

## **Cuban Ranchos in Indian Beach**

by David Jennings

ost neighbors are aware that the land comprising Indian Beach has been occupied by humans for many thousands of years. We often think of prehistoric residents...Calusa Indians and Timicuans.

The early rancho in our neighborhood was located just north of present day Whitaker Bayou and by (at least) the early 1800's belonged to a man named Antonio Pacheco. The Armed Occupation Act of 1843 allowed the property to be assumed

Sadly, many of the people were decimated by disease brought by Spaniards and other early explorers. In the 16th and 17th centuries many native lives were lost to yellow fever, smallpox and measles. This left very few people up and down the Gulf Coast and was part of what Marjory Stoneman Douglas, author of *River of Grass*, called "The Three Hundred Quiet Years."

Indian Beach remained occupied, as Cuban fisherman worked the coast and moved into the vacant Indian villages and built seasonal homes on the



Bay Shore Road in 1914

high ground of temple mounds and kitchen middens. The Cuban fishermen created "Ranchos," and they sometimes intermarried with Native Americans and lived in these locations for many generations. Most stayed as squatters after Spain ceded Florida to England in 1763, but by the time of the Indian Wars between the Seminole and the United States of America in the early 1800's they were in a political bind, friendly to the natives but under suspicion by the new American government. Indians had lived here for generations. They found a high temple mound, burial mounds and many kitchen middens. While exploring an area north of the bayou, they came upon a Spanish fisherman named Alzartie. He said fish and game were so abundant in the region that a man settling here would want for nothing.

In the years that followed, Whitaker bought a total of 193 acres and owned over one mile of bay front stretching from the Van

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IBSSA Semi-Annual Meeting June 1 at the Bay Shore Mennonite Church at 7pm. North Trail Redevelopment Update State Representative Keith Fitzgerald Post-Session Report What's New at New College • Sarasota Property Appraiser Bill Furst, What's Happening to Property Values Ringling Arts Festival and Construction Plans USF Criminology Prof. Jim Unnever on Race, Racism & Crime

It was immediately apparent

by Manuel Olivella from Hillsborough. It is known that Olivella became a "neighbor to the north" of the Whitakers, who had settled just below Snell's Bayou (now Whitaker Bayou).

In a personal memoir written years later, William Whitaker describes sailing into Sarasota Bay on December 14th, 1842 and seeing an area of yellow bluffs, now the location of the Sarasota Bay Club. Upon arriving at the chalky, exposed cliffs, Whitaker and his brother lowered their sails and drifted in to a palm lined bayou just to the north.

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0		AdamT2@aol.com				
Jono Miller						
jonosarasota@gm	ail.com					

#### **NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNICATIONS**

**Website** - www.ibssa.ws Contact Cynthia Biggar (350-2265) with questions

**Newsgroup** - go to website for instructions on how to join and participate. Contact Gretchen Serrie (355-2560) with questions.

**Newsletter** - EDITOR - Donna Bauer (355-0427). Contact with feedback on articles or news of potential interest. Please contribute an article or volunteer to be a newsletter writer.

#### Writers June 2010 Newsletter

Cynthia Bernstein - 355-8773 Cindy Galik - 586-6611 David Jennings - 650-7354 Sharon Kenworthy - 359-9360 Debbie Muller - 355-5743 Johannes Werner - 330-0303

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Transit—Looking to the Future
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by Johannes Werner

From behind the steering wheel, we only realize it exists when we hit the brakes for the rough grade crossings on Myrtle Street or Martin Luther King Way. Once or twice a week, we hear the whistle of a freight train. And even to residents living near the tracks they are — at best — a weed-infested no-man's land, or — at worst — the imaginary wall that separates Black and White Sarasota.

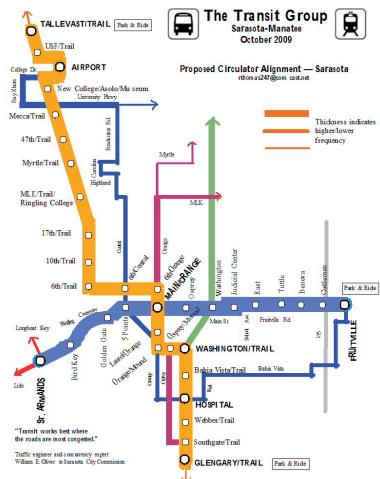
But the Coast Line railroad track is an invaluable asset for Sarasota. It could be a regional lifeline that connects Sarasota citizens to downtown Bradenton, Brandon and Tampa.

Close your eyes for a moment and use your imagination: A station near downtown; a stop on MLK; another one at the airport. Now think about a two-car, air-conditioned, bus-like diesel shuttle in bright colors with big, tinted windows, complete with level entry, plenty of leg room and space for wheelchairs and bicycles. If you're demanding, add wireless Internet for passengers. Imagine reading the daily paper or checking your email during the one hour 20-minute commute to Union Station in downtown Tampa. Envision walking across the platform at Union Station to catch the local train to Tampa International Airport, Clearwater, or the main campus of the University of South Florida. No hurry — there's one every five minutes. If you plan to go farther you may have to hurry, because the hourly bullet train to Orlando and Miami is about to pull out of Union Station. Another one to Orlando, Jacksonville and Atlanta is due in half an hour

Now open your eyes. This option is closer than you might think: That's because the rail right of way and most of the infrastructure is already there. As is, the railroad from Bradenton to Tampa allows for 65 mile-an-hour speeds. The biggest single capital

expense — an estimated \$20 million — would be needed to rebuild the awfully neglected track from downtown Sarasota to the Tropicana plant. Then, there would be installing a modern signaling and grade crossing system all the way to Tampa, building modest stops with level platforms and ticket dispensing machines, and buying half a dozen diesel shuttles. The operating entity could be TBARTA, the regional transit authority. Once the political decision





is taken and funding is secured, hourly commuter trains could be running to Tampa in a matter of months.

The legal situation has to be sorted out. Owned by Jacksonvillebased CSX Corp. and operated by Fort Myers-based Seminole & Gulf Railroad under a long-term lease, the Coast Line is subject to the Passenger Railroad Act of 1971. According to this law, CSX must grant a state passenger railroad entity access, if needed. Possibly, CSX should also shoulder some of the cost of track restoration.

Rehab projects of dilapidated rail lines elsewhere have shown that they offer the biggest bang for the taxpayer buck and make the biggest difference in the shortest time period.

That said, in April, both the city and county commissioners unanimously decided to sacrifice the Tampa rail option for a local bus system, capping a planning process driven by SCAT officials. The county is applying for federal grants to spend \$82 million on a bus rapid system connecting the hospital, downtown Sarasota, the airport and the local USF campus. Key to this plan is to rip out the railroad track and pour concrete and asphalt on the railroad right-of-way. If Manatee County decides to join, which could or could not happen, the rapid transit buses might take passengers as far as Bradenton.

Beyond the BRT plans, the biggest challenge is that neither county nor city planners are considering transit as a regional option. Elected officials have been in on-off thinking mode about bullet trains on the median of I-75 for years, in billion-dollar and 50-year terms. But these ideas haven't even reached planning stages. Meanwhile, long-term plans don't even include existing railroad corridors as an option. There is no comprehensive transit plan for Sarasota-Bradenton. And when it comes to transit planning, most elected officials, confused and intimidated by dizzying technical details and bureaucratese, rely on staff recommendations, which mostly come from SCAT officials.

The bus rapid transit plan hinges on federal funding, and the proposal is far from assured to receive a go-ahead in Washington. So the Tampa rail option is still alive.

There are strong arguments for rail. Overhauling and reactivating the Coast Line could help relieve the city's stagnating urban core from the strengthening stranglehold of suburban sprawl. Here's why: It's been more than a decade since the last commuter survey for Sarasota-Bradenton was made, but anecdotal evidence shows that thousands of Sarasota residents are already commuting daily to Tampa, St. Petersburg and beyond. As one in five workers in Sarasota is currently un- or underemployed, the lure of a job in downtown Tampa beats the pain of the commute. And when the pain of having to battle the first half-hour of the commute through traffic in Sarasota gets bad enough, the megacommuting, two-employee family will prefer to move from the city to a Lennar Homes-style subdivision near I-75.

If we don't do anything to channel the growing number of commuters, sprawl will be the future of Sarasota.

## And the buses?

No matter whether the Bus Rapid Transit proposal succeeds or fails, local transit planners will have to go back to the nitty-gritty of improving an imperfect bus system that has all routes ending in an overloaded central transfer station.

City commissioners Richard Clapp and Kelly Kirschner have floated the idea of a downtown circulator along Main Street, an idea that could be expanded.

The Transit Group believes that, if SCAT and MCAT were to run buses on straight-shot circulator routes along US 41; Manatee Avenue; University Parkway; Fruitville Road-Main Street-Ringling Causeway; and Bee Ridge Road, residents along these axes could enjoy 15-minute headway service. This improvement could be implemented with existing resources, at little additional cost.

As a guideline, planners can use a 2002 MPO plan that recommended bundling of resources along the area's most important thoroughfares.

As is, the buses running along Tamiami Trail — including route 99, which serves the North Trail — are among the highest-used routes in both counties.  $\diamondsuit$ 

We thank Johannes Werner, an Indian Beach resident, former mega-commuter and member of the Transit Group of Sarasota-



Manatee, who submitted this opinion piece on regional transit.

Graphics: Map made by Transit Group Sarasota-Manatee

Photo: Diesel commuter train on a rehab rail in Germany. Photo credit: SWEG

## Live Longer – Move!

by Cindy Galik

o you feel healthy? Would you consider yourself to be in good shape? Fit, for your age? Whether you are currently overweight, a top athlete, in the best shape of your life, fat and happy or just happy, your physical condition and activity level determines to a large degree the quality of your life today and many tomorrows to come.



Incorporating movement and exercise into your day can positively effect not only how you look and feel, but how long and how well you live. The staff at the Mayo Clinic (www. mayoclinic.com) boasts that good old-fashioned exercise may help you feel better and live longer, combat chronic disease, promote better sleep and improve your sex life. Some pretty good reasons to get moving. Not convinced? There's more.

Including more activity into your life can be simple and fun. You don't need to join a gym or health club. A personal trainer isn't necessary, nor must you use the best or latest in exercise equipment. Don't get me wrong. Working out at a fitness center, hiring a trainer or buying the newest and coolest in fitness gear can motivate most of us to stay active. But, you can accomplish much and feel great without any of it.

There are a many different kinds of exercises and activities to engage in which require minimal or no equipment. Walking, pushups and the squat are three great exercises that qualify. Walking provides aerobic exercise. The pushup strengthens the upper body, while the squat works the lower. Most of us can perform all three easily; however, modifications for those with limitations may be necessary. Consult with your physician prior to starting any fitness routine or new activity. The brain often says, "Yes" when the body says, "I don't think so." So, if you haven't worked out in some time, listen to your body.

Walking is inexpensive, readily available, and you can participate rain or shine. The Indian Beach-Sapphire Shores area provides a beautiful and enjoyable backdrop for a short leisurely stroll or heart-pumping run. All you need is a good pair of walking shoes and head for the front door.

Take the Scenic Route or choose your own path. Don't overexert, no matter what you used to do. The sidewalks can get a little

tricky to maneuver in some spots, so exercise caution. Consider the curbs, bumps and ridges that you encounter along the way as opportunities to improve your balance. Step carefully and consciously.

Try adding some strength/resistance training while enjoying your walk or run. Stop at one of the benches in the park overlooking Sarasota Bay and do a few standing pushups. Place both hands shoulder width apart on the back of the bench with your feet more than arm's distance away. Lower your body/chest to approximately three inches from the bench making sure to keep your body straight. Push back up where your arms are straight but not locked out. Repeat five to 10 times or do as many as you can perform comfortably.

Pushups can also be done at home or in your hotel room while traveling. Instead of using the bench, place your hands on the edge of the countertop in the bathroom or kitchen. To make the movement a little more challenging, stand on one foot with your elbows close to the body or get on the ground or floor. Experiment. Play. Move.

To strengthen the lower body, do what I call the chair sit squat. For those with physical issues, do what is comfortable and start slowly. To begin, stand in front of the same park bench where you did your pushup. Use a chair if you're home. Hold your arms out in front of you, parallel to the ground. Lower your body slowly, as if you were going to sit down, without actually putting any weight on the bench, if you can. If you feel pain, stop! If you need to sit all the way down, that's fine. Stand up slowly. Keep your arms parallel with the ground and look straight ahead throughout the movement. Repeat five to 10 times. To reduce the stress on the joints, when you squat, keep your knees behind or directly over your heels. Don't allow the knees to move forward of the toes. Confused? Catch me when you're on your walk, and I'll demonstrate.

The National Institute on Aging (www.nia.nih.gov) reports that regular exercise and physical activity can reduce the risk of developing some diseases and disabilities that develop as people grow older and is important to our physical and mental health. As we age, our motives to work out can change. However, the desire to feel good every day remains constant, no matter how old we are.

Take pleasure in our wonderful neighborhood. Just for today, ignore the annoyances and nuisances of the moment. Pretend you don't hear the rumbling on the water. Forget about that long 'to do' list. Venture outside and breathe some fresh air. Find amusement with the mundane and outlandish as you move your way to a healthier, stronger and happier you.



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# Let's Make Quilting a Neighborhood Tradition

#### by Sharon Kenworthy

uilting among friends has been an American tradition since Colonial days. Today there are various "Bees," groups of women who meet regularly to share ideas, fabric, information, techniques and, best of all, camaraderie. Usually the bees meet at members' homes at a decided time and place on a rotating basis.

In my bee up north we have helped one another finish our projects. We have made quilts together for personal use and charity. Our latest craze has been a block challenge out of a new quilt book and it is always fun to see what fabric people use for the same blocks.

It has been a great way to meet other quilters and spend creative time together. All levels of quilters are welcome. For a beginner, I would suggest visiting the local quilt store to look into required supplies, as you need quite a few and it can be expensive.

If you are interested in joining a quilt group, please let me know. You can contact me at skenworthy@att.net.



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## Cuban Ranchos in Indian Beach cont.



Whitaker Bayou 1910

Wezel to present day Indian Beach Drive. Interestingly, Whitaker allowed Alzartie, his friend and neighbor, to live on this property until he chose to cede his *squatters rights* and move to Cuba.

Alzartie was one of the last Cuban rancho occupants to leave our vicinity, ending a long period of occupation and beginning a new one we belong to today.

(Some of the information in this article came from *River of Grass* by Marjory Stoneman Douglas and *Edge of Wilderness* by Janet Snyder Matthews)



Early Indian Beach Road Photos provided by Sarasota County Water Atlas

# 50th Anniversary on Sarasota's N Trail



## **Public/Green Space Update**

by Cynthia Bernstein

#### 40th Street Row to the Bay



Committee member Richard Thomas has replaced the split-rail fence at the entrance to this ROW off Bay Shore Road. Take a walk down the shady path, filled with Florida natives and see how beautiful the bay is as it unfolds before you. Many thanks to the IBSSA Board for covering the cost and Richard for providing the labor.

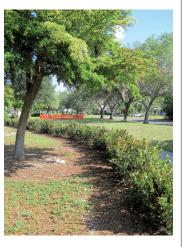
#### Alameda Row to the Bayou

On April 19th, following a presentation by Bill Hallisey and Javier Vargas of the Public Works Department and comments by the public, the City Commissioners voted to again allow public access to Whitaker Bayou via this ROW. Access will be obtained by making modifications to the existing fences on and bordering the site.

#### **Sapphire Shores Park**

Work by the Public Works Department is proceeding as planned at this popular park. The damaged coco plum hedge surrounding the pet-free area has been replaced with the same variety of coco plum and has been mulched as well.

The sprinkler system has been repaired and is in good working order. However, this does not mean that the City will be constantly watering the park the current schedule is once a week for areas not recently planted nor seeded.



The re-seeding of the grassy areas has just begun. An area based on irrigation coverage—will be seeded and roped off until ready for foot traffic. The City will then proceed to other areas of the park in the same manner.

The City is currently exploring bids for the extended sidewalk, trees and bench at the southern end of the park. There are wonderful opportunities to participate in this project by purchasing a tree or bench in memory of a loved one, etc. through the City's Legacy Tree and Bench Program. Please call Alan Lillie at (941) 351-2715 for further information.

If you have an interest or concern regarding any of our public spaces or if you wish to participate on the Beautification Committee, please contact Cynthia Bernstein, Chairman, at (941) 355-8773.

# Neigborhood Watch

#### by Debbie Muller

The idea behind Neighborhood Watch actually began many years ago when pioneers worked together to protect their settlements. The U.S. Neighborhood Watch concept began formally in the early 1970s, when neighborhoods organized to

fight rising crime rates. Neighborhood Watch came to the city of Sarasota in 1983 with our neighborhood being the first to become organized. The wonderful residents of Indian Beach-Sapphire Shores have always been committed to maintaining a beautiful and safe neighborhood for our families, and proudly we continue to have the oldest and most active Neighborhood Watch in the city.

#### Crime Report - March/April 2010

During the months of March and April we had one residential burglary. It occurred during the daytime. The thieves broke in, but only stayed inside for a moment due to an alarm. There were also numerous thefts including a ladder from a backyard, a 100' extension cord from a front porch, a large potted plant from a front walkway, and a canoe from private property. An attempted boat theft from a dock and an attempted theft of a very large yard ornament were also reported.

### **Home Security/Crime Prevention Meeting**

A Home Security/Crime Prevention meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 26, 2010 at 6:00 pm at the Crossroads Methodist Church (US 41st and 47th Streets).

#### National "Night Out"!

EVERYONE! Turn on your outside lights as a symbolic gesture on August 3, 2010. "Lights On" means "Lights Out for Crime." Send a message to criminals that they will not be tolerated in our neighborhood!

#### **Citizen Volunteer Program**

We now have five neighbors who are citizen volunteers with the Sarasota Police Department. If you have eight hours a month to patrol our streets or to do a variety of other duties, call Officer Ford Snodgrass at 954-7056.

#### **Upcoming Neighborhood Watch Meeting**

Residents will be informed of the date, time and location or you may call your neighborhood coordinator for information.

#### Remember: See it! Hear it! Report it!

Report all crime and suspicious activity...IMMEDIATELY!

- First call the police for emergencies call 911, for nonemergencies call 316-1199 or 316-1201.
- Call your Block Captain or Coordinator
- Alert your neighbor

While some suspicious situations have innocent explanations, the police would rather investigate a crime-prone situation than be called when it is too late. Your call could stop a criminal act, prevent an injury or save a life.

#### AND MOST IMPORTANT: BE AWARE! TAKE CARE! BE SAFE!

# **Membership Application and Dues Renewal Form**



# Indian Beach-Sapphire Shores Association

Membership type: 
New 
Renewal

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I can volunteer:	Name:					
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## **Neighborhood Watch Coordinators:**

Sapphire 1 58th Street - 47th Street Debbie Muller 355-5743 Sapphire II 47th Street - Myrtle Street Barbara Cherry 351-7906 Barbara.Cherry@comcast.net Sapphire III Myrtle Street - Indian Beach Drive Holly Cita 351-8034, hollycita@verizon.net Sapphire IV Indian Beach Drive - Whitaker Bayou Yvonne Lacey 365-7063, lacey.yvonne@yahoo.com

## **Helpful Numbers:**

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Non-emergency	316-1199 or 316-1201			
S.P.D. Front Desk	954-7025			
Chief Peter Abbott	954-7002			
Lt. Pat Ledwith (N. Dist)	364-7344			
Animal Services	861-9500			
Boat Noise	316-1201			
Citizen Volunteer & Project Lifesaver				
and Crime Prevention: Officer Ford	Snodgrass 954-7056			
Gang & Graffiti - Kim Laster	364-7327			
Narcotics Hotline	954-7050			
Nuisance Abatement: Det. Jeff Stein	ner 954-7092			
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