



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

MAY 2017

NEVILLE AND ROY MCJUNKIN

Unknown Author and Sun-Sentinel Obituary

Wilton Manors Historical Society

The Wilton Manors Historical Society has recently uncovered a typed write-up on Neville and Roy McJunkin's early days in South Florida. The author is unknown. It is three pages, typed double spaced. It appears to end in 1919. There is a hand written note at the end relating an incident in 1913. It is signed, but the signature is unclear. It is either F. A. M, or J. A. M. Ultimately, Neville McJunkin owned much of the land between NE 21st Court and NE 7th Avenue.

We have also reprinted the Sun-Sentinel Obituary of Neville, published July 1988, by Ray Lynch.

Florida Pioneers

Broward County

1912

A flip of a coin decided the fortunes of Neville and Roy McJunkin, aged 19 and 21, the South Carolina brothers who were "The Gold Dust Twins" to their peers. They had just finished a job for the Appalachian Apple Orchard in North Georgia and were waiting for a train in the little station at Cornelia. They had the promise of another job further north in Virginia and the train was due in 30 minutes, but in 10 minutes the Southern was due heading south. Young and adventuresome, they flipped a coin. This time the South won!

At Jacksonville they changed trains, and the Coastline brought them on down to Tavares arriving after dark. They found a boarding house and went to bed.

Next morning they were surprised by the large number of buzzards that were roosting on the roof tops. Surprise turned to dismay when they learned that all the drinking water came from cisterns that caught the rain water from the roofs. They drank no water during their entire stay, but drank only "sody water".

Roy got a job working fruit across Little Lake Harris and rowed back and forth to work.

Neville worked in a small grocery store. The alcoholic owner of the store was having a struggle making a go of it because of poor management and

"carrying people on the books". He got out his accounts and went over them with Neville. There was over \$250,000.00 in unpaid accounts for Neville to try to collect. The old man went down the list -- "old man Blake is dead - cross him off. Sam Howell has moved to Oklahoma - cross him off" - and so on down the list. Finally the practical amount was reduced to \$2,500.00 and Neville set out with the revised list.....to pry some money out of these people. At the end of a long day he came back with one - one dollar bill!

When the owner's daughter began reaching in the till without her father's knowledge, Neville decided it was time to change jobs and joined Roy's crew in the orange grove across Little Lake Harris. When the crop was packed they came on down to Fort Lauderdale for the winter of 1912.

Fort Lauderdale had one paved street 2 blocks long and the alligators roamed that at night.

They both found work with Southern Growers which was farming a stretch of land in what is now Oakland Park between Old Dixie and Federal Hwy. The boss allowed them and 3 other boys who were working for him to camp in the loft of his packing house. Its peaked roof was too low for standing upright except right in the very center. For a time the mule slept downstairs or rather down ladder while they slept in their cots overhead.

The spring of 1913 found Neville running a tomato packing house for the settlement of Japanese farmers on Yamato Road, Palm Beach County. They were very honorable, good farmers, and easy to get along with.

When World War I broke out in 1914 Neville went home to Carolina to volunteer but was turned down for poor eyesight. Sight failure had already caused him to withdraw from the College of Charleston before his first year was over--cancelling his plans to become a doctor. Not to be outdone, he applied at another enlistment center and when that doctor also wrote a negative eye report and gave it to him to take back to the sergeant, he tore up the paper as he was crossing the compound, reported for duty, and served in France where he became a 3 stripe Sergeant and was in officers training camp in France at the time of the Armistice.

Roy was deferred because of his farming. In 1919 he bought The Post Card Shop on Brickell Avenue (NOW. 1st Ave.) from Lucian Crair for \$1650. This price included 2 pianos (one a player), 2 typewriters, desks, chairs, show cases and the stock of merchandise-(magazines, office supplies). He housed the postal telegraph service, a desk for D. C. Alexander's real estate business, the Miami Herald and sold everything from typewriters to refrigerators. He and Myrtle (Shealy) had no children but became "Uncle Roy" and "Aunt Myrtle" to the whole community. The Post Card Shop moved from Brickell to Andrews, to Las Olas, to S. E. 1st Street before it was finally sold in the late 1940s.

The summer of 1919 saw Neville discharged from service and heading toward Colohatchee with his wife Jessie (Pitts) and baby Kathryn. For the first time now he farmed on his own on the south side of Middle River from what is now the N. E. 4th Avenue Fort Lauderdale High School parking lot to Andrews Avenue Extension. He grew tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and beans.

Hand written note at the end:

About 1913, Neville and Roy rode their bicycles to Miami one Sunday to take their first look. They traveled down the unpaved Old Dixie Highway. (US 1 was not built until many years later). On the round trip, they met only one car on the road, and none passed them.

Joseph Neville Mc Junkin, 95, Pioneer Broward Farmer

Sun-Sentinel Obituaries

July 9, 1988|By RAY LYNCH, Staff Writer

Joseph Neville McJunkin, a pioneer Broward County farmer who moved to Florida in 1911 after losing a bet, died at his home in Wilton Manors on Thursday. He was 94.

As the family story goes, Mr. McJunkin, then 19, was picking apples in north Georgia when he and his brother, Roy, 21, started looking about for more work.

Roy wanted to go to Florida but Neville insisted they head north to Virginia. A coin was tossed and brother Roy won the bet, said Mr. McJunkin's daughter, Jerry Lee Jones.

The brothers, nicknamed the "Gold Dust Twins," were soon camped out at Little Lake Harris in Central Florida, running a citrus picking crew and packing the fruit near Eustis in Lake County.

A year later, the brothers were living and working in the Fort Lauderdale area. Roy McJunkin, who died in 1979, didn't like farming much and eventually had a store and managed a school cafeteria in town.

But "Daddy liked to farm," Jones said.

As the years went by, Mr. McJunkin, who fought in France during World War I, squatted on land, then rented or bought it. He also sharecropped, often buying the property later on. He camped out in what is now Wilton Manors for several years before moving into Fort Lauderdale where his wife, Jessie, raised their children. Jessie McJunkin died in 1981. The couple had been married 64 years.

Using a mule and plow, Mr. McJunkin planted beans, tomatoes, eggplants, cucumbers and other winter vegetables on several sites, including land that is now the entrance to the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, in Parkland where the Cypress Head development is located and between the Hillsboro Canal and Holmberg Road on the west side of State Road 7.

A granddaughter once asked Mr. McJunkin why he hadn't bought oceanfront land when he'd had a chance. He thought a while, then answered: "Beans don't grow very well on the salty sand," Jones said.

After his son, Morgan, returned from service in World War II and took over much of the farming duties, Mr. McJunkin began to take it easy.

"He only worked 10, 12 hours a day instead of 14, 16 or 18," said his daughter.

"I worked hard back in the old days," Mr. McJunkin said in a 1978 interview. "People say the old days were miserable. If I was miserable, I didn't know it."

Most of Mr. McJunkin's farmland is now developed, a point that irritated him 10 years ago.

Honored as a pioneer by the Broward Historical Commission in 1978, Mr. McJunkin said: "Growth has been too fast. ... The developers have taken away all of the land from the farmers. They have driven us out and subdivided everything."

Survivors include two daughters, Jones of South Carolina and Kathryn Brown of California; his son, Morgan of Fort Lauderdale; 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Services will be at 8 p.m. today at Fairchild North Federal Funeral Home in Fort Lauderdale.