

fm's

NARRATIVE FROM NOTES OF INTERVIEW WITH
CHARLIE JAHNS 11-10-85

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Charlie Jahns' father was a fisherman, brought over by his parents from Germany when a small boy. Jahns' mother was from the area, raised in _____.

CJ had five brothers and sisters, of which he was the youngest. Only the oldest son and he are living now. He was born in 1912, in Gulf City.

He fished all around east Tampa Bay until 12 years ago. Shell Point, built in its present state in the 1920s, was one of the places CJ has fished. Net fishing was banned on the Little Manatee River 10 or 12 years ago, but line fishing is still permitted there.

CJ remembers the history of area dredge projects as being

- (1) Bahia Beach, first to be dredged: "pumping beaches,"
(2) then Apollo Beach, and
(3) Simmons Park (county)

Old Man Turley lived further up the river, and wanted to build a shed, for which he got a permit from Captain Thomas. (exact place not determined)

Bird Key was one of the places CJ says you could get oysters, from a large bed that lay between the island and the mainland. The island used to be much larger than it is now, and other islands out in that area have disappeared. One thing CJ thinks is funny is the way "these people" say oysters have gone down (in number), but they aren't fishermen, so they don't know where to look for oysters. Maybe this is true, but they don't know anything about oysters.

Paul ^Dickman dredged the Ruskin Inlet before he did Bahia Beach. Many people didn't like the Inlet being dredge, but Dickman is given credit for building the town.

CJ worked on Shell Point Road during the Works Progress Administration of the 1930s, when this road became the first paved after Highway 41. Dickman owned all the land north of that road; Culbreath (?) built Cedar Grove to the south, and the Tillets came and bought some property from McCall.

As for Shell Point itself, the Colluras were the ones who built up the land and turned it into a housing development. Thomas' ownership had produced a lodge, cabins, and docks, but not very much impact on the land in terms of dredge and fill. The Carl Yost family had also had this land in their local holdings, before Roy and Edna Fox bought it in the 1960s

Shell Point's bar is going through major changes in construction, which unfortunately include the inside bathrooms. CJ says they have named the one portable, which adorns Shell Point's entrance, the "co-op" bathroom...

A shell pit was proposed for a site next to Highway 41, but that plan was shot down by residents. An 80 acre site was also reduced to 35 ~~acres~~ acres. The state has recently taken a big hand in stopping marina construction, dredging, building, and other such projects.

One place of interest, the former dairy farm of Mrs. Annie May Strickland Holloway, on Simmons Park Road, was turned into Ruskin's first shell pit after changing hands twice. The dairy was on the North side of the road; the existing pit now is about the same size as the large one that lies on the South side of the road and to the east (towards 41). Leisey's operation has been going on for around 15 years; Clarence Leisey, who farmed in the area for many years, passed away only three or four years ago.

CJ's first home, in Gulf City, was on the second curve past the cemetery (on Stephen's Road). The two-storey house he was raised in is now torn down, by the present owners who made that property a trailer park. Just around that second curve, on the north side, is where his father was raised.

CJ went to school at the Gulf City Schoolhouse, which was moved by Selner onto the river side and later burned down. There is a photograph of the class of 1915 at this school, which depicts CJ's two sisters and one brother.

(A) Evelyn Matthews, one of the ladies Mrs. Virginia Jocusen turned me on to, according to CJ may or may not have been born here, which is what CJ said. He remembers that her family was from Georgia; also that she is about the age of his sons.

Charlie Jahns proclaims himself the "oldest fisherman alive who fished this river." He and his two brothers-in-law once caught the record catch under the bridge where 41 crosses the river: 55,000 pounds of fish in one morning.

The flood of 1921 came to the steps of the Gulf City schoolhouse, after it had been moved to the river. That flood washed out many structures along the rivers, including the railroad tracks between the two bridges. That bridge has since been replaced with material sturdier than wood.

Most of the time, when the Jahns were living in their previous homes, they couldn't get to the stores in Ruskin except by boat from the Gulf City side. CJ and his wife now live on a shell road off of Stephen's Rd., on fairly high ground in the Ista Manatee Mobile Home park. The store they always bought their goods from was Willis and Dickman's store, The Coffee Cup.

Mary Willis, who married Willie Walker, is the baker of Coffee Cup's pies. Willie is the chief meat-cutter there. Mary's sister, Elizabeth, appears in the GCS class of 1915 photo: the last child on the right in the front row.

A: (back) Chick Willis, Albert Heinkel, Fred Jahns, Henry Willis, Cordelia Denson, Elizabeth Parks, Ello Buzbee, Leona Denson, Annie Jahns, Maude Steel, Ethel Selner
(front) Malachi Denson, Henry Heinkel, Buddy Buzbee, Charlie Hall, Margaret Jahns, Louise Hall, Elizabeth Willis (Mary's sister).

B: Gulf City School, class of 1913--July 4th picture.

(big Pic
w/ old man
in back)