

# Thomas S. Kennedy:

## an autobiography by a country doctor\*

### PART ONE

[Internal evidence indicates that Dr. Kennedy wrote his autobiography in the 1930s. The following portions are reprinted from the first ten pages, numbered one through ten, of the first version of Dr. Kennedy's autobiography.]

Thomas S. Kennedy was born at Goldsboro, North Carolina, on September 22, 1859, the sixth son of John T. and Elizabeth Cox Kennedy. The family lived in Goldsboro during part of the Civil War. In the year 1863 they moved to a place known as the "Bass place." While they lived at the "Bass place" the War closed and [Union generals William T.] Sherman and [John M.] Scofield struck Goldsboro. In about twelve hours after they arrived there wasn't anything left but the women and children, and nothing left in the immediate vicinity surrounding the town. What they couldn't destroy they burned.

Being a child of six years these things were impressed on Dr. Kennedy's mind very emphatically, the following is as he tells it.

#### THE CIVIL WAR YEARS.

The first thing we had to eat was corn picked up in

the camps where the horses were fed, and that they had trampled on and stood on for several days. This was after [Confederate General] Johnston had forced Sherman and Scofield to follow him up to Hillsboro. We would carry that corn to the well and wash it and dry it, and parch it. We lived on it until the Union Army established headquarters at Goldsboro to issue out provisions to the women and children.

I remember well the first time my mother went; I went with her. She was dressed in a homespun dress, a brown warp and blue filling, and a palmetto hat that she had also made.

All the women in the South wore homespun dresses and palmetto hats then. If they didn't wear the hats they wore homemade bonnetts. They gathered indigo and dyed the thread blue; young tender oak sprouts dyed the thread brown.

As small as I was I well remember well standing in line behind Mother until her time came to draw the little pittance that the army issued to her.

We had walked 5 miles over country road, sand and clay to get there. We only walked

the once to draw rations.

When the army moved from the camp grounds around our house they left an old bob-tailed brindled ox that they thought would be of no use to them, and an old spring wagon on the camp grounds. I had two brothers older than myself and not old enough to be in the war, who were at home. They captured that old brindled ox, and took possession of the wagon. They tied the old ox to the wagon with some strings and anything they could get hold of; pieces of rope and a little leather, so he could pull. Mother and we younger children got in the wagon and my two older brothers drove and led the ox; we rode to Goldsboro to a Captain Bill Wilson's wife, where we stayed until Father came home out of the army in May.

[When Father returned from the War, he] ...took us and carried us out in the country about six miles from the town in the forks of the river, and he and the men who were with him and 2 or 3 of our old slaves, who refused

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\*See "Behind the Scenes," inside front cover.

to leave us, soon had a brand new log house, "an old timey log house," up. He got Mother and we children in it, and then put up a stick and dirt chimney, in order that we might have a place to cook, and a fire to keep warm by.

As soon as that was done Father and the old slaves and my older brothers commenced to preparing land for cultivation and as soon as the land was prepared they planted corn. Such corn has never been grown before or since on such poor land as they had to plant it on. Every grain yielded two big ears to the stalk. We lived out there in that log house until the following December; had plenty of corn to go on for another year. The older boys would catch opossum and, now and then, kill a deer, and we got along pretty well.

We had plenty of corn bread to eat, sweet potatoes, corn, opossum and sometimes venison, all we wanted.

Father then rented a farm and we moved to a place about two miles from Goldsboro. We lived there until 1870. I was big enough by that time to chop cotton, drive a cart, haul compost, and break up ground with a plow, to haul wood to Goldsboro to saw. I made a regular field hand, did as much work as any man. We had plenty of everything to eat and wear then and have had ever since. Thank God!

I got to go to school about 3 months in the winter time; but it wasn't a public school. The old Confederate soldiers would get together and usually hire some good woman and pay her to teach the school and run it, and teach the children about 3 months in the winter time. Now and then they would hire

a man.

I never shall forget my first school. It was to a Capt. Howell, a Confederate Captain. He taught me my A-B-C's, and to spell in the old "Blue Back." I finally got to "bed" and "milk." I got to "bed" and spelled B-E-D. He wanted me to pronounce it; I couldn't pronounce it, and as we had been sleeping on blankets ever since Sherman and Scofield had burned our houses and everything in them. When he asked me what I slept on at night I just spelled B-E-D, "blanket." We got to milk and I couldn't pronounce it. He asked me what I liked to drink best and I told him M-I-L-K, "brandy."

Captain Howell quit the school and turned it over to my aunt, then a young lady about 18 or 20. She finished out the term. The Captain, my oldest brother, and three or four other men saddled their horses and cut out for the West.

I lived along and worked like other children in the country until August 1879. Most of us had to work in the field, chopping cotton, plowing, picking cotton, feeding the horses and the mules, hogs, milking, feeding the chickens, carrying wood and water into the house. We got to go to school about 3 months in the winter time as a rule.

#### LIFE WITH UNCLE.

The second day of August, 1879, I was sent from Wayne to Green County, from Goldsboro to Spate's Bridge, to work for an old uncle. The old man was in his 70s, 71, 2 or 3. You can imagine my curiosity: what kind of a disposition the old fellow

had; what kind of work I was going to do; what kind of place I was going to live; and what I was going to get to eat. I was very excited about it.

An older brother of mine took me down there. We traveled with a horse and buggy, had country roads to travel and most of it was deep sand. We left Goldsboro about 1:00 in the afternoon and got there about 5:00. It was a distance of 26 miles. My brother spent the night and went back home the next morning.

I never had seen the old man in my life, nor any of his family that I remember. He had seen me somewhere, and had seen my father and told him that he wanted me to come down there and work in

William T. Sherman, 1865. [Fort Lauderdale Historical Society]



his old store. My mother didn't want me to go, she objected to my going; but Father sent me just the same. He didn't pay any attention to her.

At home where I was raised my father always loved to see his wife and children enjoying life and being happy and having a good time around him. My uncle had two grandsons and a daughter all about my age and in the store with me. I hadn't been at Spate's Bridge but a few days before I would see them hiding around and whispering every time they saw the old man about. They were afraid to say anything in his presence.

Well, I wasn't used to that kind of business. I hadn't been there but a little while before I found out he was a regular old tyrant; he wanted everyone to be scared of him, and when he came around where they were, afraid to say a thing, and if they did to say it in a whisper. I decided that I wasn't going to be scared of him; decided that I would not be like his grandsons and daughter in that respect. I did not propose to let him scare me.

I hadn't been at work in the store but about a year before my uncle found out I knew something about farming. He immediately purchased a saddle horse, outfitted him and put me to overseeing his farms. While my old uncle lived and I was working for him I was called up at 4:00 every morning; saddled my horse and stayed in the saddle from then until about 11:00 at night six days in the week. He was a regular old tyrant and nobody in the world could hardly live with him.

He would fuss about anything, his coffee wasn't hot

enough when he was eating breakfast; the Negroes weren't doing the plowing right; it wouldn't rain according to his wishes; the weather didn't suit him; in fact nothing suited him. He found something to fuss about from the time he got up in the morning until he went to bed at night. He fussed at anybody. No one could please him.



The whole trouble was he had accumulated a lot of wealth and had to die and leave it, and it looked to me like he wanted to give everybody in the world all the trouble he could [in] what time he had to live. He had all the confidence in the world in me, he told one of his sons-in-law; he also told him he didn't like me because I was not afraid of him.

My uncle finally became so tyrannical that I left. Took what money I had saved and went to school. I had saved enough money to last me two years in school, and before my second year was over he was writing for me to come back. Well, when I finished my second year I went back and worked for him for another year or two.

When I left him this time I got a job with C.H. Chapin and Company in Philadelphia. This was a mercantile company, and I was given part of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Ohio to travel over. I was a traveling salesman, and worked for them until my uncle who lived at Spates Bridge died.

Philadelphia was a grand old city. It was the largest

city I had ever been in at that time, and one can vision a young man 22 or 23 years old in the old city. I took in all there was to be seen or done. Just a country boy come to town! It is surely named correctly, "The Quaker City." Having come from Quaker stock and attended a Quaker School in North Carolina, I could appreciate it.

When my uncle died the executors of his estate wrote to me and wired me to come and help them settle up the estate. They offered to pay me a higher salary than Chapin and Company were paying me, so I accepted their offer. I left Philadelphia in September, 1885, and went back to Spate's Bridge in North Carolina, and went to work on the Sanders P. Cox, estate.

After his estate was settled my aunt employed me to stay on and work for her. All of her children and grandchildren left her after they got what was coming to them out of the estate, and there wasn't a white person on the plantation with the exception of herself and myself.

One thing I well remember, in the winter of 1886 and 1887, beginning the later part of December, I took a team of mules and hauled 300 bales of cotton for a distance of 20 miles, to the nearest railroad station. It took me over 50 days to complete the job. The roads were winding clay and sand roads. Red clay and sticky when it was raining and it was often raining and sleeting. I was in the saddle at 5:00 in the morning and as a rule it was 9:00 in the evening before I got my mules fed and watered and I got into the house.

My aunt was as good to me as if I had been one of her own children. I enjoyed work-

ing for her. She died in 1890 and left a will naming me as executor of her estate. I settled up the estate in about 2 years, would have done it sooner but all her heirs gave me all the trouble they could trying to break the will. However, the Courts upheld the will and the heirs didn't get any place.

#### BUYING AND SELLING A FARM.

I moved back to Wayne County and, with what money I had saved, bought a farm. Sold cotton in the year 1893 at three and three quarter cents a pound, which is about as low as the price of cotton has ever been. By working hard I was able to pay expenses and had plenty of meat in the smokehouse and corn in the crib. I gave my farm and horse and buggy to my father and mother, knowing that they could rent the farm for enough to take care of them.

#### LIFE IN GEORGIA.

In May 1893 I arrived in Douglas, Coffee County, Georgia. Got a job in a day or so after my arrival working at a one-horse sawmill. I worked at the sawmill until the latter part of August, then got work in a drug store. I studied whenever I got a chance. I learned quite a bit of chemistry while working in the drugstore.

In June 1897 helped fight a fire and got too hot, and took sick with the typhoid fever. I got back down to the drugstore about the middle of August. Looked like I never would get my health back, but managed to keep up and going.

#### MILITARY LIFE.

In February 1898 the MAINE was blown up and Governor Atkinson called on Georgia for her quota of troops. I went with Company G, First Georgia Regiment, Brunswick Rifles. My army experience was not for a great period of time, but gave me all the army life I've ever wanted.

We were first stationed at Chicamauga Park, a mile or so distant from Knoxville, Tennessee. As soon as my papers were checked over and the officers found out I was a druggist they put me in the hospital tent, and I administered to and waited on sick folks the rest of my time in the army.

From Chicamauga Park we were sent to Macon, Georgia, and stayed there until I was mustered out about the 15th of the following November. From Macon I went to visit my father and mother in North Carolina.

#### REMINISCING.

Sitting around the fire in the evenings we would reminisce. Talk over old times. My father and mother were pretty well-to-do for people in the South before the Civil War. They owned a big plantation and quite a few slaves. Father asked me if I remembered the old plantation home, the Negro cabins and all.

I told him I couldn't remember the old home and all so well, but I could remember standing on the piazza beside Mother when Sherman rode up to our door and said: "Madame, where is your husband?"

She replied, "Where all good Southern men should be."

He said, "Then he is in Lee's army?"

Her reply was, "Yes, and 2 of my sons and all I hate is that I haven't 500,000 more to put with them."

It wasn't but a few minutes after that before the house and cabins and everything but the clothes on our backs were burned to the ground.

My mother then started teasing me- I wasn't 4 years old when this happened in 1862. She asked me if I remembered going with her to Fortress Munroe to get my father, who had been severely wounded and was exchanged in the exchange of officers, and had gotten word through to Mother somehow to come get him. I could remember going with her and that was about all.

It was at about the time of the blow-up of Petersburg that Father got wounded. Of course, trains at that time were very slow; it took quite a while to go from Goldsboro, away across Virginia to Fortress Munroe, and we had to stop for 2 hours in Weldon, North Carolina, for breakfast. At the breakfast table in the hotel I got hold of the sugar dish and ate up what sugar they had in the hotel, which goes to show how scarce such things were in the Southern States at that time. Mother never forgot the incident, much to my embarrassment many times.

When we got to Fortress Monroe I was the proudest thing you ever saw to see my daddy. I don't remember a thing about the Fortress Monroe. I was very interested in the way my daddy was handled, though, and the Northern soldiers were just as gentle in handling and putting him on the train as if they had Union soldiers.

We got him home and it wasn't long before he was on crutches and a short while after that he was back in Lee's army and was with him at Appomattox when he surrendered.

Dr. John Jones visited Father and treated him after we had brought him home. I never shall forget the old doctor driving up to the house, getting out of his buggy and taking the prettiest, shiny black little suitcase, I called it, and going in to see Father. The oftener I saw that little medicine chest the more I became impressed. I decided, right then and there, when I grew up I was going to be a doctor and have one of those things. I think this was my first idea of ever becoming a doctor.

Many a pleasant evening we spent sitting around the fire listening to Father describe the different battles he was in. He could picture them to us even to the minutest detail.

I can remember a verse or two of one of the songs that was sung during the reconstruction days. What makes me remember it so well, I was working at the time for my uncle in Green County, and Cousin Hattie Bizzell from Montgomery, Alabama, came to visit my aunt there. When her visit was finished she wanted to go to New Berne for a visit with some more relatives. I had to go with her. Women, in those days after the war, were not allowed to travel alone.

She was a little old lady about 50 years old, and one of the bloods, an aristocrat, carried herself like a queen. We got the train at Wilson and a couple of Northern men happened to be sitting in the seat behind us.

We hadn't traveled very far before we passed some Negroes at work on the road. It was pretty chilly and they had a fire and would warm themselves a bit and then run back and work a while. The weather wasn't so cold that if they had been working as they should have they wouldn't have needed a fire. Well, these "Damn Yankees" sitting behind us made several remarks about the way the Negroes were treated, which didn't sound so well to Cousin Hattie.

She said, "Tommie, hand me my guitar."

She always carried her guitar with her and could play one nicely. I handed it to her, she tuned it and struck a few chords and began. I never shall forget the following:

*I followed old Marse Robert  
For four years nigh about  
I caught the rheumatism  
And starved at Point Look Out,  
But I killed a chance of Yankees  
And that's just what I did.  
Five hundred thousand Yankees  
Lie stiff in Southern Clay,  
They died of Southern fever,  
Of Southern steel and shot.  
I wish it had been five million  
Instead of what we got.  
I wish it had been five million  
Instead of what we got.*

About that time the two Northern men got up and went into another coach and we weren't bothered anymore during our trip.

Can't you just see the little old lady, and don't you know how much good it did her to hush up those two men.

[The following portions are reprinted from the succeeding seven pages of the remainder of the first version of Dr.

Kennedy's autobiography. They had been numbered to again begin with number one.]

## MIGRATING TO FLORIDA.

During my army experience one heard quite a bit of talk about Florida. In other words Florida was more talked about as a pioneer state for young men to go to to start their life's work than the old phrase, "Go west young man, go west." I decided to go to Florida, so after my visit with my parents in North Carolina, I took the train to Florida, got as far as Savannah, Georgia, and my money ran out -- most of it -- I counted the crossties from Savannah, Georgia, to Jacksonville. That is commonly known as walking the rails.

From Jacksonville I got steerage passage on a steamboat to Sanford, Florida. I spent from Tuesday until the following Saturday trying to get a job in Orange County. Sanford was in Orange County at that time. On Sunday morning I took my satchel, put it to a little stick, put it across my shoulders and counted the crossties to Titusville; slept that night in a little oak thicket just outside of Titusville, next morning I looked the town over for work, but found that the freeze of 1894 and 1895 had left everybody in poverty around Titusville. Finding nothing to do there I went to the steamboat office and told the purser how I was fixed. He told me to come back that afternoon, that the boat would be there at 4:00, and to pass right by him in the doorway, not stop and, as I went by him, he would hand me a pass; that he would be standing in the door.

The steamboat arrived at Jensen the next morning about 9:00. I got off and went to the pineapple fields to try and get work, I had been told there would surely be work at Jensen.

The pineapple fields were a sight to me. I had never seen a pineapple field before. Hundreds of acres of pineapples set in rows like corn, and growing on a stem about 12" to 18" long out of tops just like the tops on fresh pineapples one buys in the market. The soil on which they were grown was white sand. It seems as though the pineapples are better and sweeter when they are grown on the white sand.

I found nothing to do and walked on down to Stuart and found nothing to do there. While I was at Stuart late in the afternoon I met a man with a little sailboat going to Olicia. He was a fisherman and offered me a job fishing. I went with him and found out that fishing that he wanted me to do was entirely different from the hook and line fishing that I was used to. He wanted me to take a dory and a net and go out in the ocean and stay all night and come in the next morning with a load of fish. Knowing nothing about that kind of work I quickly told him I hadn't lost anything out in that ocean and I was surely not going out there to find anything.

That night sitting around the campfire and talking I met an old gentleman named Tolbert, from Alabama. He told me I had a job if I could do it. It wasn't his job but a man from Palm Beach wrote him to have a carload of cross-ties cut and ship them to him if he could find anybody to do it. I asked him if had had an ax. He told me he

didn't have but would get me one the next morning and did. We ground the ax and I went to chopping ties.

Crossties are 9" square and 9' long as a rule and they are the hardest work in the world to cut out of Florida pine, the smoothing of them and all is done with an ax. The blade of the ax they are smoothed up with is about 12" long and is rounded. It is quite a job to learn how to use one of them in itself, but I did it.

I was just out of the United States Army and my hands were soon blistered and bleeding, but I rubbed plenty of kerosene on them and kept at work and in 5 days I had 5 cords of cross-ties cut and on a car. The trees were placed beside the railroad and I did the work out in the open and it was plenty hot.

When the train come along to take the car to Palm Beach, I crawled on it and we were from 11:00 p.m. until 5:00 next morning going 30 miles on that freight. Mr. Tolbert met me and introduced me to the man for whom I had cut the wood. He invited us to have breakfast with him, and told me that if I had nothing to do he would give me \$2.50 to unload the wood I had cut for him. He had the car placed so that I could throw the wood out where he wanted it. I went to work in about an hour's time and by 12:00 the car was empty. He then settled with me for both cutting the ties and unloading the car. I immediately went to a barber shop and cleaned up, and put on the best clothes I had, left my suitcase at the barber shop, went to a restaurant and got my dinner, and then decided to look over the city.

Before we go any further I had better tell something about the country I traveled over getting to Palm Beach. As I said from Jacksonville I took the steamer to Sanford. In those days most all business was carried on on the rivers. You were not out of sight of a steamboat or the smoke from one the whole distance. We left Jacksonville about 3:00 in the afternoon and got to Sanford about 3:00 the next morning.

That river trip, what I saw of it was beautiful. The river was from a half mile to a mile or two or three in most places and sometimes wider. The banks on both sides were dense with tropical foliage: water oaks, dripping with Spanish moss, live oaks, cypress, water hyacinths in the water profusely, cattle feeding in the water up to their bellies, cranes and water birds of different kinds and colors. All green, rich green, with the purple glints striking, thrown from the gray of the Spanish moss -- beautiful. Toward evening all slowly changing to a bluish gray, with just a touch of lavender in it, and the shore lines slowly fading into the night. One looked above the shore line at the sky and sunset, and saw God's handiwork.

A Florida sunset all the colors of the rainbow, blended: old rose, shell pink, deep orange, royal purple, and all the grays of different tones and richness, that one imagine. The whole picture slowly blending and harmonizing first to a soft gray with the lovely colors faintly showing and finally the dark curtain of night is dropped.

The country I walked from Sanford to Titusville was

scrub oak with now and then a hammock, plenty of palmetto, and cabbage palms and pine trees, the long leaf Florida pine, and as I crossed the prairie saw grass. The whole country was very sparsely settled. I didn't pass a person, or see a house from Sanford to Titusville.

From Titusville on the Indian River. It is one of the most beautiful rivers in the world, I think. It is different from the St. Johns because it is brackish, and at that time fishing was carried on very extensively on it. Wild ducks literally covered its surface, co-mingled with pelicans, sea gulls, cranes of all kinds and colors, mostly white, blue and gray. The river is very wide two or three miles most its entire length. The banks of the river about the same as the St. Johns, with the exception of now and then a break in the east one where an inlet into the Atlantic Ocean formed.

West Palm Beach is on the west shore of Lake Worth, Palm Beach is on the east shore. Most of the citizens at that time lived in West Palm. Flagler was just beginning the building of his two large hotels: The Breakers and The Royal Poincianna, in Palm Beach.

I walked around an hour or so looking over the town. It wasn't very large at that time possibly a thousand inhabitants. As I was turning a corner I met a man I had known in Georgia a few years before, he recognized me as soon as he saw me, asked me what I was doing.

I told him, "Looking for a job."

He says, "Meet me here at 3:00, and if one can be had in this end of Florida you

shall have it."

I met Dr. Arthur Pough a dentist at 3:00 the appointed time, and we got in a boat and went across the lake to the Royal Poincianna. He introduced me to several parties among them Mr. Fred Sterry and Mr. Fremd, who was the gardner. I got a job to go to work that night at 7:00 as night watchman. I was on time and worked around the Royal Poincianna until the following July.

Mr. Bill Lainhart hired me then for a couple of weeks to watch the Flagler residence and stay in calling distance of the house, so if Mrs. Flagler became violent or got away from the nurses I could assist them. I had nothing to do but keep in calling distance of the house, so I almost memorized Flint's Practice of Medicine. I studied it the whole time I was on that job.

Mr. Flagler a little later got a divorce from Mrs. Flagler on the ground of insanity. The only divorce that has ever been obtained on the ground of insanity in the United States and also the only one that was ever obtained on that ground in Florida. It is claimed by some that it cost Flagler one million dollars to get the Legislature to pass the law making insanity a ground for divorce. The very next Legislature repealed the law and consequently only the one divorce was ever obtained on that ground.

Mr. Charlie Hait was head carpenter at the Royal Poincianna and needed carpenters, I knew nothing about carpenter work but he gave me work and I worked at carpentering until the last of September.

## ARRIVAL AT NEW RIVER.

One of the men I met while working around the Poincianna was John Mullikin.[1] He was interested in citrus groves and wanted to start a grove of his own, he had heard that in the vicinity around Fort Lauderdale there was some good citrus land, as well as some good farming land.

I thought I might try my hand at farming in Florida so we got together, went to Fort Lauderdale, to look around and see what we could find. He found what he wanted about 7 miles south of Fort Lauderdale, and a few years later put out an orange grove on it.

I also made up my mind to put in a crop there that season, so I went back to West Palm Beach, and got my few belongings and returned to Fort Lauderdale, on the 2nd day of October 1899.



FRANK STRANAHAN

["Historical Mysterious Picturesque New River," Friends of the Library of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Inc., 1978-1979.]

I arrived at 11:00 at night in a pouring rain; took my satchel and followed a trail down the river bank until I came to Stranahan's camp [2], where I got a rowboat and crossed the river, went over and saw old uncle Billie Marshall [3] and he took me in for the night. Next morning it was still raining. He called me to breakfast. I had but one quarter, gave it to him for my night's lodging, saying I had nothing to pay for breakfast with.

He said, "Come on and eat, if it ever quits raining you can work and pay for it."

I told him, "yes." I didn't mind work.

It rained steady day and night until the 11th day of November.

One of the first things I did was cross the river and investigate Stranahan's camp. Frank Stranahan had come to Fort Lauderdale some years before and on the north bank of the river just a little west of where the ferry crossed built what was known as Stranahan's camp. He built a frame store about 20 by 20 feet, and stocked it with some groceries, patent medicines, dry goods and traded mostly with the Seminole Indians. The building set about one hundred feet from the river bank and there was several big water oak trees around the place; making it an ideal camping ground. I have seen a hundred or two Indians camped there doing their trading, selling alligator hides mostly to Mr. Stranahan, but he bought some egret plumes from them. He shipped the hides and plumes North and did a flourishing business, made money.

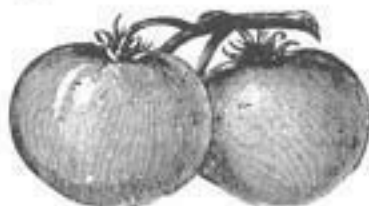
A year or two later he married and built a big two

story house there and that house [4] now is one of the landmarks of Fort Lauderdale.

The Seminole Indians interested me. I had never seen them before, they are darker of skin than any other tribe of Indians. Their manner of dress one can't describe very well, the women wore dresses of many colors, which reached to the ground, and anywhere from a peck to a bushel of colored beads around their necks. The men or "bucks" wore dresses knee length and not as full as the women's but just as many colors.

By this time a man by the name of Sandy Young had put in his appearance; so we got together, went up the river where my ground was -- he rented him some ground from somebody -- so we went there and built a palmetto shack. He knew the trucking business. I didn't. We batched there during the season. During the time the crop was made we got us a little credit, and that is the way we eat.

Mr. Mullikin at Palm Beach furnished me fertilizer to make the crop with for a certain part of what the crop sold for.



[The following portions are reprinted from the second version of Dr. Kennedy's autobiography. These excerpts begin on page three of this version.]

#### YELLOW FEVER, MY FIRST CASE.

Right about the later part of October, 1899, or the 1st of November, 1899; a young man named Walt Marshall left

this place and went to Miami, and he brought back a case of yellow fever with him from Miami. That was my first case in Fort Lauderdale.

From him it broke out and every man, woman and child on New River had the yellow fever, black and white. My last case was a lady who gave birth to a baby during the time she was sick. Much to my surprise, the baby lived and done well.

I worked in my tomatoes all day and pulled a rowboat up and down the river at night going to see these people that had the fever. One night I had pulled a rowboat 5 miles up the river to see a family at the head of the river. On my way back about one or 2:00 in the night I was slowly going down the river next to the bank and something lifted me and my rowboat out of the river, threw me out and my oars, and I lost my hat. I finally swam around and found one oar and managed to bail the boat out, and sculled it on home.

Along about the middle of March, 1900, after the epidemic had ceased, I was working in my tomatoes in the mud, about knee deep. I happened to look away across the field next to the river and I saw three men coming towards me. One of them was Mr. E. T. King, I knew him. The other two wore blue jackets; they kept coming on, until they got to me, and Mr. King introduced me to them. One was Dr. Hosea, from New Orleans. The other was Dr. Van Huss from Fernandina, Florida.

Dr. Hosea says, "I understand you are practicing medicine up here."

I says, "Yes sir."

He says, "What right have



you to practice medicine here?"

I says, "None whatever, only from the suffering cause of humanity.

"This place had been quarantined and you could not get a doctor. The doctors from Palm Beach wouldn't come, and those from Miami were not allowed to come."

That was the answer I gave Hosea, and Van Huss. Therefore I had to do the best I could for the sick people.

They had me to go and show them every patient I had had, and when they got through and examined them all they complimented me on the job, and Dr. Hosea told me to make out a bill and send it to him at New Orleans and he would o.k. it and I would get my money. Which I did.

#### ROMANCE, EDUCATION, AND MARRIAGE.

As soon as I got my crop shipped I cut out for the University of The South Medical College [5]. I went up there and spent six months in the medical school to gain what I had lost from my former lectures.

I came back here in December 1900 and about the first thing I saw was my [future] wife with her back to me [6]. The old people I had boarded with had been up in Georgia and she came back with them to spend the winter. I got board at my same old place. I made another crop that year and on the 6th of June when she left here I went with her home. I stayed around there long enough; until we made our arrangements to marry and I talked to her parents about it.

Her Mother didn't have

much to say, but her Father, being a Missionary Baptist preacher, he bucked like a young bronco. However I finally told him that we had consented to be married and I would like for it to be agreeable; however, we were going to be married if she lived and I did until the following December.

I left there and went on back to medical school, stood an examination and got a diploma at the close of the school. Left there and came on back and stopped and went out to get my [future] wife and her brother and I went and got the marriage license and her poor old Papa tried to marry us. He gave out in his ritual and finally broke down and boo-hooed, and pronounced us man and wife in a broken boo-hoo, on the 23rd day of December, 1901.

#### PRACTICING MEDICINE IN FORT LAUDERDALE.

Three days later we took the train and came back to Florida, to Fort Lauderdale. We got here the 2nd day of Jan-

uary, 1902, and I pitched another crop and went to practicing medicine full blast without a horse, without anything but my feet to walk on.

I was up every morning at 4:00 and would go and work in my tomato crop all day and walk up and down the river every night to see sick people, and let them get me back and forth across the river in their rowboats. Then I got to practicing all over the County from Stuart to Miami; you might say, I have been from here to Stuart to see sick people.

On the 4th of July 1902, I was called to Deerfield right early. I took the early train, got up there and saw three or four patients that had typhoid fever all in one house. I waited around there a while after I got through with those and started to walk back home, 15 miles. On the 4th of July and the sun a-broiling down.

I got down right close to Pompano and gave out, had a sunstroke; that is not exactly, I saw I was going to fall if I didn't get in the woods



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and sit down in the shade. I hadn't been there but a little while before the section man came along with his hand car, going to dinner. He stopped and took me up; he had sense enough to see I was in pretty tough shape so he stopped at his house and invited me in to dinner and I stayed there until late in the afternoon, and he took his men and the handcar and brought me home to Fort Lauderdale. His name was Saxon.

He reported the trip to the supervisor of the railroad, and soon got instructions from the headquarters when anybody was sick up and down the road, to take his handcar and go and get the little doctor for them.

#### SNEEZING.

My next labor case was in Pompano, and there was some fun connected with it; that is, that it was fun for me. We fooled around there from about 4:00 in the afternoon until a way towards day next morning. There was a very dear old grandma lady around all the time.

Finally she said to me, "Why don't you sneeze her?"

That sneeze her was something new to me. Something I had never heard of before. So, I replied to her that I had never heard anything about it but, if she wanted to sneeze her to go ahead and sneeze her. So I waited patiently and kept my eyes open wanting to know what sneezing meant; so in a few minutes she took out her snuff box and took some herself and then took a pinch and put it in the lady's nostrils and soon she was sneezing. And I am frank to admit that as simple as

it was it had enough effect on the nervous system to start up good hard labor pains and at about 4:00 a.m. we had a nice boy baby. I clipped the cord and handed the baby to the old grandma and I proceeded to clean up the lady and get her in good shape.

When I got through with the lady I thought I would then go and take care of the baby; but I found grandma had already taken care of the baby in good shape and found also when I got to her that she had put a piece of right tough white gobby fat meat about an inch and a half long and as big around as my little finger in the baby's mouth and it was sucking away on it. However mother and baby come out all right and got along fine and the boy is a fine young man 30 years old today.

#### MR. MONK, TELEGRAPH OPERATOR.

My next case at Pompano was an old telegraph operator named Monk. A man named Charlie Hale sent after me for Mr. Monk. He was Express man at Pompano at that time and the Express Company had furnished him with a pair of mules and a wagon to haul stuff to the depot with so that they could get it. He sent a man after me with his mules and I got up there about 8:00 at night.

I went to Mr. Hale's house and he took his lantern and walked with me and we crossed the canal in a rowboat and found the patient in a little old shack.

Mr. Hale says, "Doctor, can you do anything for him? I think he is dead but maybe you can do something for him."

Well, I examined the old

man and found out what was going on and found out he had hemorrhagic fever and had bled about to death from his kidneys. I had a great big one pound bottle of pure powdered calomel. I proceeded to pull his tongue out and put about 20 to 30 grains of that powdered calomel on the base of his tongue; took a tin cup of water and drenched it down him.

Then I proceeded to shoot him with a hypodermic of strychnine, digitalis and nitroglycerine, all at one time. Mr. Hale and I sat by and watched him all night until next morning about day light. The old man then opened his eyes and could whisper. We gave him a glass of water and I then gave him 3 or 4 capsules of quinine. I told him I would be back the next day to see him, and left. Next day I found the old man able to sit up and he got well all right.

Still I had no horse or any way to get around with except on foot unless people would come after me in their wagons. There wasn't a buggy in the country, nor a horse.

#### GEORGE, PRESS ROPER'S SON.

In April 1902, I was working in my tomato patch up the river and a man had got hold of an old horse and buggy in Dania somewhere, and had drove through the paths, and over the ditches, banks, prairies and fields, and through the woods and he stopped his horse and came across the field where I was at work and wanted me to go to the buggy then to see his boy, then about 7 years old.

I got to the buggy and found the boy crying and jerking all over. I asked him what was the trouble. He

said he stuck a nail in his foot the night before about dark.

I had a little pocket case in my coat pocket, I took out one of the lancets and popped it into place where the nail went in good and deep and out jumped a lump of puss about the size of a pea; a right hard lump; and he was asleep, right sound asleep, in 2 minutes.

That boy was George Roper, Press Roper's son. Today about 41 or two years old and a wife and children, and I am glad to say is doing well.

#### MRS. ESKULSON OF CHICAGO.

My next case in Dania was a Mrs. Eskulson. A Chicago lady. I went down there and waited on her and pulled her out of a case of severe fever, got her up and doing well; and her husband was a pretty wealthy man at that time, so after she got able to ride and take the train he wanted to carry her back to Chicago. He got after me to go with him to Chicago. Well, I had nobody to leave with my wife; however, it turned out all right. About that time my wife's sister-in-law came to see her and she promised to stay with her. So he ordered a stateroom and we boarded a through train at Dania for Chicago.

I left her with these little thin Florida clothes on and stepped off the train on Sunday morning in Chicago in snow knee deep. Well, we took a bus immediately for his house, sat around by the fire all day on Sunday.

Monday morning it was cold but the lady had got so much better that I decided that I could get back home.

The train left Chicago at about 7:00. About 5:00 me and the old man went down and he put a \$50 overcoat on me; it was still cold and chilly; and gave me \$250 in cash and a ticket back to Fort Lauderdale. I got home and found two or three calls every which way over the country; didn't amount to anything but just ordinary calls.

#### FIRST BORN CHILD.

My wife took sick at this time and I stopped everything and stayed with her. And on the 17th day of October, 1902, my first child, W.T. Kennedy was born at 10:00 in the morning. Mrs. Bellamy walked in about this time and Mrs. Bellamy washed the baby and dressed him. Wife and baby got along all right; however, he weighed a pound and a half at birth.

All the Seminoles' Indians were across the river at Stranahan's camp, and they took their bateaus and came across the river and wanted to see pickaninny paleface. I think every squaw, and every pickaninny and most of the bucks in the whole tribe were there to see the paleface pickaninny.

I had a big long house. The room where my wife and baby were had two doors, so I let them in one door and they would walk through and look at the paleface pickaninny and pass out the other door.

Such antics as they cut, one never saw before. I couldn't talk Seminole; but one old squaw, old Mammy Jumper, she could talk a little English, and she stopped and poked fun at me. She said I wasn't no count. I ought to have made one bigger.

#### NIGHT RIDE TO POMPANO.

By this time I had got me a little bench-legged pony, Jim, and I got a saddle, then I was fixed for work. Also by this time people had found out I was here and all over the country and began to think I knew a little something about medicine and surgery and Jim and I were then in the woods and paths continually mighty near day and night going to see sick folks.

About this time it commenced to rain, and by the middle of November this country was afloat. I got a call to Pompano one night to see a man, so I got on my horse and paced along up to Pompano and the bridge at Cypress creek was afloat. However I got across and went on and saw my patient, started back home at 1:00. When I got to the creek coming back the planks were floating. I got off my horse and stepped on them and held them down and he and I got across the creek all right.

A little ways from the creek bridge on the south side there was a big ditch with a bridge across it. I started across it and there happened to be an alligator there. My horse got scared, and the alligator got scared and I got scared, I don't know which one was the worst. Anyway we were on the bridge which crossed the ditch, and my horse jumped, and the bridge slipped out from under us and we landed head over heels both of us in the ditch.

My horse was tied up so he couldn't get out, so I jumped around in the ditch and put my shoulders to the wheel so to speak, and managed to get my horse's front feet back on the road and we got all

right. We had gone but a few yards before we found we were in swimming water and I swam the horse until he got so tired, at last we landed up against a pine tree and he got footing, and I let him lean against the tree and rest for a good long spell. We then went on for another half mile and rested some sore. We then started across the prairie, the water was half way up my horse's sides.

In the meantime the moon had come out and it was a bright moonshiny night. We struck the pine woods out of the prairie and my horse struck a little slow pace when I heard something squall; seemed like a woman in distress, and my horse jumped, seemed like he was uneasy. I stopped him and slowed him down, and pretty soon I heard it again closer to me and I couldn't keep my horses still. We had gone a little further and the thing squalled again not very far behind me, and I couldn't hold my horse, and I let him run.

I realized by this time that it wasn't no woman. That thing followed me 2 to 3 miles and I had two more bridges to cross, but these bridges weren't afloat across the creeks. I don't think my horse struck the first creek bridge more than twice, and then we struck a sand bank. We then crossed the second creek which is now Middle River. After we crossed the last bridge the road made a whirl and crossed the railroad and struck another sand bank and after we had gone about a mile the horse slowed down and took it along quieter.

In the meantime I had done some thinking. I decided it was a panther that had been following us. I decided as I rode up the Stranahan's camp opposite my house on the river about 3:00 in the morning, that I had better stay with my horse. I managed to find some dry matches and I don't know how that happened, but I built a fire and stayed there with my horse until the next morning.

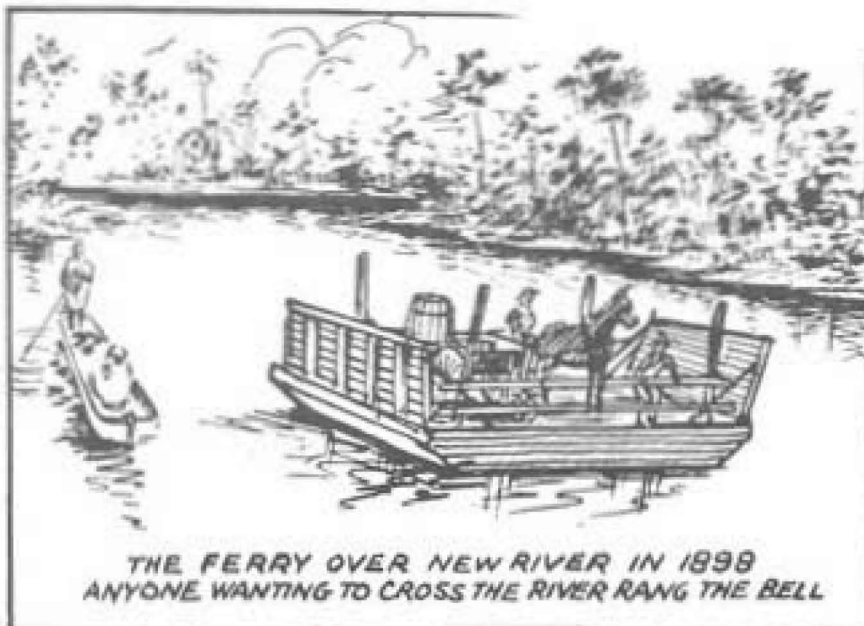
The next morning I crossed

the river and fed my horse and saw my wife and baby were all right. About 12:00 I started back to see my patient and as I crossed the first creek I got to watching the road and I found my thoughts exactly right.

It was a panther and big one from the jumps he had made and the tracks that were in the sand. To confirm this while I was gone to Pompano this morning to see my patient, Fon Cherry, and Karl Maddox and J.B. Farrell [?], who lived up New River on the side in a kind of a swampy place where they had their tomato crop, had dogs. That morning when they got up their dogs got scared and got after something and they ran Mr. panther up a tree; and those boys got their guns and killed the gentleman, and when I got back that evening late they had him lying in the depot at Fort Lauderdale, and he measured eleven feet two inches from tip to tip.

PRESS ROPER OF DANIA.

["Historical Mysterious Picturesque New River," Friends of the Library of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Inc., 1978-1979.]



THE FERRY OVER NEW RIVER IN 1898  
ANYONE WANTING TO CROSS THE RIVER RANG THE BELL

By this time Dania had grown from Henberg, Jergeson and Polson to a [habitation] of about 150 to 200 and as usual the Methodist church people had begun to take notice of it a little, so they got to work and get up by a little subscription enough money to build them a little meetinghouse, so they elected Mr. Press Roper as one of their deacons or stewards or whatever the office is that that office is called in the Methodist church, and it grew along for a year or two.

Finally, they decided that they must have them a little revival meeting down there, and then it was who would take care of the preacher.

So they went to old Mr. Frost and wanted him to take a preacher.

He told them, "No, by God. I have a good looking young wife, and I'll have no damn preacher lying around my house. I'll pay the expenses of one if some of the rest of you are a mind to take him."

So Mr. Press Roper took the preacher to his house. Press being a man who liked his toddy; so he slipped off from the preacher one evening late and takes his tea and he happened to hear the preacher coming in, so he grabbed him a small onion to eat, thinking he will destroy the scent of his toddy and in his hurry he swallowed the onion whole and got it lodged in his throat and he about choked to death.

Mr. Frost put a couple of boys in his buggy behind his old nag and told them to run her to death and get me down there before he died. The boys got me pretty quick and back we went. I jumped down and ran in and saw what was the trouble; having no instruments with me I jumped out, took the buggy whip out of the stock, cut off the small end to suit my convenience and bent it just right, all very hurriedly, and I walked back in the room took my little piece of buggy whip and put it in the onion, and shoved it right on down into his stomach, and I had the man relieved in a heap less time than it takes to tell it.

Every time I saw Mr. Frost after that he was all the time after me to pay him for his buggy whip that I used to cure Press Roper with, he had lost his buggy whip, and he thought he ought to have the money.

After that as long as he

lived every time Mr. Frost would get Press in a crowd who didn't know all about it he proceeded to tell how Press hid from the preacher to take a drink and an onion to kill his breath and it lodged in his throat and very nearly choked him to death and how I cut his buggy whip up to save him with.



#### AUNT SALLY.

About this time my wife took very sick, and I was so busy and had so much to do that I couldn't stay at home, and I got Aunt Sally, a yellow woman with some Indian blood in her but a better nurse and a neater one than half the graduate nurses today. She stayed at my house for about 2 or 3 months. During that time the colored people had employed one of these high aristocratic lady school teachers over there of a very dark color. And Aunt Sally allowed her to board at her house as she went home at nights herself, after she was through at my house.

After a month or so Aunt Sally got to missing some little things from her house, and this very dark lady school teacher's time had expired, and Aunt Sally missed something else the morning she left. So while she was at the depot waiting for the train to leave, Aunt Sally walked up to her and demanded what she had taken, and she commenced to abuse

Aunt Sally for calling her a thief.

Aunt Sally happened to have a frying pan in her hand and she commenced to flail the colored school teacher over the head with that frying pan, and continued to do so until she acknowledged she had those things she accused her of taking, and got out her old satchel and opened it up and gave them back to Aunt Sally. About this time the train came along and the school teacher mounted the train and left pretty well bunged up over the head and face and bleeding pretty nicely.

In a day or two the sheriff Mr. Frohauck, was up here wanting to see Aunt Sally, well, Reed Bryan and I happened to be standing together when he got off the train. He came up and spoke to us and his business. I immediately told him where she was but he couldn't carry her off. She was over there waiting on my wife and was going to stay. After we explained the thing to him and told him the truth about the matter, he said it was a pity she didn't beat her some more and took the next train back to Miami.

Well Aunt Sally got over to my house that morning and she was mad and puffing and blowing. My oldest boy then about 3½ years old was listening to Aunt Sally tell Mama all about her troubles, and he made the remark that if he had a gun he would go kill that dam black nigger. My kids thought as much of Aunt Sally almost as they did their Mama, and they were the same way by Bob McCulla a big black old negro man I kept around to harness my horses and to keep my buggy and things in shape.

## JIM AND THE AUTOMOBILE.

The following Sunday morning I had an urgent call to Dania. I threw the saddle on my frisky pony Jim, took my medical chest in one hand and sat my oldest baby up on a pillow in front of me. Got through my work in Dania and started home, and Jim and I met our first automobile.

We had about a two mile stretch in the road and I saw something peculiar and as we got nearer together, and it got up within 100 yards of us, Jim went to the timber with me, my baby, medical chest and all, in spite of all I could I do. As long as the old horse lived and I kept him 26 years, he was always afraid of automobiles.

## A. T. JONES, HORSE DEALER.

About this time A. T. Jones took sick with a case of typhoid fever. He stayed in bed about 6 weeks and I attended him. Every day and part of the time twice a day.

His occupation was a horse dealer. He had sold all his horses but one, and that one was a beauty, a light sorrel with black mane and tail, and as fine a looking a horse as anybody wanted to look at. He weighed about 1,200 pounds and was as active as a kitten. I needed a horse might bad to help Jim out.

So, when Jones got well so he could attend to his business he owed me \$200. He said he didn't know how in the world he would ever pay it. I told him I would give him his doctor's bill for the horse. He told me he wouldn't sell me that horse under no conditions if I would give him the cash unless I would get a certificate from my wife saying she would

never sue him in case he killed me. The reason he hadn't sold him everybody was afraid of him, he said. I told him, all right.

I had to go to Miami that day to get a lot of drugs, and I had a good harness and good reins and a good bit, so I took my horse out, and took the harness off him, and fitted it to the other horse and bought me a good collar and fitted it to the horse good and had a couple of niggers to help me and we hooked him to the buggy.

I had the niggers hold him by the bits until I got in the buggy and got the reins in my hands. I went out of Jones' lot into the street in about two jumps. I whirled him right down the road for Miami, and by this time he was running pretty good and I just held him in the road and let him run.

After he had run about a mile he wanted to stop and I took the whip and gave him a good sharp crack or two and kept him a-running. After he had gone about 6 or 7 miles he calmed down to a good nice gait like a horse ought to, and I went on to Miami and got my drugs in the back of my buggy and came on back and about an hour by sun that evening when I came by Jones' the horse was walking just as nice as you please, handling just as easy as a baby and I had no more trouble with him as long as I kept him worked and driven. If he ever rested 3 or 4 days he was ready to run away with you as soon as you struck the buggy.

## ALLIGATORS AND BABIES.

One evening about 4:00 I was called out to a labor case. I got through about 1:00 in

the night and started home. Coming along back I had to cross a little branch where they had made a little sand road across the branch just big enough for a horse and wagon, and there was mud on both sides neck deep. As I got there there was an alligator lying right across the road, it frightened the horse and he went into the right hand side; mud half way up his shoulders and couldn't move. I unloosed the traces and got down in the mud and put my shoulders under him and managed to lift his forefeet upon the road and then took the reins and let him go out; then I took the shafts and pulled the wheels up against the bank; backed my horse down again between the shafts, took a rope I had on for a halter and tied his tail to the cross bar of the shafts, and held the shafts up, and made him pull the buggy out, then I hitched him up right and we come along home.

(To be continued next edition.)

## FOOTNOTES

1. John Mullain, a native Kentuckian who came to Florida in 1822 and moved to Dania in 1903 where he served as the first mayor from 1904 to 1905.
2. Frank Stranahan: (1845-1929) moved to New River in 1893. Considered to be the founder of modern Fort Lauderdale.
3. William H. Marshall: moved to New River in 1898. Became the first mayor of Fort Lauderdale in 1911.
4. Pioneer House: currently being restored by Stranahan House, Inc.
5. University of the South Medical College: founded in 1857; located in Seawee, Franklin County, Tennessee.
6. Future wife: Mollie Dent, who had lived near Valdosta, Georgia.
7. Joe B. Farrell: born in Georgia, had moved to New River in the 1890s and made a fortune in real estate. Returned to Georgia in the early nineteen hundreds.

