



Jupiter's School Boat

How did kids get to school around the turn of the last century? The same way most people got around -- by boat.

The Jupiter school boat was called "The Maine" in honor of the battleship U.S.S. Maine, which exploded in Havana Harbor in 1898 igniting the Spanish American War. The Maine was a lifeboat from the famous battleship (according to GLIMPSES OF SOUTH FLORIDA HISTORY corroborated by the note on the back of the photo to the right.)

So far, no source has indicated how the lifeboat from a battleship that exploded in 1898 became a school transport a few years later but it sounds like an interesting yarn in itself.

A look at a map of Florida in the early 1900's shows that the sparse population was clustered toward the coastline and around lakes and rivers. The reason for this is clear -- land travel was very difficult. How difficult is illustrated by the below photo of one of our major roads as late as 1916.

The story of the school boat starts with the story of Dr. Charles Jackson, a homesteader on the Loxahatchee River.

The following is from HISTORY OF JUPITER by Elsie Dolby Jackson: "Dr. Jackson, his wife, son and daughter came here in 1895. They moved south for the doctor's health. Probably no one family did any more to help Jupiter than this one. The doctor was a physician, minister and friend to old and young in the community. During the winter of 1895 and '96 he taught school at East Jupiter. In the summer of '96 he started raising pineapple on the bank of the river. He shedded four acres. This proved a success for the industry was very profitable."

"In 1901 and 1902 he taught again at North Jupiter..." Classes were held in a rough one-room building. It has since been removed. It was east of the railroad and stood in back of the Barfield house. The next two years he taught at West Jupiter. His daughter, Mary, was his assistant. "Miss Mary taught as assistant and principal for five years. Her resignation was deeply regretted by all."

"The winter of 1903 and 1904 was the first school boat year. The doctor not only taught but ran the boat as well."

The Jacksons ran into misfortune three years after coming here. They lost their house by fire and another



one had to be erected. Family heirlooms which were lost can never be replaced, however. Dr. Jackson went into the "pines" very heavily in 1905. "That industry, temporarily, proved a failure in this section, though due mainly to the exorbitant freight charges."
"It placed the doctor in such a position that in 1910 he left for Coconut Grove. He has since served there as rector of the Episcopal Church. To say he is missed is expressing our sentiments very mildly."

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