kathryn A. | 2008 Manatee County Historical Structures Survey.

The Rye homestead most closely resembles the “frame vernacular” houses of the area with raised foundations, wooden walls, tin roof and front porch. The house seen in the image on the previous page was built in the “vernacular” style at Parrish, Florida in 1930 (Parks & Younkin 2008: 58).

Industry

The only industry nearby Rye was that of the turpentine still. Turpentine, a byproduct of tree resin used in everything from varnish to soap, was an important ingredient for the tar and pitch needed to maintain wooden ships. A Florida Naval Store that produced turpentine was located approximately three miles west of Rye on the south side of the Manatee River. Various oral histories of the area locate a few other turpentine stills near the area. Despite Rye’s proximity to turpentine stills, I have found no evidence that inhabitants of Rye worked at the stills.

There is also talk of a “tram road” in two interviews conducted by the Warners in addition to one conducted by myself with Manatee County Historical Commission member Don Brainard (Warner & Warner 1982: 10). It’s unclear if the trail was for transporting railroad ties manufactured by the mill at Rye or if it was from a nearby turpentine still. Brainard said that the trail was still visible from Rye Branch years ago. Unfortunately, I was not able to find it.

An inhabitant of the nearby settlement of Duette at the time, named Doyle Chancey, gave the Warners the following description of a nearby turpentine still. “I imagine there was about 50 to 100 houses there. Colored people, you know. They had a big mule lot. Must have had 50 mules” (Warner and Warner 1983: 4).

Another interviewee of the Warners remembers another turpentine still north of Rye from which they shipped their finished product. "I remember -- now, they had Slade -- they had a turpentine still over -- well, it was about two miles north of the old Rye place, off over in there. I guess he had leased that timber. And they had several houses in there that they had their workers in, and they made their turpentine and shipped it out right from there" (Warner & Warner 1982: 10). From the interviews conducted by the Warners for *The Singing River* it is clear that the area was dotted with turpentine stills, north, south, east and west of Rye.

Carl King, who conducted an interview with the Warners on Rye, interjected with the following insight on the workers' conditions at the turpentine stills. "I interviewed one of those colored people that was down here at one time, and he was a hundred years old, and he said that they used to go up to Georgia and South Carolina and recruit them up there and bring whole families down in a freight car. They would bring canned goods that they could eat on the way, and they would get them down here, and they said it was too bad if they wanted to go back home because they never could make enough money to buy a ticket to go back" (Warner and Warner: 10).

With its mistreatment of African Americans, the historical turpentine industry in this area of Manatee County deserves further study. An organization of oral and written histories, some field surveys and preliminary mapping seem like a good first step in continuing this line of study.

Commemoration

According to Don Brainard of the Manatee Historical Commission, the Erasmus Rye Homestead was under consideration to be moved to the Manatee Historical Commis-

sion Park before it burned down. James Lawrence “J.L.” Harrison was committed to local history and worked very hard to preserve what was left. His efforts should be commended.

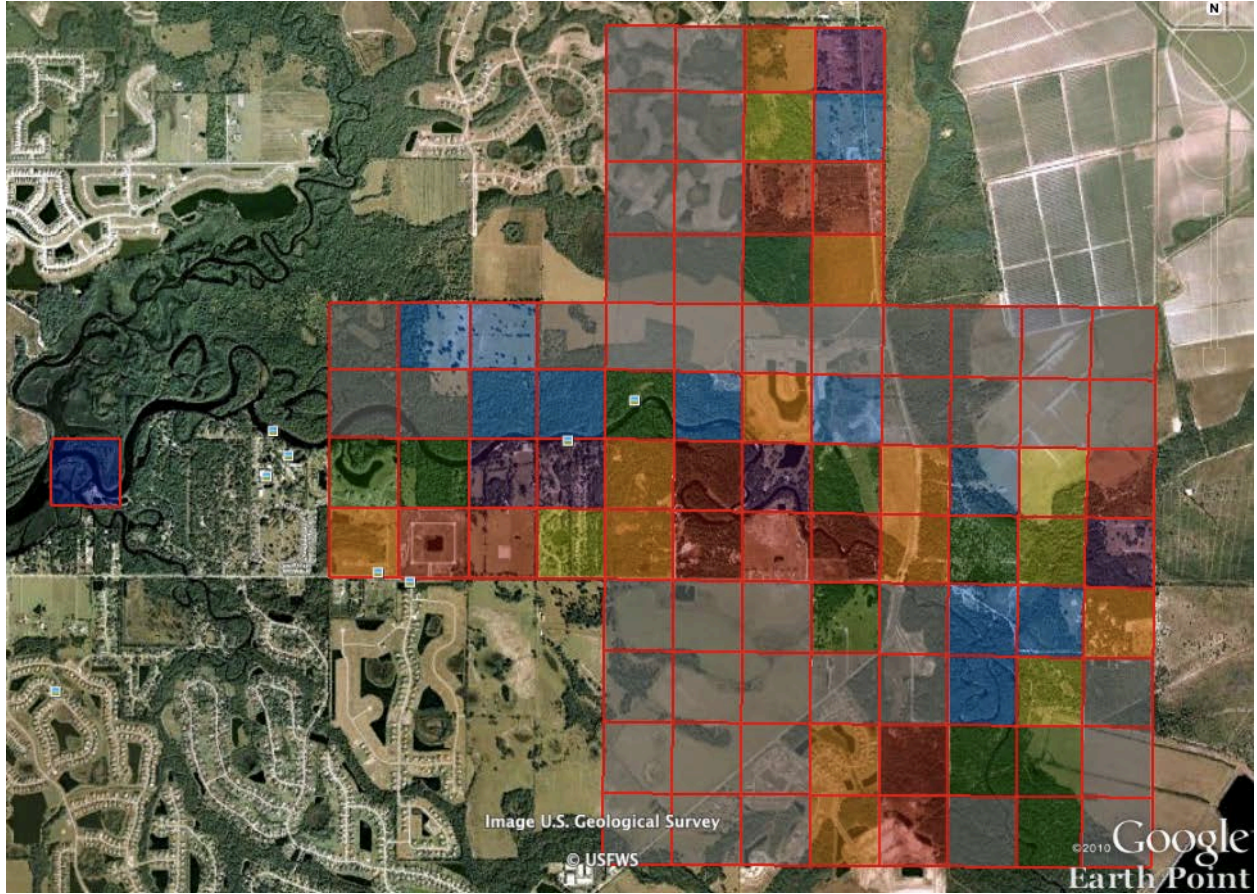
Today, the only effort to commemorate the town is a small stand inside the park ranger’s office at the Rye Wilderness preserve. The stand gives a short history of Rye, displays a few historical photographs and states how the “small Rye family cemetery still remains as our only physical reminder of the small river settlement.”

Although Rye is not commemorated in any significant way, it has left a small imprint on the area with its name. The preserve, a road and a subdivision now bear its name.

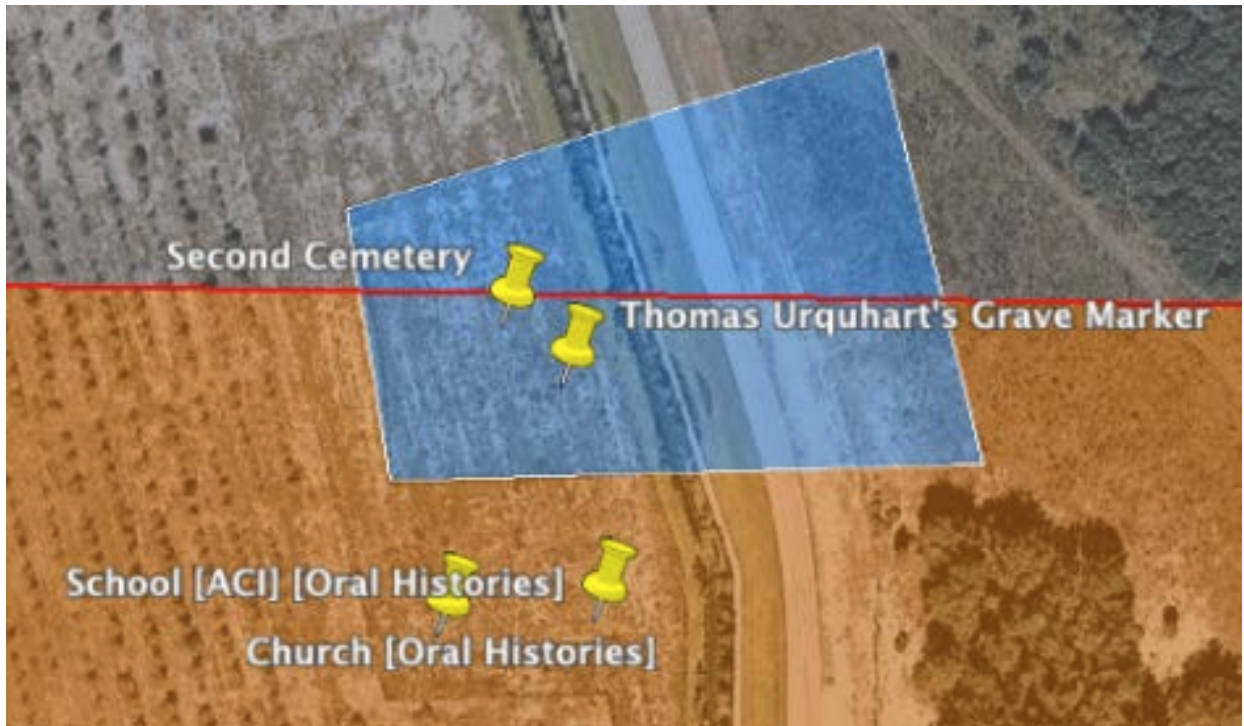
Maps

Mapping was an important part of this research as there are no maps of Rye available. Knowing where the cemetery is located and how many people lived there isn’t enough to form an accurate idea of the town’s size or layout. Using land deeds, tax records, GPS coordinates of site features, oral histories and the results of ACI’s surface pickup and test pits on Neal’s property, I was able to create a rough map of Rye. Although only a few structures could be pinpointed, we now have a clear map of land ownership in the area. With the map, we now have a clear idea of how large the community of Rye was and how far it extended. An electronic, interactive version of the map to be used in Google Earth is attached.

Sections 11, 13, 14, 15, 23 and 24 of Township 34 South Range East were mapped. Those sections cover an area approximate six square miles. An image of the map is on the following page.



Below is an example of how GPS coordinates are displayed on the electronic map of the area.





If a colored square is clicked, information pertaining to the owner and sale of the land will appear. With these maps, our understanding of Rye's size and layout has grown.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Uzi Baram for introducing me to Rye, encouraging me to do something adventurous and his invaluable guidance. Sherry Svekis of Time Sifters also deserves my thanks for her support and proofreading. I would also like to thank Cindy Russell at the Manatee County Historical Center for helping me dig through records and organizing the land records into something that aided me greatly in mapping. I would also like to thank Don Brainard of the Manatee County Historical Commission for sitting down to do an interview with me. I would also like to thank Mr. Brainard and his friend Colonel Warren Johnson for cleaning up the Rye family cemetery and building the new fence around it. Evelyn Hoskins also deserves my thanks for telling me about her first cousin once removed, James Lawrence "J.L." Harrison, and his love for local history including the preservation of the Rye family homestead. All the other members of the Manatee County Historical Commission also have my deepest gratitude.

I would also like to thank Sarasota County Archaeologist Jodi Pracht and everyone at the Sarasota County History Center. I would like to thank Karen Fraley and everyone at Around the Bend Eco Tours for giving me another perspective on the area where Rye once stood. I would also like to thank Michael Waas for accompanying me out to Rye several times and helping me with genealogical research. Frances Bray also deserves my thanks for being so kind as to detail her genealogy and provide me some pictures of her ancestors who lived at Rye. Patrick Neal also deserves thanks for allowing me to survey his property, his Executive Assistant Priscilla Heim for helping to facilitate the survey and Randy Olson for the grand tour of the property.

The history of Rye would be only a quarter as long if it were not for the Warners' The Singing River, so I thank them for writing it. Last, but most definitely not least, I would like to thank my parents for accompanying me to the Rye Preserve on several occasions and putting up with my incessant rambling about it throughout the car ride home.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Structures and Site Features at Rye Village

- Man-made spring (Haines 1936: 1)
- Grist mill whose stones supposedly lay at the bottom of Rye Branch (White: 1986)
- School** (White 1988: 1)

Thanks to an interview with Rye inhabitant George Redding, we know that the one room schoolhouse and church were “side-by-side” (Warner & Warner 1988: 2). A report found by ACI (Almy et al 2004: 4-9) and George Redding’s interview, both state that the church had the second cemetery located behind it. The location of the school is noted on the map attached.

George Redding also notes that both the school house and church were demolished in historic times. “I was eight years-old and they already did away with the church and school house” (Warner & Warner 1988: 2).

A 1909 account by an anonymous school teacher describes her first day at the one-room schoolhouse:

“It was a square frame building, set on posts which were rotting and falling to pieces, The trustees of the district were there, busily occupied in cutting poles and propping the building so it would not collapse. Having made sure the building would not fall down, we went inside and all eyes were turned on me. I was pretty nervous by this time and thought if only I had a desk to stand behind. There was one in the back of the room and two trustees kindly shook the rats nest out of it and put it on the platform for me” (Almy et al 2004: 4-9).



The image on the previous page comes from the Manatee County Public Library Historic Photograph Collection. The description of the photograph notes that the school was likely a schoolhouse at Duette or Rye. The description also notes that the image was taken in 1930. If said date is accurate, this school house is likely not the one at Rye as it seems to have been destroyed earlier (Warner & Warner 1988: 2). However, it is highly likely that the Rye schoolhouse resembled the one pictured.

- Sawmill (Warner & Warner 1986: 146); (Almy et al 2004: 4-13)

- Church** (Haines 1936: 1)

Thanks to an interview with Rye inhabitant George Redding, we know that the one room church and schoolhouse were “side by side” and that the cemetery was behind the church (Warner & Warner 1988: 2). Since the location of both the cemetery and church are known, the location of the church can be deduced. The likely location of the church is noted on the map attached.

George Redding also notes that both church and schoolhouse were demolished in historic times. “I was eight years-old and they already did away with the church and school house” (Warner & Warner 1988: 2).

- Warehouse (McMurria 1967: 1)

- Subdivision named Mitchellville with 90 lots & five streets running north and south (Warner & Warner 1986: 144)

- General store with a dock for steamships (Warner & Warner 1986: 144), old post office (Warner & Warner 1986: 145)

- “New” post office building with cement foundation (Warner & Warner 1986: 145)

- Second general store (Warner & Warner 1986: 145)
- Rye family cemetery (Warner & Warner 1986: 144)
- Second cemetery with Thomas Urquhart's grave (Warner & Warner 1986: 145) 25 people buried (Almy et al 2004: 4-11).
- Shed for well equipment (Almy et al 2004: 4-13).
- Hines family home two miles north of Rye (Warner & Warner 1986: 145)
- Erasmus Rye homestead with detached kitchen and detached smokehouse (Bradenton Herald 1964: 1) & (Warner & Warner 1986: 144).
- Ox-cart Trail near Rye Branch (Interview with Don Brainard at Manatee County Historical Commission)
- Rye Orange Grove (Interview with Don Brainard at Manatee County Historical Commission)
- Goddard Branch must have relation to Goddard family
- "Sand road off to an orange grove was property of Willard Powell"
- Water Treatment Plant
- Two or three houses of Rye descendants north of interviewee "towards the bridge a little bit."
- Mitchell Homestead south side of Sand Branch (Warner & Warner: 1988)
- Various Native American mounds noted on the map attached.
- 4 cement "markers" on North side of Rye Branch

While there undoubtedly were more structures to support those who lived at Rye, these are the only ones that can be confirmed through the written records, a visual survey or oral histories.

Appendix B

The Inhabitants of Rye at the end of the 19th Century:

1897 White Pages Rye Listing

- Alderman, D. H., v.
- Briggs, George. H., v.
- Birggs W.H.
- Browning, Thomas. S., merchant.
- Bryant, Ben, f.
- Bryant, J. I., v.
- Cason, J. W., f.
- Chancey, J.R., f.
- Craig, John, Jr., v.
- Dennis, D. F., f.
- Downing, H. J., v. f.
- Downing, J. H., v. f.
- Downing, S. E., v.
- Dryman, J. M., v.
- Estes, Jno. F., v.
- Erieman, H., v.
- Gibson, J. H., v.
- Gilley, C. F., v.
- Grescham, N. C., mill.
- Grier, S. J., v.

- Griff, Wm. P., f.
- Guthrie, J. H., v.
- Hall, Chas. E., v.
- Harris, N., v.
- Harrison, C. M., v.
- Hawkins, C. D., f.
- Hawkins, D. L., v.
- Hill, C. E., v.
- Hine, M. J., v. - Purchased land at Rye in 1862
- Hogan, E. B., v.
- James, M. C., f.
- Jones, Jas, D., f.
- Jones, M. C., f.
- Jones, W. F., mechanic
- Jordan, H. C., v.
- Kersey, J. F., f.
- Lamb, Rev. J. B.,
- Lamb, Jesse D., f.
- Lamb, J. B., v. c. - Preacher
- Lamb, J. J., teacher - son - farmer
- Layne, Dr. James.,
- Layne, J. J., teacher.
- Layne, R. L., f.

- McClure, J. A., teacher.
- O'Riley, Wm. O., f.
- Parrish, J. C., f.
- Parrish, W. F., f.
- Pieratt, Jas., f.
- Pope, Andrew C., f.
- Pope, A. J., f.
- Pope, L. A., f.
- Pitch, A. R., v.
- Pitch, J. W., c. f.
- Rivells, T. L., f.
- Rye, Charles. B., f.
- Rye, W. F., f.
- Saffold, J. D., f.
- Saffold, J. T., f.
- Sparkman, J. J., f.
- Stewart, Wm. A., f.
- Swaub, D. A., f.
- Swain, J. R., f.
- Urquhart, J. G., f.
- Webb, J. W., f.
- White, H. J., f.
- Wilkins, Wm. J., lab.

- Wright, John, f. - Mail Carrier
- Yates, C. E., f.
- Yeomans, Aaron, f.
- Yeomans, Jas., f.
- Yeomans, J. H., f.

Appendix C: Content of cemetery sign at River's Reach

“From 1875 to the 1920s, the River’s Reach area was known as Rye, a logging and farming community at the head of navigation on the Upper Manatee River. Rye was an attractive location for loggers, ranchers and farmers seeking to ship their goods to market. Nearly 75 families called Rye their home.

The community of Rye was named after Civil War veteran Erasmus Rye. For a brief period from 1882 to 1884, the town was known as Mitchellville, after Tampa merchant Sam Mitchell, who moved to Rye and built a large store and boat docks, and plotted a subdivision of 90 lots. Mitchell tried to change the name of the post office from Rye to Mitchellville, but since another Florida post office shared that name, the town and its post office retained the name Rye. By the 1920s, railroads and paved roads signaled the end of riverboat commerce, and in the 1980s, the remaining cracker homes at Rye were relocated by Manatee County.

Life on the river was difficult, and many settlers died as a result of water-or mosquito-borne illnesses in a region with few doctors and no medicine other than herbal remedies. The Mitchellville Cemetery still stands on the grounds of River’s Reach, and the Rye Family Cemetery is nearby. Though most of the markers are gone and the

gravesites are unknown, the remaining headstones are testament to the hardscrabble lives of these early pioneering families.”

Appendix D: Urquhart and Mitchell Descendant Information

After doing some research through Ancestry.com, I was able to contact Thomas Urquhart's Great, Great Granddaughter, Frances Bray. Urquhart, who is buried within the cemetery at River's Reach, was the father in law of Samuel Mitchell who owned the general store at Rye. Mrs. Bray sent me her family tree tracing her ancestry to Urquhart along with many pictures of her relatives, several of which I have included in the following pages.

Family Tree

Thomas Urquhart

Relation: Great, Great Grandfather

Born: About 1813 (from his age on the census)

James Glover & Janie Ida (Delegal) Urquhart

Relation: Great Grandmother/Grandfather

James, born: December 1855 abt 1903

Janie, born: September 9, 1856 September 6, 1933

Mary Emma (Urquhart) Guthrie

Relation: Grandmother

Born: September 22, 1888 March 12, 1974

Bennetta (Guthrie) Polatta

Relation: Mother

March 4, 1912 November 20, 2000

Frances (Polatta) Bray

Born: November 9, 1946



Above is Jane Cathernine Urquhart Mitchell, daughter of Thomas Urquhart and wife of Samuel Mitchell, owner of the general store at Rye. She is Mrs. Bray's Great Aunt.



Above is Emma (Sissy) Mitchell Jackson at age 18. She was the only daughter of Samuel and Jane Mitchell, owners of the general store. Samuel and Jane had three sons.



Above is Janie Ida (Delegal) Urquhart, daughter of Rye resident Thomas Urquhart. Janie Ida was James Glover Urquhart's wife and Jane Mitchell's sister-in-law. Janie Ida was born on September 9, 1856 and died on September 6, 1933. She is Mrs. Bray's Great Grandmother.



Above is Mary Emma (Urquhart) Hoyt, daughter of Janie Ida (Delegal) Urquhart and grandchild of Thomas Urquhart. She is Mrs. Bray's grandmother.



Above is Tom Urquhart, brother of Mary Emma (Urquhart) Hoyt, son of Janie Ida (Delegal) Urquhart and grandchild of Thomas Urquhart. He is Mrs. Bray's Great, Great Uncle. In the photograph above, he is working in a telegram office.

Bibliography

Almy, Marion, Parcht, Jodi, Moates, Jeff & Hinder, Kimberly. (2004). *Cultural Resource Assessment Survey Waters Edge Development Manatee County, Florida. Performed by Archaeological Consultants, Inc.*

Around the Bend Nature Tours. (2009). *Rye Settlement Nature & History Walk*. Retrieved from <http://www.aroundbend.com/discover/rye-settlement-history-walk.php>, accessed on December 10, 2010.

Brainard, Don. (2010). *Personal Interview at the Manatee County Historical Park*.

Carl, King (Interviewer), Warner, Joe (Interviewer), Warner, Libby (Interviewer) & Rye Mullins, Opal (Interviewee). (1982). *The Rye Family of Manatee County* [Interview Transcript]. Retrieved from the Manatee County Library.

Carmack, Sharon De Bartolo. (2001) *Your Guide to Cemetery Research*. Betterway Books, Cincinnati.

Denbow, James. (1999). *Heart and Soul: Glimpses of Ideology and Cosmology in the Iconography of Tombstones from the Loango Coast of Central Africa*. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 112(445), 404-423.

Digger Odell Publications. (2007). Bleach and ammonia bottles. Retrieved from <http://www.bottlebooks.com/questions/common/bleach%20bottles.html>, accessed on December 10, 2010.

Greenwald, Bart. (1988, May 13). Officials still puzzled by Rye fire. *Bradenton Herald*, B1-B3.

Haines, Albert. (1936, November 27). Time erases pioneer town of Rye, but memory of it is fresh in minds of many. *Bradenton Herald*.

McMurria, Mary. (1967, March 5). 'Forgotten communities' live in memories. *Bradenton Herald Sunday Magazine*, 3.

Parks, John T., & Younkin, Kathryn A. State of Florida Department of State Division of Historical Resources, State of Florida Department of State Division of Historical Resources. (2008). *Manatee County Historical Structures Survey*. Renker Eich Parks Architects Inc.

Stewart, Louise. (December 27, 1964). Little Remains of Rye, Once a Riverboat Town. *The Bradenton Herald*, 3-B.

Turley, Briane. (2007, October 13). *Religion as Art: Gravestone Iconography in West Virginia*. Retrieved from <http://are.as.wvu.edu/grave.htm>, accessed on December 8, 2010.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). (1983). *Soil Survey of Manatee County*. Washington, D.C.

White, Dale. (1986, March 2). Community of Rye gone, not forgotten. *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, 1B-4B.

Warner, Joe (Interviewer), Warner, Libby (Interviewer), Chancey, Doyle (Interviewee) & Chancey, Pauline (Interviewee). (1983). *Manatee county Historical Society Interview with Doyle Chance & Pauline Chancey* [Interview Transcript]. Retrieved from the Manatee County Library.

Warner, Joe, & Warner, Libby. (1986). *The Singing River, a History of the People, Places and Events along the Manatee River*. Florida.

Warner, Joe (Interviewer), Warner, Libby (Interviewer) & Redding, George (Interviewee). (1988). *History of Redding Family, Rye Area & Max Cohen* [Interview Transcript]. Retrieved from the Manatee County Library.

White, Dale. (1988, May 18). Historians can close the book on Rye, Fla. *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*.