



CitrusLAND: Ghost Towns & Phantom Trains

Richard Lee Cronin

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Benjamin M. Robinson was one of hundreds of Veterans of America's Civil War who began arriving in Central Florida in the 1870's. Union and Confederates, of those fortunate to survive that war, many relocated to Central Florida to claim a Homestead, free land earned through their war service. Former enemies became friends and neighbors, and these second generation Central Floridians, transplants from every state of our Union, picked up where forgotten warriors before them had left off, farming Citrus and developing Land. Over the next 25 years, a dozen railroads encouraged Veterans to spawn 100 new towns. Florida's Sweet Orange had become a pathway to wealth, and everyone wanted a piece of that action. As commercial citrus shipments grew from 100,000 boxes annually to 6,000,000, investors and their cash poured into this region. Edward T. Stotesbury, of Philadelphia's famed Drexel & Company, was but one of many Capitalists who took interest in Central Florida, America's newest Paradise. Newspapers reported disease to be nearly non-existent, while doctors bragged Central Florida's water had miraculous medicinal qualities. Orange County was touted as a place where the "man of moderate capital" who planted a 10 acre orange grove would find it his "safest and surest investment." But then one night, it got cold. Paradise Froze! At Sanford, Florida, Benjamin M. Robinson knew immediately he had been witness to a disaster of historic proportion. Robinson knew his livelihood of the past 25 years was gone, and knew too that he wasn't alone. The cold of February 7, 1895 killed not only the fruit, but most fruit bearing trees as well. Citrus fell to the ground in layers. Then came the horrendous odor of rotting fruit. Florida's Great Freeze crushed the hopes and dreams of thousands. Northern and foreign investors lost fortunes in an instant. Locals of "moderate means" suddenly lost everything, their groves, homes, and, "in some cases leaving tables set and beds unmade, they simply went away." Central Florida's Paradise fell from grace. In a decade leading to the 20th Century, Central Florida's population declined. Citrus growers and town founders gave up on their dreams, leaving behind taunting ghost towns such as Paola, Sylvan Lake, Palm Springs, Lakeville, Toronto and Crown Point. While some towns did survive, even they fell far short of living up to their planner's expectations. Robinson left behind a sworn affidavit, a document Benjamin "asked to be recorded for the information of future generations." Stotesbury went to great strides to limit the financial pain and suffering of Central Floridians. Robinson and Stotesbury are but two of many forgotten pioneers, pioneers who come alive once again in, CitrusLAND: Ghost Towns & Phantom Trains. This is the true-life story of long lost hopes and dreams, an accounting of forgotten founders and the mystery towns they left behind. This is their story, a region's misplaced and forgotten history, a rich, fascinating story that has remained hidden much too long!

CitrusLAND: Ghost Towns & Phantom Trains Details

Date : Published June 6th 2015 by Richard Lee Cronin (first published September 8th 2013)

ISBN :

Author : Richard Lee Cronin

Format : Kindle Edition 180 pages

Genre : History



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From Reader Review CitrusLAND: Ghost Towns & Phantom Trains for online ebook

Carlton Phelps says

Long on history of Orange County Florida. Very interesting to see how the area was developing, before and after the Great Freeze. The freeze came very close to ending the development of Florida and the railroads. Which this book is really about. Without train travel the citrus industry would not have grown as it did and after the freeze not only were the people struggling the railroads were looking for backer so they could continue.

Great read.

Richard Cronin says

The following 5 STAR Book review is available for review at my Amazon Author Page:

"Excellent historical fiction involving a train trip from Sanford to Oakland, FL during the primitive development of central Florida. Because I am a 4th generation central Floridian living and working in the towns included in the train's itinerary, I was particularly captivated by both the content and the style with which the book is written. The details of the real people included in the descriptions of the towns' populations were of particular interest, because I knew some personally and had the pleasure of teaching many of their progeny who are citizens and leaders of those towns, today."

<https://www.amazon.com/author/richard...>
