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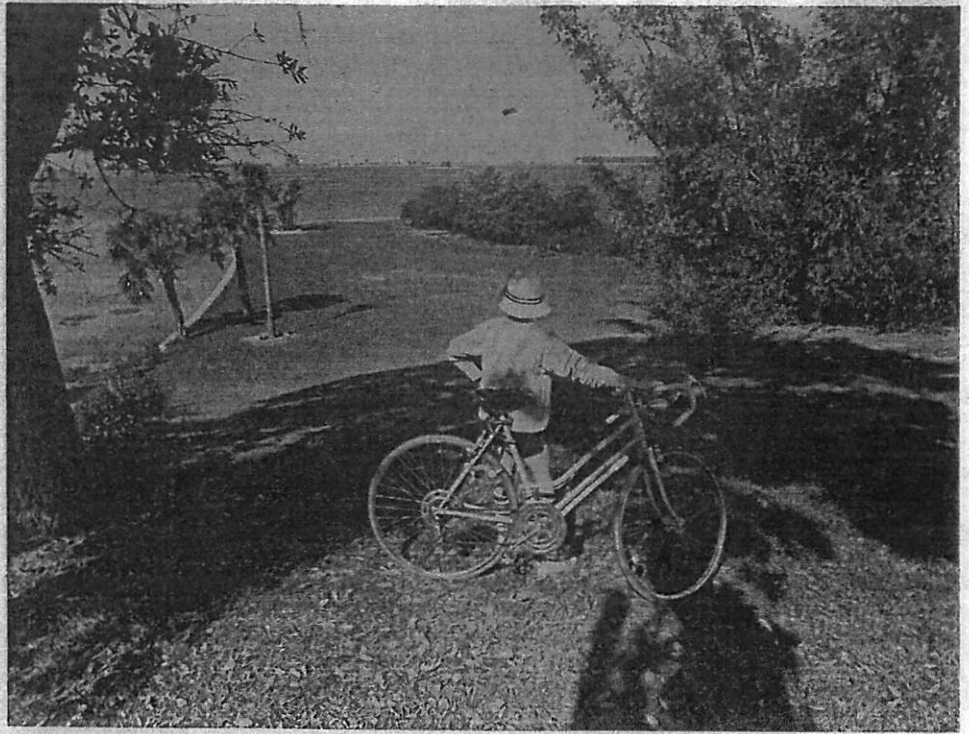
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**The 1980-81  
Belleair  
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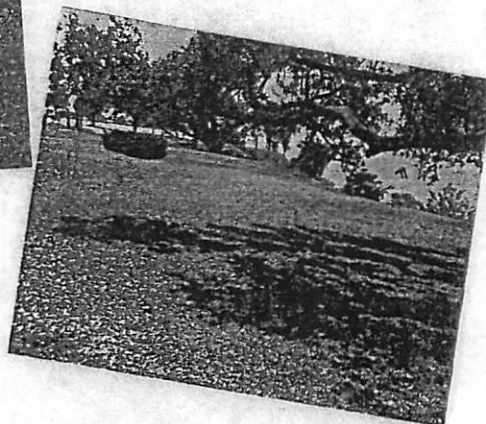
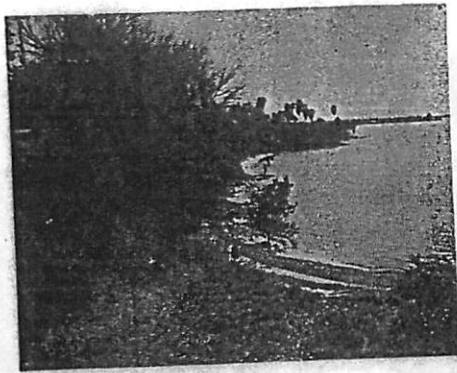
Your Park Board appreciates the helpful suggestions and support it receives from the citizens of Belleair. All contributions and memorial gifts to the Belleair Park Improvement Fund, which are tax deductible, are appropriately acknowledged and a bound list of contributors is on display at Town Hall. The Park Board meetings are open and we hope you will attend — the second Monday of each month at Town Hall, 9:00 a.m.

### **Officers and Members of the 1980 Belleair Park Board**

Mayor John H. Lumley, Commission Representative  
Mrs. D.M. Weible, Chairman  
Mrs. Robert Hoyerman, Vice Chairman  
Mr. Hilleary H. McCormick, Secretary  
Mrs. Hugh Jones, Treasurer  
Mrs. William Armstrong, Garden Club Representative  
Mrs. Irving Morris, Consultant



# HALLETT PARK



In 1977, all the park land, fronting west on Bayview Drive and contiguous submerged land in Clearwater Bay was named HALLETT PARK in honor of

ERNEST WILBERT HALLETT

The Halletts, whose generous donation of all this land, and many other contributions have indeed made Belleair beautiful!

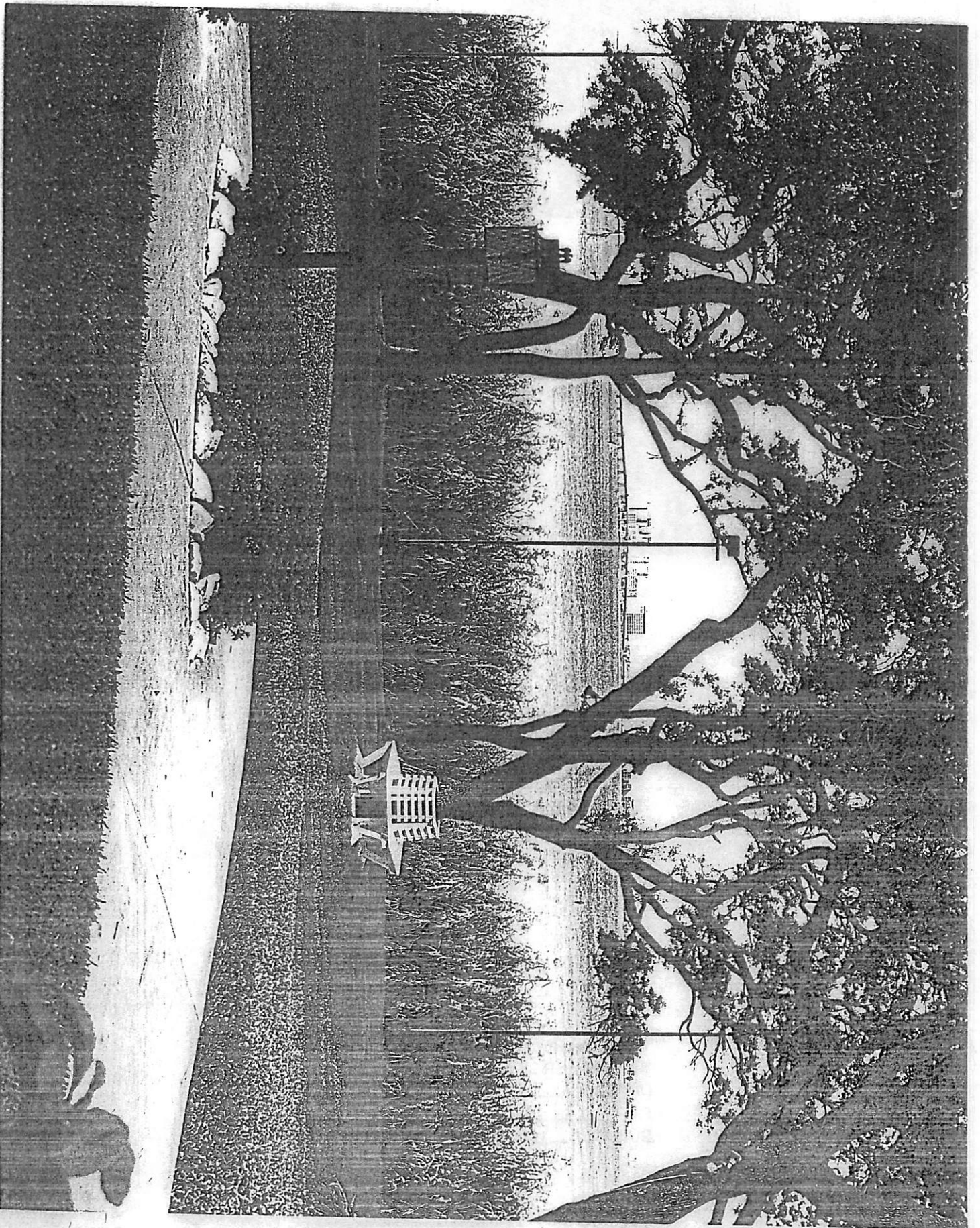
TOWN OF BELLEAIR ARCHIVES

NEWSPAPER Directory

DATE 1977

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Hallett Park area - 1976



# **TIDAL FLATS** (Continued from Page 9)

kinds differ. Also, there are two kinds of mangroves here; red and black. The red mangroves have spider-legged roots which join to form the main trunk above the high tide mark. These closely-knit clusters of roots trap sediment and debris, slowly building up the land. They have thick, glossy leaves, and produce long slender seed pods that drift until they lodge in the soft mud of a shallow area, then root.

The black mangroves do not have the spider-legged root system. Instead, their surface roots send up a multitude of crayon-sized breather tubes which protrude about 6 inches above the water-logged soil.

Growing with the mangroves are buttonwoods, a taller, straighter tree with a very hard, durable, cross-grained wood. These trees once supported a wooden button industry in southwest Florida, hence their name. Their leaves are more pointed than those of the mangroves, but have the same waxy appearance.

As the mangroves and buttonwoods grow, they will provide a roosting place for the wading birds that depend upon the shallow flats for their food supply. Before the big freeze, it was common at the time of high tide to see

a number of egrets, herons, and ibis perched in the mangroves. It was a lovely sight.

The cordgrass or mangroves, and the eelgrass beyond, play a vital role in cleansing the waters of the bay. As debris and silt move in with the rising tide, some of it lodges among the grass stems or mangrove spider roots and breather tubes. What does not lodge among the roots on the rising tide, has a second chance to be collected on the falling tide. As the silt collects, and the lodged debris decomposes, it builds up slowly into a layer of fertile mud, which supports a heavier growth of eelgrass. The eelgrass in turn supports other life. The entire process is supplemented by organic matter and minerals leaching out from the high shoreline. Studies have been conducted on the fertility of these tide flats. The findings are amazing. The tidal flats are so fertile that they produce a heavier yield of organic matter (on a dry yield basis) than the most fertile farmlands of the world!

Thus, these tidal flats not only cleanse the waters of the bay, they produce organic matter that is the vital ingredient in many chains of life. Even the roving schools of deep ocean fishes depend upon these tidal flats. These fish do not venture near shore, but the smaller forage fish

depend upon the shallow flats and the life thereon for their existence, which in turn supports the larger predatory fish. The more that is learned about these tidal flats, the more it is realized how important they are.

It is important that Florida's inshore tidal flats be protected and preserved. Dredging and filling have destroyed too many flats already. Seawalls along the shoreline severely disrupt the leaching of nutrients from the mainland and reduce the productivity of the flats. In the case of the Belleair flats, dumping of debris, sand, and rock along the edge of the bluffs has had a bad effect. Ultimately this washes out onto the flats, smothering the precious eelgrass, and raising the level of the flats to the point whereby eelgrass will not grow. Fortunately, this has been stopped.

It is ironic that people travel thousands of miles to see the lovely wading birds in the Everglades National Park, when most of these species are found right at the foot of Belleair, if only we would take the time to walk over and watch.

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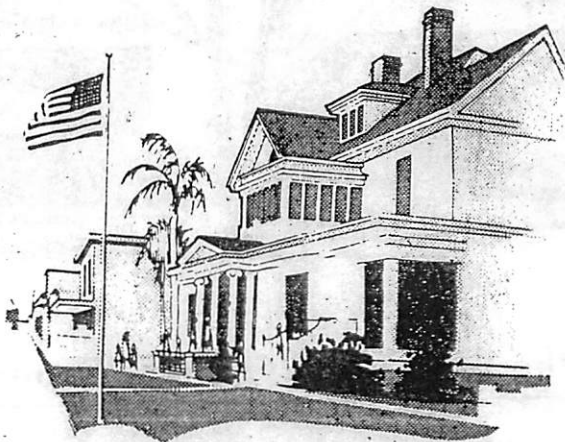
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TOWN OF BELLEAIR ARCHIVES  
NEWSPAPER Belleair Breeze  
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## TIDAL FLATS

(Continued from Page 6)

visible grass growth, literally teems with multitudes of small crustacea that require this particular amount of sunlight and alternate submersion.

Earlier, the white ibis were mentioned as feeding in this area. They are not alone. Large flocks of plovers, sandpipers, killdeer, terns, willets, and other shorebirds can be seen feeding here when the water's edge is this point. When the tide is lower, these birds scatter over the flats and sandbars to feed. When the tide is high, some of them visit the Gulf beaches.

At the very edge of the shore can be seen the large beds of cordgrass. At this time of year it is a lovely green and is visible above the water level even at high tide. In winter it is brown and battered. It requires the higher elevation near shore, yet it is regularly submerged when the tide is high. During high tide, many of the wading birds can be seen stalking through the cordgrass, searching for minnows and crustacea hiding there.

Belleair is close to the southern tip of the range of cordgrass. It is also close to the northern tip of the range of the mangrove tree, which grows in exactly the same shoreline areas as

cordgrass, but cannot tolerate the cold weather which cordgrass tolerates.

In the winter of 1962-3, a very interesting, natural phenomena occurred which completely transformed this shoreline. This was the year of the devastating freeze, the most severe since 1898. On the evening of the freeze, this shoreline was rimmed with a dense growth of lush, tropical mangrove trees. The day after the freeze practically every one of these trees was completely dead. Within two weeks their leaves were fallen, and within two years the decaying trunks were falling to the mud. The mud which had built up for decades around the roots of these trees was now open to the elements of erosion, tide, wave, and rain. This fertile mud was swept out onto the flats, or became suspended in the water, suffocating much of shell life, including the oysters which lived among the mangrove roots and in small beds beyond.

At the time, this appeared to be a natural disaster. But it was not. Time has since proved differently. The shore area which had previously been covered by dense mangrove trees was now exposed to sunlight. From the north some cordgrass seeds floated in, swept down by a northwester. They must have lodged among some dead mangrove stubble and rooted. They

grew in the shallows near shore and in the bright sun, and spread their stems below ground, sending up more sprouts. By now, 10 years later, nearly the entire area previously covered by mangroves has been covered by beds of cordgrass. This shoreline is now very similar to that of the Coastal marshes in Florida's panhandle and along the coast of Georgia and northward.

Just as those cordgrass seeds drift down from the north during winter storms, mangrove seeds drift up from the south during summer storms. These seeds lodge in the fertile mud among the cordgrass stems and sprout, and grow. A very few survive; most do not. Only recently has this occurred because the cordgrass has only recently been thick enough to catch and hold any mangrove seeds. These few mangroves are only the beginning. As more and more seed survive, small thickets of mangroves will spring forth along the edge of the Belleair bluffs. These will grow and shade the cordgrass. Deprived of sunlight the cordgrass will gradually die, and the mangroves will have subtly destroyed the host that allowed them to re-establish their northern territory!

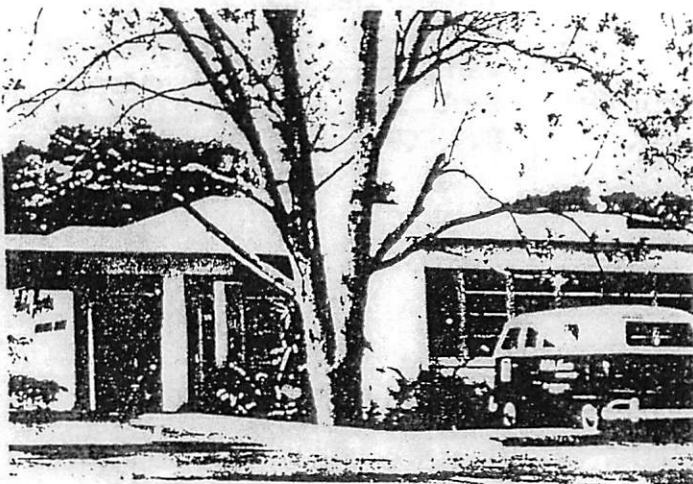
The mangroves and cordgrass both provide nourishment and cover for myriads of crustacea, although the

(Continued on Page 10)



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## TIDAL FLATS

(Continued from Page 5)

egrets curl up their long necks during flight, and stretch them out only for take-off and landing. The Wood Storks are white with some black. Their heads are black and scaly. They feed in the mud, consuming small crustaceans and shell life, working back and forth with a lateral motion. They rarely feed close to shore, preferring the sand bars along the outer edge of the flats. These birds are seen here only during the summer.

If you happen to be at the edge of the bluffs as the tide is receding from the flats, and the edge of the water is at the mud 50 yards or so from shore, you will probably see 5 to 25 white birds with black wing tips and coral red, curved bills, feeding along the very edge of the water. These are white ibis and they are feeding on the small crustacea which they can find only at the water's edge. They will be walking vigorously, bobbing their curved bills up and down in the soft mud, extracting their dinner therefrom.

As the tide goes all the way out, the flats will be completely open to view. Along the outer edge, where the flats slope off to deeper water, can be seen the sand bars that are continually being eroded and re-deposited by the

action of waves. This may be difficult to visualize on a peaceful summer evening, when the breeze is gentle and the water calm. But on a winter day during a roaring northwester there will be whitecaps on the bay, with waves crashing against the outer edges of the flats, carrying sand up from the bay, and sucking sand back to the bay. When the wind is not perpendicular to the edge of the flats, the sand will be moved inward with the same direction as the wind. As the waves churn out, rolling off the flats, they move perpendicular to the edge of the flats, carrying the sand outward, only to be picked up and moved in with the next wave. This zig-zag motion of "in with the same direction as the wind, and out perpendicular to the edge of the flats," results in a gradual downwind drift of the sand. This is known technically as "the longshore drift". Because of this longshore drift, there is little vegetation at the very edge of the flats where the storm waves break. There is some vegetation on the gradual slopes beyond the flats, in deeper water, but only to a depth of four to six feet. In this area, deeper water is too murky to allow sunlight to penetrate sufficiently to support plant growth. For this reason, the bay bottom beyond the flats is largely barren of plant life. Shoreward from the edge of the flats, plant growth begins at the area that is

far enough shoreward from the edge of the flats, that the bottom is fairly stable, and not so disturbed by the longshore drift. This growth is quite visible, and consists primarily of eelgrass which grows from underground stems. The grass blades are about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch wide and about  $\frac{1}{16}$ th inch thick, and may be as long as 2 or more feet. When the tide is out the grass lies mostly flat. When the tide is in, the grass floats upward in a vertical position.

This eelgrass, which requires shallow water in order to have sufficient sunlight to grow, is the key element in this entire system of life. The grass provides a structure upon which small crustacea attach themselves. The dead grass blades provide organic matter which is part of the chain of life. This chain of life includes minute plankton, crustacea, small shrimp and crabs, larger shell-life, minnows, fishes, and finally the larger predatory fishes, and birds.

Nearer to shore, the flats appear barren because the elevation is too high for the eelgrass and other growth to be adequately covered with water for a sufficient percentage of time. The elevation of this marginal area is too low for the shore line vegetation. Here, as in many places, looks can be deceiving. This soft mud, barren of

(Continued on Page 9)



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## TIDAL FLATS AND THEIR VALUE

Take a walk over to the top of the bluffs overlooking our bay some evening this summer. The sunsets are at their loveliest this time of the year, but if you are observant you will see much more.

If the tide is out, and the vast flats beyond the bluffs are exposed, or nearly exposed, you will soon observe that these flats are the habitat for many interesting forms of life.

If the flats are fairly well covered with water, and if the offshore wind is not too strong, the water will be roiled and swirled by large schools of mullet feeding on the plant life on the flats. They are particularly evident at this time of the year. They are one of the few fishes that jump apparently for the pure joy of doing so. A mullet will often jump three or more feet into the air, then repeat the act 3 or 4 times. The flats play host to more fish than mullet. Trout, redfish, sheepshead, pinfish, grunts, and various scavengers and small fish feed on the flats as the tide rises, then feed around the outer edges as the tide falls and washes food organisms from the flats outward to the deeper water. Small trout are very common on the flats during the summer. This is the nursery period of their lives, and they find a multitude of minnows and small fish

among grasses of the flats.

As the tide recedes, the great blue herons will fly out low over the water, slowly flapping their large wings in a deliberate motion. When a low flying heron finds a "fishing spot" to his liking, he will stretch out his neck, turn into the wind, spread his wings for braking and stretch out those great long legs. Once situated, he will patiently stalk along, peering intently into the water. If you are lucky you may see him swiftly catch a fish in his long, pointed bill. Once dinner has been caught, he will tip his head upward, and will position the fish headfirst, directed to his throat. A few shakes of his long, slender neck and the fish will slide down. Contentedly, he may then preen some feathers, or continue fishing. When the tide is high, the herons rest in tall trees along the shore, or fly south to the small islands south of the Belleair Causeway. At one time, the tall trees on Belleview Island were used as a roosting place, but no more.

As the tide continues to recede, the beautiful American egrets will fly out for some fishing. They are shaped similarly to the herons, but differ in that they are white and have long plumes during the breeding season. These are not visible at a distance, although they can be noted at close range or with binoculars. These

plumes once brought the egrets to the verge of extinction as they were slaughtered off their nests to obtain the plumes for women's hats. Stiff law enforcement saved them, however, largely as the result of the Audubon Society's diligent efforts. Now, the greatest threats to the egrets, and herons as well, is the loss of habitat from land "development" and the pesticides draining to our waters from the land.

The American egrets have yellow bills, and black legs and feet. Their smaller cousins, the snowy egrets, have black bills and black legs, with bright golden colored feet. They have a sort of dainty appearance. Then there is the slate-blue-gray bird, known as the little blue heron. Similar in size, but with some white, and darker coloring as well, is the Louisiana heron. All can frequently be observed feeding on the flats. It is important to note that these birds are dependent upon just such shallow water areas as this for their very existence. No habitat—no wildlife.

A particular treat at this time of the year is the seasonal visit of the Wood Stork—America's only true stork. They are of stockier build than the herons and egrets, and fly with their necks continuously outstretched. Herons and

(Continued on Page 6)

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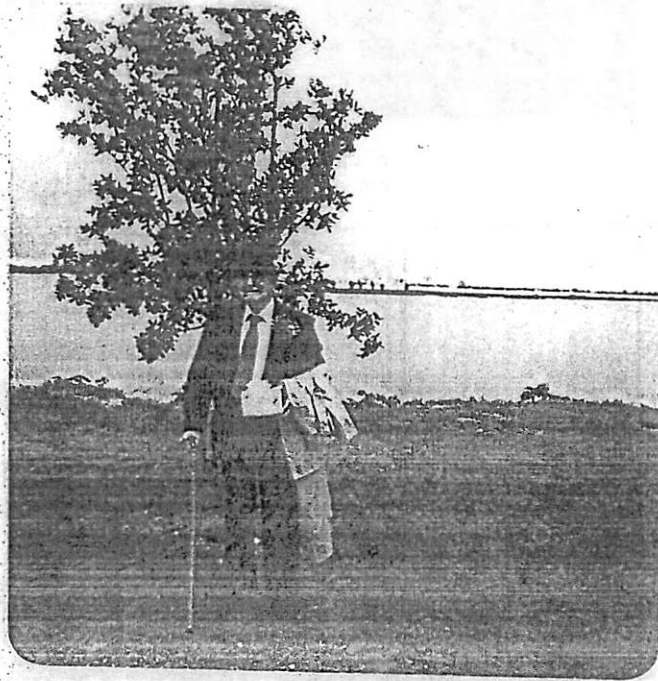
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SUBJECT Ernest Hallett

## HALLETT'S FORESIGHT

We salute Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Wilbert Hallett, who in 1946, upon purchasing an abandoned development known as Belleair Estates, saw the ecological need of preserving some open spaces, giving to Belleair our delightful Bayview Park.

A splendid view of the bay is afforded from its bluffs as well as the opportunity to observe shore and land birds simultaneously.

Mr. Hallett tells us in his autobiography of purchasing the area known as Belleair Estates including the Pelican Golf Course in February, 1946 for \$212,000. This was a large property which had been mostly developed in 1925-26, with nicely laid out streets graded and paved, sidewalks, curbs, water and street lights installed. Before it was utilized the Florida boom broke, and the property went back for taxes and bond debt. The property, lying dormant from 1929 to 1946—seventeen years, had grown up badly in weeds through cracks in the streets, sidewalks and curbs. Many sidewalks were so covered with sand that their existence was unknown.

All the lots and golf course were grown up with palmettos and other brush. Pine trees had grown in some

places 20 to 30 feet high, too thick for horseback riders to pass through. There was much wildlife—quail, rattlesnakes, alligators, etc.

Through diligent, persevering effort the Halletts were able to recondition the property, always having as a guiding goal the idea of a beautifully harmonious community. This was accomplished by setting up rigid restrictions and requiring complete adherence to these restrictions as the Town grew. Consequently, Belleair is

one of the most desired residential areas—The Gem of the West Coast of Florida.

Today, when highrises interrupt our view across the bay, we can thank Mr. and Mrs. Hallett for the comfort we have in knowing that Bayview Park is held in perpetuity.

A grand spot from which to watch the fireworks on July 4 is along Bayview Park. Bring your folding chairs and enjoy the sunset and later the fireworks display.



Mr. and Mrs. Hallett enjoying the view from Bayview Park.

TOWN OF BELLEAIR ARCHIVES

NEWSPAPER BCA News Star

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SUBJECT Ernest W. Hallett

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