

## Section 5: Corridor's Story

The communities surrounding The Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail have a long, rich history that begins approximately 20,000 years ago during the last Glacial Period and is closely linked to three bodies of water – the Atlantic Ocean, the Halifax River and the Tomoka River. The Halifax River is actually an arm of the Atlantic Ocean that thrusts northward from Ponce de Leon Inlet to the south and splits the land into two sections. The Tomoka Basin, the source of the Halifax River, is located about twenty-three miles north of Ponce de Leon Inlet and is fed from the southwest by the Tomoka River, a fresh water river. The surrounding lands are located on the Silver Bluff Terrace – an ancient ocean bottom. Giant ground sloths, saber-toothed tigers, mastodons, and prehistoric horses once roamed the forests surrounding these waters. On the east side of the Halifax River is a narrow peninsula approximately a mile wide. The northern most portion of the peninsula in Volusia County is known as Ormond-By-The-Sea. Following the peninsula south from the Flagler County line for about 8 miles brings us to the City of Ormond Beach, which is separated by the Halifax River into beachside and mainland segments. The northern mainland side of The Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail corridor sits in unincorporated Volusia County.



*View of the Halifax River*

Descendants of primitive Asiatics, who came to be known as Indians, migrated to Florida approximately twelve thousand years ago. They came to hunt the mammoths, musk oxen and caribou. These early inhabitants hunted and fished along the Halifax and Tomoka Rivers, leaving behind mounds filled with broken pottery, arrowheads, and shellfish remains. The earliest inhabitants of the area that we have knowledge of are the Timucuan Indians who lived along the banks of the Halifax and Tomoka Rivers during the early 1500's. Their primary settlement was called Nacoroco and is thought to be located in what now is Tomoka State Park, which faces the Tomoka Basin and welcomes visitors through its entrance on North Beach Street, the western limb of the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail. Nacoroco was mentioned in a 1569 memorial to the king of Spain by Captain Antonio de Prado who noted that the village was situated between two rivers (now known as Tomoka and Halifax). Princess Issena of the Timucuan Indian Tribe married French Huguenot nobleman Ernst D'Erlach in 1566. An engraved rock marks the site near the primitive church on the northwest corner of the Granada Bridge. In 1605, Spanish explorer Alvaro Mexia mapped the area. Prehistoric shell middens are located along John Anderson Drive containing the remains of oysters harvested by these peoples from the river and tiny coquina clams gathered from the ocean side. Bones of shark, sea turtle and manatee are also found in these significant archeological sites. Because of this bounty of river and sea, the natives who lived in villages once located along the Halifax and Tomoka Rivers never practiced agriculture until the arrival of the Spanish. The Timucuan villages of Cacaroy and Cicale are believed to have been located along the banks of the Halifax River in present day Ormond-By-The-Sea. The Cacaroy settlement is believed to have been located just south of Bicentennial Park, with the Cicale settlement approximately one mile further south along the banks of the river. The Timucuans disappeared entirely by the early 1800's, perhaps decimated by diseases brought by European settlers.

At the end of the Seven Years War in Europe, Spain ceded Florida to the British in exchange for Cuba. Britain gave out many land grants to settlers, including 20,000 acres to Richard Oswald in 1766. Mount Oswald

became a rice and indigo plantation, encompassing what is now Tomoka State Park. There are eleven known plantation sites within the Tomoka State Park area all of which can be seen and are accessible from the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail. During the survey of these land grants, the Halifax River received its name in honor of Lord Halifax. Later, Florida reverted to Spain and Mount Oswald and other early plantations fell into ruins. Spanish land grants of the early 1800's brought a new wave of settlers from the Bahamas. Spain remained in possession of Florida from 1783 until 1821, when it became a United States territory. Some of the earliest settlers to the area included James and George Anderson, who came to Ormond with a Spanish land grant and took over what had been Mount Oswald. Loop road John Anderson Drive is named after their family. Captain James Ormond received a 2,000-acre land grant that he called Damietta Plantation. James Ormond II died in 1829 and is buried in Ormond Tomb Park located on Old Dixie Highway. A landmark of the second Spanish period is located in the vicinity of Pine Tree Drive. What was once the Addison Land Grant was later sold in part to the McCrae brothers. This landmark, known as the McCrae Plantation Ruins and Addison Blockhouse, are important examples of 19th century plantation architecture. This plantation, like many in the area, was destroyed during the Second Seminole War. The effective reprisals of the Seminole Indians in 1835-36 laid waste to the plantation economy in this part of the state, from which it never recovered. During the course of the next fifty years, these lands lay dormant allowing nature to take its course.



*Sunset over the Marsh*

In the 1870's, a new wave of settlers arrived, including a group employed by the Corbin Lock Company of New Britain, Connecticut, who named the area New Britain. In 1876 Chauncey A. Bacon, an architect and Civil War veteran from New Britain, Connecticut, purchased 172 acres in present day Ormond-By-The-Sea and named it the Number Nine Plantation. Mrs. Bacon became the first teacher in the colony of New Britain, present day Ormond Beach. In her book *Ormond-On-The-Halifax*, Alice Strickland describes the site: "The land was covered with a dense, tangled forest of palmettos, scrub oaks, and pine trees which Bacon cleared out with axe and grub hoe. The Bacon's first home was a palmetto cabin, but later Bacon built a small, two story house with a large coquina rock fireplace on top of the Indian shell mound. Eventually this house became the 'jelly house' where Jennie Bacon, and their son, Earl, made delicious jams, jellies, and preserves that were sold on the property and also shipped to all parts of the country." The Bacons constructed a third home, which still stands on John Anderson Drive, from salvaged mahogany logs that washed ashore from the wreck of the *City of Vera Cruz*. The Number Nine was a favorite picnic ground for the early settlers of New Britain with picnickers and other guests traveling by boat on the Halifax River since no roads along the riverfront on the east side of the Halifax River existed. The Bostrom brothers came to what is now called Riverside Drive and built a fine home called Bosarve, which means "Home Place" in Swedish. Like the Bacons, the Bostroms built three homes altogether on the same site; the first was a palmetto shack, then a two-story frame house and eventually a third home with some of the lumber coming from Jacksonville and some salvaged from ship wrecks. Alice Strickland's book describes the shingles as being homemade and "the bricks for the chimney were pilfered from old plantation ruins". Bosarve, which is still filled with magnificent old oak trees, was torn down in recent years and a modern home now occupies the site.



*View of the Halifax River*

Alice Strickland also gives us an accounting of the tragic shipwrecks that occurred during the hurricane season of 1880, the most severe storms ever experienced by the early settlers. Strickland wrote: “The largest of these ships was the *City of Vera Cruz*, bound from New York to Havana, which was carrying over a hundred passengers. As the ship broke up in the immense waves, passengers and crew were thrown into the sea, and only a few reached shore alive...the settlers formed a sort of vigilance committee to bury the human bodies strewn along the beach north of Ormond and which were being attacked by wild hogs. Sixty-seven of these bodies were interred in one huge pit dug back of the first row of dunes just north of Number Nine Plantation. For many years a large timber set upright in the ground marked the spot, but was finally destroyed by woods fires”. The first cottage built on the beach was constructed from salvaged materials from the Vera Cruz and named in the ship’s honor. In the 1880’s this cottage rented in the summer for \$30 per month. At the time of his death in 1911, John Anderson bequest the Vera Cruz cottage to William Fagen. In December of 1896, another fierce hurricane grounded the Nathan Cobb just offshore. Citizens of Ormond attempted a rescue of the crew despite high rough surf. One resident and several crew members perished. Salvage from the Nathan Cobb was used to build a cottage, also called the Nathan Cobb, on Orchard Lane just north of the Hotel Ormond. The cottage stands today and is accessible from John Anderson Drive.

The first bridge over the Halifax River was built in 1887 and connected the peninsula and the mainland. Today Granada Boulevard and a graceful high-rise descendant of the first Halifax River Bridge form the southern border of the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail. John Anderson and J.D. Price bought part of the Bostrom property and built the first wing of the Hotel Ormond, along with winter visitor and Wall Street broker Stephen Van Cullen White, which opened on January 1, 1888. Many wealthy travelers stopped here, including John D. Rockefeller who rented a complete floor of the hotel. Other notable travelers included Henry Ford, Will Rogers, and the Prince of Wales. In 1890, Henry Morison Flagler purchased the structure and enlarged it. In 1904, Flagler added the Ormond Garage on the hotel property. The 104-year-old hotel is now gone, demolished on May 26, 1992, and recently replaced by the Heritage Condominium. The restored hotel cupola, now a small museum displaying memorabilia, is located in Fortunato Park across the street from the original site, visible from both John Anderson Drive and Granada Boulevard. Hammock House, which was built in 1878 by the hotel’s co-founder J.D. Price, still stands at 311 John Anderson Drive and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



*Pilgrims' Rest  
Primitive Baptist Church*

On December 18, 1918, John D. Rockefeller made Ormond Beach his winter home by moving into “The Casements”, a three-story house on the corner of Granada and Riverside Drive which borders the Halifax River. On May 23, 1937, Rockefeller passed away while at The Casements. The Rockefeller family sold the home in 1941 and it became a junior college for young women. The property changed hands a number of times after that with the citizens fighting off efforts to redevelop the property as condominiums in the 1970’s. The City of Ormond Beach purchased the property in 1973 and the building was restored and preserved as a cultural and civic center for the community. The Casements is one of the premier historical landmarks along the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail.

A subscription for a church building was started in 1884 and a river front lot at the corner of Lincoln and Beach Streets was donated. Lumber for the church was ordered from Jacksonville, but the schooner carrying it ran aground and the captain could not get it afloat. Community members got the lumber from the schooner and crafted it into a raft. Working all night, the group poled the raft six miles to Ormond where, with help

from other citizens, they carried the lumber ashore, dried it and then began construction of the church building. The Ormond Union Church was incorporated September 21, 1888. Across from the church, directly on the Halifax River, is the Ormond Yacht Club, which was built in 1910 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The wooden clubhouse stands stalwartly over the water at the end of its pier, a striking component of the viewshed at the south end of the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail. Further north at 166 N. Beach Street stands the William McNary house. William McNary lied about his age when he enlisted with his son, Clarence, to fight for the Union in the Civil War because he was too old for conscription. McNary had been a cabinetmaker for the Corbin Lock Company in Connecticut and this family became one of the most prominent in the colony. Immediately north of the McNary house is the Dix House, which was built for Mrs. McNary's sisters, Ruth and Eliza Dix. Originally built as almost identical houses, the Dix House retains its open upper and lower porches and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It was here that the citizens of then New Britain voted to incorporate the city under the name Ormond Beach on April 22, 1880. The first meeting of the Ormond City Council took place at the Dix House on May 8, 1880.

The 1920's brought a real estate boom to both mainland and beachside Ormond Beach. In 1926 Oceanshore Boulevard (A1A) was constructed and opened the forbidding wilderness of scrub jungle that existed between Street Augustine and Ormond Beach. This improved access led to the beginning of residential subdivisions along the peninsula. In the early 1950's a residential construction boom started in the beachside area north of Ormond Beach. One of the first subdivisions was called "Ormond-By-The-Sea", a name that eventually became the identity for that community. Between Ormond-by-the-Sea and the Flagler County line to the north lays North Peninsula State Park. Nearly three miles long and extending across the peninsula from ocean to river, the park is a pristine undeveloped dune scrub, an ecosystem that has nearly vanished from the rest of Florida's east coast. It is here that the Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail will meet the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway, with the intent of receiving national status as well.

Five days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the United States entrance into World War II, fifteen local individuals along with some New Smyrna Beach residents took the qualifying exams for the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 44, called Flotilla 1-3 during World War II, manned the lookout tower in Ormond-By-The-Sea around the clock as they searched the coast for German submarines. This restored structure still stands today. A wooden tower in the rear of the Ormond Beach fire station on East Granada Avenue also became a watchtower. Flotilla 44, Daytona Beach – 7<sup>th</sup> CG District, is one of the oldest Coast Guard Auxiliary flotillas in the United States. Flotilla 1-3 (present day Flotilla 44) was formally chartered on December 18, 1941. German submarines arrived off the Atlantic Coast in January 1942. By May of that year, 180 vessels had been sunk. The Coast Guard Auxiliary responded to aid the sinking vessels and rescued those who were forced to abandon ship. At times, people on the beach could see these U-boat engagements. In addition to their responsibilities for patrolling the beaches of Volusia and Flagler Counties, members of Flotilla 1-3 also conducted river patrols on the Intracoastal Waterway and patrolled the offshore waters of the Atlantic Ocean searching for harbor infiltrators and enemy submarines.



*World War II Submarine Tower*

Stanley Steamer cars came to Ormond Beach on January 24, 2006 to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a Stanley car setting the most famous land speed record on the beach on January 26, 1906. Stanley car owners

came from as far away as Great Britain to mark the anniversary. Owners prefer to drive the cars rather than display them; they all raved about the magnificent beauty when they completed driving "The Loop."

For over a century the citizens of Ormond Beach and the surrounding communities and visitors to the area alike have learned to love and value the natural vistas and historic structures they see from the roadways that make up the Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail. Those within the community are deeply concerned with preserving and protecting the remaining unspoiled areas of forests, swamps, scrub dunes, and coastal marshes with its abundance of ecological systems and historic value in this area. The Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail hopes to contribute to this worthy endeavor through its efforts to establish the corridor as a Florida Scenic Highway.



*Stanley Steamer car*