



Pioneers of Jewell: A Documentary History of Lake Worth's Forgotten First Settlement (1885 - 1910)

Ted Brownstein

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A documentary history of Jewell, Florida, a lost community of everglades pioneers founded in 1885 by Samuel and Fannie James, an African American couple, believed to be former slaves. Jewell eventually grew into the City of Lake Worth, its earliest history largely forgotten.

Pioneers of Jewell rediscovers the world of Fannie and Samuel James in the context of their neighbors and the wider context of Race and Segregation in the aftermath of the American Civil War. For the first time, groundbreaking research reveals the flight of Fannie's family from North Carolina to Ohio during the Civil War along the track of the Underground Railroad, and traces the Jameses' trek back south through Tallahassee and Cocoa, Florida, before taking up a homestead on the western shore of Lake Worth. Once in South Florida, the Jameses overcame many of the hindrances of race in those troubled times, and became the nucleus of a vibrant, mostly white, farming community.

Meet Dr. Harry Stites, a well-known physician who gave up a successful medical practice in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to 'rough it' on the South Florida frontier. Meet Squire John C. Hoagland, the area's first Justice of the Peace, who loved boating and spent much of his time sailing between Palm Beach and Jewell. Meet Michael Merkle, a hermit who lived an austere life in a lean-to west of Jewell, eating unseasoned fish and berries. Merkle, rumored to be a defrocked Catholic priest, was known to walk the pinewoods chanting in Latin when he thought no one was listening.

Relying upon primary historical sources, *Pioneers of Jewell* reveals:

- * Bios of a dozen previously unknown Jewell pioneers.
- * The dispute that challenged the Jameses' land holdings.
- * An in-depth look at the Jameses' stunning financial success.
- * Investigation of the Jameses' slave background.
- * The establishment of the Osborne Colored District.
- * Klu Klux Klan activity in Lake Worth during the 1920s.
- * The fate of Jewell and its pioneers.

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