



Hypoluxo Scrub Natural Area History

The danger of attack during the Seminole Indian Wars kept virtually all settlers out of South Florida. The Third Seminole Indian War ended in 1859, but the approaching Civil War also discouraged settler activities. In the 1860's, a few individuals established campsites on Lake Worth, but no one remained there permanently. The first permanent settlers on Lake Worth were the Hannibal Pierce family, who moved from the Jupiter Lighthouse in 1873 to an island in Lake Worth. The Pierces were friendly with the remaining Seminoles that frequently came to the area to trade and gather goods washed up from shipwrecks. They named the island they had settled on after the Seminole name for the lake, which the Pierces spelled as "Hypoluxo". The Pierce family settled on the south end of Hypoluxo Island on some former Seminole clearings. This land lies due east of the natural area and is the site of the present-day Manalapan Club (Linehan 1980).

As for the natural area, the most significant group among the new settlers were the "Kentucky Boys" – James Porter, Andrew Garnett, and James Edward Hamilton. These twenty-ish friends from Cadiz, Kentucky were looking to find their place in the world, and had previously investigated settling in Bartown and Ft. Myers (Linehan and Nelson 1994). They bought a 15-acre tract on Lake Worth on the eastern side of the natural area in 1885, split it into three long narrow tracks, and began to raise crops for sale. Garnett and Porter were both impressed by the agricultural potential for the area, and homesteaded adjacent tracts in 1886. Garnett homesteaded the 160 acres north of present day Hypoluxo Road and west of U.S. Highway 1; Porter homesteaded the 160 acres south of Hypoluxo Road and west of U.S. 1, which included the northern two-thirds of the natural area (Harris 1990).

In 1886, a Hypoluxo post office was established at the Garnett house, with Andrew Garnett as postmaster. A walking mail route was established along the beach to carry the mail from Hypoluxo to Fort Dallas on the Miami River for the sum of \$600 per year. The three-day route involved walking barefoot down the beach and crossing several inlets in small skiffs, while staying overnight at the two houses of refuge for shipwrecked sailors. The normal routine was three days down, three days back, a day of rest, and then start back down again. This route inspired the story of "the barefoot mailman" which was popularized in a novel of the same name by Theodore Pratt and is the origin of the Town of Hypoluxo's slogan. James Edward Hamilton was the mail carrier in 1887 when he mysteriously disappeared at the Hillsboro Inlet. He was believed to have been attacked by an alligator or a shark when he swam across the inlet to retrieve a skiff that had been moved by another traveler. After Hamilton's death, Porter and Garnett bought his land holdings from his heirs and split them (Linehan and Nelson 1994).

Barefoot mailmen were not unusual in Florida in the mid to late 1800s. Long John Holman was the first, and he began carrying the mail between St. Augustine and Ft. Dallas in 1845. It took him two weeks to make the journey one way. The barefoot mailmen were usually temporary mail carriers- as the population of an area grew and could support railroads and steamship lines, the mail was transferred to more regular forms of transportation. The Hypoluxo to Ft. Dallas beach route was the last barefoot mailman route to be eliminated in Florida (Hutchinson and Paige 1998).

In 1892, an 8-foot wide sand road was authorized for construction by the Dade County Commission between the south end of Lake Worth and the north end of Biscayne Bay. This road started in the vicinity of present-day Hypoluxo Road at the Garnett boat dock and ended at Lemon City in present-day Miami. This sand road had nine bridges and a ferry where it crossed the New River near Ft. Lauderdale (Linehan 1980). The 1892 road ran through the natural area north to south, and is still visible today as a bare sandy strip near the middle of the site. Portions of this sand road are proposed to continue to be used as management roads within the natural area.

It is not clear when Porter built his wood frame home on the natural area, but it is present on a map of the early Hypoluxo neighborhood around 1900 (Harris 1990). A 1959 Miami Herald news clipping says the house grew from a one-room shed to a 14-room house over time. Porter's home was located opposite his land holdings on Lake Worth and a road linked the two parcels together, crossing the railroad tracks. The homesite and the road are both visible on the 1930 USCGS map. Although Porter's home has since been destroyed, what appears to be an old septic tank and a partially above-ground circular masonry structure are still present at the homesite. Porter descendants have indicated that the masonry structure was a water cistern that was converted into a septic tank. The remnants of the Porter family's fruit tree and ornamental plantings are still found in the vicinity of the homesite, although most are invasive exotic pest plants that will need to be removed.

It is likely that Porter logged his land in the 1890's. He may have cut down large slash pine trees to provide lumber to build his house, or dragged them to the railroad to ship to nearby sawmills. Remnants of old cut "lighter" pine stumps have been found in the southeastern portions of the natural area. A major fire burned most of the natural area on April 10, 1910 (Linehan 1980).

In February 1914, the Hypoluxo Development Co., Inc. With J.W. Porter as president, platted most of the northern portion of the natural area as the Hypoluxo Subdivision. The majority of the lots were 50 by 150 feet, a few were 25 by 150 feet. No names were given for the streets, which were 50 to 80 feet wide (Hypoluxo Development Co., Inc. 1914). The access to the subdivision was via the railroad crossing in front of Porter's house; there was no connection to the future Hypoluxo Road and the subdivision didn't extend that far north. The streets in the subdivision were not cleared and it remained a subdivision on paper only. Because of this, a lack of utilities,

and possibly other unknown reasons, Porter's subdivision was not a success, and only four lots were ever sold.

In the 1950's, Henry Porter put shellrock down on Madison Street just north of his homesite from the railroad tracks to Overlook Road. This gave him a western access route to his house. The shellrock road was sealed with oil, which dried to form a thin hard black coating. Remnants of the shellrock road and the coating are still visible on the site.

The Porters apparently gave up on being developers in the late 1960s. Warren Porter sold his 63 acres in the natural area to the REC Railway in 1969, while Henry Porter sold his land east of Overlook Road to the FEC Railway in 1970. Henry Porter moved out of the old Porter house to somewhere else in the Lantana area (Linehan 1980). The railroad wasted little time removing any traces of the Porters' usage of the site. The old Porter house and outbuildings were burned down as a fire-training exercise by the Town of Lantana in late 1971 (Linehan 1980). Mowing of the site was ended, but access to the site by illegal dumpers was not prevented.

Considerably more open white sand is visible in the 1977 aerial photograph (Palm Beach County Property Appraiser 1977). This is not believed to be the effect of additional site clearing, but is possibly the result of the dying out of grasses formerly encouraged and maintained by previous mowing activities. ORV usage seems to be increasing and the ORV trails are more prominent.

In early 1990, a perimeter ditch was dug on the southern, western and portions of the north boundary at the natural area to block access by illegal dumpers and ORVs. The ditch is visible in the 1993 aerial photograph (Palm Beach County Property Appraiser 1993). The perimeter ditch was only partially successful in blocking access as portions of the sand berm were quickly ridden down to create filled in spots in the ditch where ORVs could continue to access the site. Additional ORV trails were created after the perimeter ditch was constructed. A wildfire also occurred in the center of the natural area in 1996. Approximately 5 acres of dense scrubby flatwoods burned. In some areas, the fire was hot enough to kill the overstory slash pines.

In August 2001, the County and the Town of Hypoluxo submitted a new application for matching funds for the Overlook Scrub to the Florida Communities Trust's Florida Forever Program. The application received enough points to be funded, and FCT has given preliminary approval for \$1.7 million in matching funds. In November 2001, the County approved an interlocal agreement with the Town of Hypoluxo to manage and restore the northern 2.53 acres of the natural area that was previously the temporary bank site. The Town removed the asphalt parking and concrete slab from the temporary bank site in early 2002 and installed low post-and-rail fencing along Hypoluxo Road. Landscape trees were installed at the site as part of the restoration process.

In September 2001, a wildfire attributed to a homeless person, burned about 0.5 acres of scrubby flatwoods southwest of the retention pond. City of Boynton Beach Fire-Rescue personnel put out the fire using water and foam, and there was minimal damage to natural area vegetation. In October 2002, the County's Natural Areas Management Advisory Committee voted to change the name of the natural area to Hypoluxo Scrub at the request of the Town.