

SPRUCE BLUFF -- INDIAN MOUND AND PINEAPPLE FIELDS ON THE RIVER'S EDGE

The earliest known occupants of the area were the Ais Indians, but they may not be the builders of the Indian Mound at Spruce Bluff as they were mainly coastal inhabitants, according to historian Lucille Rights.

The "Spruce Bluff Mound" is about 18 feet tall and 190 feet in diameter. Historical research dates the mound between 100 and 300 B.C. This mound was investigated and recorded in 1978, by the state of Florida. There had been two other ancient mounds in the area, but they were destroyed and used as fill for roads. Spruce Bluff is still located in south-east Port St. Lucie off South Bend Boulevard.



The first organized non-Native American settlement in what is now Port St. Lucie was Spruce Bluff. This was a very small community in the 1890's.

It was settled by the widower John Enos Fultz, who came here in September of 1891 from Rockledge. Fultz homesteaded 160 acres on Winter Creek, now called Blakeslee Creek. Mr. Fultz petitioned for a Post Office and the name Spruce Bluff was adopted. Fultz did for a time carry mail. A Mr. John Calhoun was the first carrier who operated a 20 foot schooner-rigged boat. He picked up the Potsdam (Stuart) mail at Sewell's Point and brought it north, up the Indian River.

William F. and Harley A. Crews operated a sawmill at Spruce Bluff in the late 1890's. Sawmills at that time were set up near large stands of pine or cypress. When the trees were cleared the sawmill was moved. This sawmill employed some black laborers who came to the area with the mill. William married Mary F. Winter at Spruce Bluff on July 3, 1903. Their first child, a daughter, was stillborn, but they later had three sons and a daughter. William and his family moved to Oregon about 1910, but returned within a few years to Stuart.

Mr. Charles D. Blakeslee arrived in 1893. His homestead was on the north branch of Winter Creek (about 1.25 miles south of the Fultz home). Charles fished with his father, Capt. John Blakeslee, during the fall and winter. An enterprising gentleman, Lloyd G. Hill raised bees and pineapple with his family. He was a photographer, and promoted honey production with a monthly "trade" journal, American Beekeeper, published in Fort Pierce.

Other members of this tiny community included the Winter family. In 1896 a school opened with a young teacher from Tennessee, a Miss Heath, who boarded with Mrs. James Winter. Not long after the school, a small Methodist Church was built which held services twice a month. A young man from Potsdam was smitten with this newly arrived educationalist, he was said to have rowed six miles up the river and back, in order to accompany her to church service.

The early settlers planted pineapples and citrus, but by the severe winter freeze of 1894-95, most were discouraged and left Spruce Bluff. Fultz, along with his new wife and family, moved to Fort Pierce and when St. Lucie County was formed in 1905, he became the first Clerk of the Court. Mr. Hill also moved to Fort Pierce where he opened the Florida Photographic Concern. The glass plates taken by Mr. Hill, his son and grandson, give us a priceless view of our county since the beginning of the last century. Thousands of these photos are available for reprint, from the St. Lucie Historical Society in Fort Pierce.



All that remains of this community is a small stone obelisk on Lookout Boulevard, with some broken gravestones. The monument is inscribed "Spruce Bluff Early Pioneer Settlement 1892." On the north and south faces are the names or descriptions of the seven that are buried there. Spruce Bluff is now considered a recreation area, a tract of 97 acres owned and managed by St. Lucie County.

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