The Hanson Family Archives of Fort Myers, Florida

Cynthia Marie Mott

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The Hanson Family Archives of Fort Myers, Florida

by

Cynthia Marie Mott

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Liberal Arts
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Christopher Meindl, Ph.D.

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I appreciate everyone associated with the Florida Studies Program — what an amazing group of teachers, mentors, and students! — all of whom became friends. My time in this program was one of great personal enrichment, and my life is better for having spent these years in study.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Mr. Woody Hanson, who holds the Hanson Collection in trust, and who allowed me access to his incredible trove of artifacts. Also, his two warm and welcoming assistants, Cathy Reynolds and Wendy Doerr, who brought kindness and laughter into my days spent buried in research. Thanks, Ladies and Sir.

And, as always, to my family, whose love and encouragement mean everything.
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The Hanson Family Archives of Fort Myers, Florida

Cynthia Marie Mott

ABSTRACT

The Hanson Family Archives of Fort Myers, Florida offers a comprehensive overview and select examination of a privately owned, family collection of historical artifacts, currently held by the Woody Hanson family of Fort Myers, Lee County, Florida. This collection spans five generations, generally from the 1880s through today, with subject matter being mostly Southwest Florida, its settlement, development, and the effects growth and modern progress had on South Florida Indians.

The Collection contains thousands of extremely high-quality, black & white photographs, taken over a span of fifty years. The images cover every facet of regional growth, from waterways to architecture to national parks to birds to people. However, at least half of the photos are of Native Indians in their natural environment, and only a small fraction have ever been publicly seen. They are original, and found only in the Hanson Family Archives. These photos are a cultural treasure of immense importance.

This material offers a stunning array of scholarly research opportunities. Southwest Florida is sorely lacking in historical records, memorabilia, and scholarship. One of the goals of this paper is to reveal the presence of this awe-inspiring mass of records, letters,
writings, and photographs, and to encourage other scholars to pursue mining the hidden treasures lying within this great historical accumulation.
INTRODUCTION

The Hanson Family Collection is a dazzling cache of historical artifacts, gathered, accumulated, and preserved by five generations of one Southwest Florida family. The collection is not a carefully acquired group of museum-curated memorabilia, but a mass of personal stuff gathered by real people, real-time, and kept — photos, letters, journals, newspaper and magazine articles, ledgers, postcards, essays, sketches, paintings, original poetry, essays, and more — thousands of items. It resides in private hands, held by the Woodward “Woody” Stanley Hanson family in Fort Myers, Lee County, Florida. The bulk of the collection spans roughly a century, from the mid-1880s to the mid-late 1900s, though Mr. Hanson is still acquiring select items as they become available.

During the era represented in the Hanson Collection, Fort Myers blossomed from a military outpost, built during Florida’s Seminole Wars, into a modern city. The Collection document those changes with thousands of high-quality images and writings. Since they are privately owned, scholars have not yet been granted full access to this
exquisite accumulation of historical effects. This made it my distinct and great privilege to be allowed six months to read, study, absorb, and research the sprawling mass of information. The Hanson Archives are vast and priceless. The goal of this paper will be to offer a cohesive overview of the historical trove, and to illuminate at least a few of the unique and most significant items found in the Hanson family’s collection.
FIRST EXPOSURE: DISCOVERY

I was introduced to Mr. Woody Hanson by a mutual friend, who knew of the family’s hoard, and who also knew I was pursuing a masters degree in Florida Studies, through the University of South Florida in Saint Petersburg. My area of research interest was Southwest Florida as a region, and I was in search of a thesis topic. Mr. Hanson and I first met in early July 2010, in his office at Hanson Real Estate Advisors, Inc., located at 2233 Second Street, downtown Fort Myers. It is a real estate appraisal and consulting firm, started by Mr. Hanson’s father fifty years ago.

Woody Hanson had two rooms set aside, out of a suite of offices, he used as a sort of private, boutique museum. He called the display, “Seminole Lodge.” It was dedicated to displaying a fragment of the family collection of Florida Indian artifacts. My first exposure was a personal tour given by Mr. Hanson, which lasted six hours.

My tour began in one of the museum rooms, where walls were covered by enlarged, black & white photos. The photos, perhaps a hundred, were often several feet in diameter and of extremely high quality — clear, crisp, and mesmerizing. Florida Indian
faces of men, women, some very old, some babies, are captured, often smiling directly at the photographer. Most striking was the intimate nature of the photographs — Indians in palmetto chickees (traditional thatched houses), families in canoes, sitting on logs, and around fires; women nursing babies, washing clothes, preparing meals, styling hair, and children playing. Adult and children alike, unguarded and relaxed, preserved in their own environment.

Figure 3 Indian boy with dog. HFA DOC 017-111

It did not take six hours to look at a room full of photos, of course, though they could have been studied for much longer without boredom or absorbing all there was to see. But Mr. Hanson proceeded to whisk me through what seemed to be an unending string of files, folders, notebooks, boxes, bags, scrolls, books, and computers full of a myriad of scans. Some were scanned photographs, others writings, while still other pieces of century-old papers were pulled from a grocery sack and unfolded in front of me. The Hanson artifacts lined shelves, and overflowed boxes, two rooms full. It required the six
hours just for the briefest of views — photos, over a thousand, he estimated, hand-written letters dating to the 1800s, newspaper articles, books, pamphlets, essays, poems and local histories (written by grandmothers) dating to the early 1900s, greeting cards, invitations, announcements, awards, newspaper obituaries, and folders full of Works Progress Administration (WPA) essays written during the 1930s. I saw art — sketches of Seminole ceremonies, drawings by Seminole children, paintings, colorful chalk and water color illustrations. One beautiful painting was done on the back of an old Ritz Crackers box, in the Everglades, some eighty years ago. Mr. Hanson pulled out family journals, ledgers, canceled checks made out to and signed by Indians, and hand-written federal census records in tiny notebooks; World War II military-draft records for Seminole men which included such details as physical characteristics, identifying scars, and whether or not they were literate. He opened boxes filled with coins and jewelry and patchwork fabrics and paraded more objects and bits and pieces and odds and ends than I could fathom — all gathered there in one place, being pulled out and put back with such speed it was impossible to keep up.

I left the Hanson office feeling overwhelmed and dazed, with no clue what it all might mean to me. I knew only that it was important. I made an appointment with Florida Studies Program director, Dr. Gary Mormino, and told him what I’d seen. He confirmed that the collection was important, especially in light of the fact that there is a known scarcity of historical records and artifacts pertaining to Southwest Florida. Mormino wholeheartedly endorsed my desire to pursue researching the Hanson Collection.
A QUEST BEGINS: ORGANIZATION

Having met Mr. Hanson only once, it was delicate deciding what to ask for: “I’d like to spend time grubbing around in all your family’s personal stuff,” did not seem the best idea, but I lived two hours away, did not know the man, and was in no position to say, “I would like to undertake a serious study of the Hanson Collection.” It was not even formally called the Hanson Collection, it was merely his family’s inheritance — a magnificent, gargantuan mound of miscellany that fell into Mr. Hanson’s possession after the death of his parents, in 2004 and 2005. I contacted Mr. Hanson and asked if I might come to his office and spend some time “going through” his “stuff.” He said yes. I spent an entire day browsing, reading, and absorbing, and at the end of that day asked permission to come again. He said yes. We continued this pattern and the days began to add up. Mr. Hanson’s two excellent assistants, Cathy Reynolds and Wendy Doerr, situated me in the conference room, brought me research materials, and, along with Mr. Hanson, treated me like I belonged. After two months, I had a good overview of the collection and a decent grasp of what it encompassed. It was not near enough time to read every letter and paper, nor to study every photograph. However, it was enough exposure to convince me it was a trove worthy of study as long as life circumstances. So, I moved — lock, stock, clothes, and furniture — from Terra Ceia to Fort Myers to be near the Hanson office, and thus the wonderful collection. I also set my sights on making it the subject of my thesis.
Such a massive, raw body of information presented its own sizable challenges, which were compounded by my own lack of experience in dealing with such materials. First, there was the issue of organization. I would read something, mentally categorize it, but soon realized I had no ability to ever find the item again. It was like a set of encyclopedias removed from their binding and scattered on a table. Reading one page might illuminate some bit of history, but then replaced in the pile and shuffled, it sort of disappeared and faded.

Mr. Hanson himself only became aware of the extent of the collection after he inherited it in 2005. Realizing the value and fragility of some of the items, he spent five years feverishly scanning every possible item in his possession. He would then have his assistant, Cathy, print a bundle of the scanned images and bind them into spiral-bound books. Even better, he assigned each image a reference number: “HFA” for Hanson Family Archives, followed by a book number, followed by an image number. So, an image (artifact scan) number may read: “HFA DOC 001-078, which stood for Hanson Family Archives Document book number two, image number seventy-eight. This number system and the bound books make researching the material infinitely more wieldy, because it put the items in a safe, accessible form, but also provided a reference for later locating an item of interest. But, there was no overarching index, which meant that even though a item was scanned, assigned a number, and bound in a book, there was no way to re-locate “Indian boy with dog.” The part of the Hanson Collection that will be covered in this thesis is contained in nineteen books. The early books averaged about 125 pages, but later they would grow to be as large as 470 pages. It was impossible to see a letter or image and later find it, at least for me. Incredibly, Mr. Hanson could, as he possesses an
encyclopedic knowledge of the items and seems instinctively to know where to find them in a book. But in the first nineteen books, there are 2,126 scanned images, too huge an amount to recall for me or other scholars who will surely be interested in the Hanson Archives.

Mr. Hanson and I discussed the need for an index and he suggested an Excel spreadsheet. It was the right solution and has infinite future possibilities — one being attaching a scanned image to each spreadsheet line. This would allow, for example, a search of the word “dog” to pull up every reference to “dog” in the Archives, complete with an archival scan of “dog” documents. During my in-office research time, we did not get that accomplished, but I did complete a descriptive line for every image Mr. Hanson scanned and bound into a book. I included his assigned HFA DOC locator numbers, dates, names, places, and tags useful for searching, such as: food, women, children, WPA, Fort Myers, Tamiami Trail, Big Cypress, ceremonies, Seminole dance, birds, Audubon, political, and so forth. The spreadsheet took on a life of its own, as a tedious cataloguing chore. Some items are boring — a telegram or greeting card saying little — and it felt laborious having to create a spreadsheet line of description for such a scan. However, it did accomplish several positive things. Besides being an obvious finding tool, for me and other scholars who might ever be allowed access to it, it forced me to go through the Hanson Archive books one page at a time, reading every word on every page, so that it might be described, entered, and tagged on an Excel line. It is possible that without the spreadsheet and my desire for it to be as consistent and accurate as possible, I might have skimmed or skipped some less-interesting pages (government correspondence) for items of more personal interest to me (handwritten letters). But, the
spreadsheet kept me “honest” which, in the end, gave me a deeper understanding of the collection as a whole, including its more and less fascinating parts. The spreadsheet ended up with 2,126 completed lines, covering a total of nineteen HFA books. It took five solid months of painstaking work to go through the collection and assign each item a spreadsheet line.

### Hanson Collection

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<td>Hancock, war, 12,000 volumes, location</td>
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<td>1936-08-25</td>
<td>Letter to Editor Tampa Trib: Seminoles Picturesque Tribe</td>
<td>San Carlos Bay, fishing, ferry hunting, Everglades, deer, bear, panther, turkey, short</td>
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<td>56</td>
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<td>1936-09-28</td>
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<td>medicine man, freedom, customs, hygiene, spoon, fear</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>1936-09-29</td>
<td>WPA: Agriculture, Thomas Edison</td>
<td>rubber, goldenrod, Everglades, garden, Wallace</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1936-10-02</td>
<td>WPA: Agriculture, Thomas Edison</td>
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Figure 4 Page from Hanson Family Archives Book 001, DOCS 001-061
THE “KEEPERS” GONZALEZ

A family of “keepers” lies at the heart of this collection — people related by blood and marriage who believed in saving tangible scraps and bits of their everyday lives. They did it for multiple generations, and not only what they themselves produced, but also what passed into their hands through inheritance. What makes their “keeping” even more remarkable, is that not one generation was wealthy or particularly privileged. There was no rambling castle of empty rooms in which to store and forget family memorabilia. These people were early settlers in the fledgling town of Fort Myers, surviving on the fringes of the Florida wilds. It would have taken only one member of the past five generations to tire of keeping the mounds of history to break the chain with a good spring cleaning. One house-fire, one flood, one big wind or rain storm could have destroyed the collection forever.

In Southwest Florida over the past 150 years, storing photographic and paper records generally meant cardboard boxes, shoe boxes, and paper grocery sacks crammed full and placed inside large, black plastic garbage bags, twist-tied, and put in an attic or out-building. This was the common method of preservation in an area prone to extreme heat, floods, storms, limited space, high humidity, and no electricity for air conditioning. And so it was with the Hansons.
Figure 5 Hanson family genealogy. Pedigree chart by author
What I call the Hanson family was not made up exclusively of Hansons. Genealogically speaking, four lines of ancestry, from one individual, represents thirty-one primary people. Counting from Woody Hanson up to his first ancestors to arrive in Fort Myers, there were thirty direct progenitors of Woody Hanson. He married and had five sons, who currently constitute the fifth-generation of Fort Myers Hansons.

The progenitors of the collection itself sprang from widely varied regions of the world. Members of the first Fort Myers generation (sixteen individuals) were born between 1798 and 1844 in London, Ireland, Germany, New York, Spain, Bahamas, South Carolina, and Florida. They hailed from around the world, but half of them would migrate to Southwest Florida, where they would eventually be buried. The remainder of the ancestors would arrive in the second-generation.

The earliest ancestor to establish a homestead in the Fort Myers area was not surnamed Hanson, but was Manuel Antonio Gonzalez, born 1832 in Spain.¹ This chapter of the family’s history was recorded by Manuel Antonio’s eldest son, Manuel Sequismond Gonzalez, and published in the Fort Myers News Press (prior to 1935).² Excerpts from the article are also recorded in the only properly authoritative and comprehensive history ever written about Lee County, historian Karl H. Grismer’s, The Story of Fort Myers.

The Gonzalez story recollects the family’s arrival in Manuel Antonio’s small schooner on the banks of the Caloosahatchee river, Wednesday, February 21, 1866. There were four persons in the party who had set sail from Key West with the intention of settling in the lush, fertile, and beautiful region. Manuel Sequismond was five years old at the time, traveling with his father, who had visited the old fort many times, delivering

¹ Karl H. Grismer, The Story of Fort Myers, (Fort Myers: Island Press, 1982), 86.
² HFA DOC 018-122/123. Fort Myers News Press article. Undated, but the author, Manuel S. Gonzalez, died in 1935, so it pre-dated his death.
mail and supplies during the Civil War. Excerpts from the Manuel S. account provide fascinating details about the area and its first settlers:

For the convenience of shipping, the government had built quite a long dock at what is not the foot of Hendry street . . . a breastwork of dirt had been thrown up . . . the palmettos and shrubbery had been cleared away and this is the land which the early settlers claimed when they first came to the south shore of the Caloosahatchee.

There were some five or six buildings which had been used as administration offices and officer’s headquarters. There was a hospital, two-and-a-half stories high, and a barracks with store-rooms for ammunition and general supplies. The buildings, with the exception of the barracks, were strung along the river . . . all these structures had been substantially built, plastered houses, but when we came we found them mutilated and all but destroyed, by coastwise people who came and took everything they wanted for their own use. All of the floors of the different building had been taken, as was all other material which could be easily removed. The windows and doors were all gone. In removing the doors from their hinges, instead of removing the hinges with a screwdriver, they simply chopped them away with an ax. Everything was a wreck and the house we selected as our new home was no exception . . .

After prospecting for a few days, the boat returned to Key West for the other members of the family, household goods, etc., leaving my father and I alone until the boat should return three weeks later. We looked here and there for enough boards to partly floor one room. There was a fireplace in this room and it was here that we laid a temporary floor and did all our cooking.

The interval of the departure and the return of the boat seemed almost an eternity. But finally “our ship came in,” bringing the family . . . Our family started life anew . . . and my father laid claim to the strip of land between Jackson and Lee Street streets . . . the parcels of land which were claimed by the first settlers ran from the river to Second Street, so as to give each access to the river-front . . .

The land was used for farming purposes and very successfully, for it was very fertile and produced some fine fields of corn, cane, vegetables, and watermelons . . .

I am the last of the original quartet whose life has been spared. I have been a resident of Fort Myers since I was five years of age. I have seen it grow through
all these long years, up to the present time when it has gained the honor of being a modern little city. I have led a strenuous life and have labored and lived under many great and trying difficulties, but I feel also that I have done my bit here in such a way that the community is none the worse for my having lived in it.³

Under the Homestead Act of 1862, the Gonzalez family would homestead 160 acres of land to the west of Fort Myers, on a parcel that would later become the site of the winter homes of inventor Thomas Edison and automobile magnate, Henry Ford. A creek running through this land was named Manuel's Branch, and remains so-named today.⁴

Manuel Antonio, the father, built a store in what would become downtown Fort Myers on the banks for the Caloosahatchee River, where he traded primarily with the Indians: “beads, gunpowder, calico, groceries, and tobacco . . . for dressed deer skins and alligator hides”⁵ This is the first recorded interaction between Southwest Florida Indians and what would become the Hanson family — relationships born in the late 1860s that would continue, parent to children, for the over 120 years.

Manuel Antonio Gonzalez — born in Asturias, Spain 1832, died in Fort Myers, Florida 1902 — would father eight children with his Abaco, Bahamas born wife, Evalina J. Weatherford (1836-1905). Most of their children would stay in Fort Myers, including eldest son Manuel Sequismond Gonzalez — born in Key West, Florida 1862, died in Fort Myers, Florida 1935 — who with his wife Irene E. Haskew (1868-1933), would have nine children. Manuel S. would have a long career as one of the region’s premier building contractors.

³ Ibid.
⁴ Grismer 49.
⁵ Grismer 89.
Over his life, he added many fine homes, hotels, apartment buildings, and banks to the burgeoning community, many still in use today. One building, originally built to house the large Manuel S. Gonzalez family, was later combined with another Gonzalez-constructed landmark and the two have long-housed one of Fort Myers’ most esteemed restaurants, *The Verandah.*

Figure 7 The Verandah Restaurant 2011, Fort Myers, Florida
THE “KEEPERS” HANSON

Dr. William Hanson (1842-1911) and his wife, Julia Allen Hanson (1843-1934), were the first Hansons to settle in Fort Myers. William and Julia were born in England, to old and substantial lines of English ancestry, and both were college educated. By 1870 William had earned medical degrees from the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons, in Edinburgh, Scotland. He married Julia Allen the same year. The Hansons first left England for America in 1880, but their destination was Texas, where William established a surgical practice. After only a few years, they uprooted their two sons and all their belongings, boarded a ship, and ended up in Key West, Florida where Julia immediately gave birth to their third son, William Stanley Hanson. What drew the young family to Fort Myers is unknown. It was little more than a dirt-street cow-town when the Hanson family arrived in 1884, and whatever their reasons, the Hansons chose to stay.

Dr. William Hanson faithfully served the medical needs of Southwest Floridians until his sudden death in 1911. However, during the mid-1880s, the entire population of the Lee County

Figure 8  Dr. William Hanson (1842-1911)  
Hanson courtesy photo
area was only about 350, so for years Dr. Hanson would sail to Key West to perform surgeries there, as a way to help support his family. Of greater significance to the Indian artifacts contained in the Hanson Collection, Dr. Hanson made it a lifelong practice to provide medical treatment for the Seminoles and Miccosukees who would come into Fort Myers from the Big Cypress and Everglades regions of South Florida. Records of Dr. Hanson’s treatment, and of Indians camping in the Hanson yard during their visits, are found throughout the Hanson Family Archives in both written and photographic records. One particularly vivid recollection is given by William Stanley Hanson, Jr. in a 1975 interview with Dr. John Mahon for the University of Florida’s Oral History Program.

William Stanley, Jr. is Woody Hanson’s father.

My grandfather [Dr. William Hanson] was the first practicing physician in Fort Myers . . . [they] moved here in 1884 when my father was six-months old, which happened to be the same year that Thomas Edison moved to Fort Myers. My grandfather became his physician and surgeon, and took care of him when he was here until the time my grandfather died . . .

During the period of my grandfather’s practice, the Indians took a liking to him, had confidence in him, came in and were treated by him. The small Indians, the children, came in with them and my father and the small children used to play together, and they grew up knowing each other. That’s how he got established with them. As time went on, they had a trust and confidence in my father which was contrary to their natural suspicion of white man that they had had over the years.

For many years the Indians used to come to Fort Myers to trade hides and buy supplies — calicos and sewing machines, beads and what have you — and the only place I’ve ever known them to stay when they came to Fort Myers was to camp in our back yard on Monroe Street. We always found them to be very trustworthy, and never known to steal. I’ve gotten up in the morning and found maybe up to twenty-five Indians that came in during the night and camped in our yard. We have gone off and left our place and the house unlocked for a period of one to two weeks and never found anything missing. We would tell them when we’d be back — and we used to keep chickens in the back yard at that time — tell them they could have the eggs and stuff until we got back, and before we got back they would start saving the eggs for us. They would come and go, and eventually they built a couple of Indian chickees where they used to camp, so they didn’t have to sleep under mosquito-flies.

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6 Year: 1880; Census Location: Key West, Monroe, Florida; Roll: 131; Family History Film 1254131; Enumeration District: 118.
That’s basically how my father got close to them, and then he used to be in the woods a lot, visit with them. And he acted as an agent for them on occasion to help them find work, and he would locate them sometimes in places that wanted to put on exhibits. Sometimes they’d set up an Indian camp. For instance, in the late twenties in Saint Petersburg, Mr. Bouton of Southern Tours would probably have twenty to twenty-five Indians up there at a time as an attraction. They built Indian chickees and he would arrange for different ones to travel back and forth up there so that this tourist attraction could operate, and at the same time provide money for the Indians.

I would say in the late twenties, the first Sara-DeSoto Pageant was held [in Sarasota, Florida] and he took a group up there. John Ringling and a few of the circus people came down, set up a place for them to stay — that is they drove stakes and put a roped-in enclosure so it would keep the people from coming in and molesting them or bothering them. And John Ringling was out there driving the stakes with the roustabouts. It was quite interesting. The bus that took them up stopped at our place in Estero and the Indians got a bunch of grapefruit to take up. One Indian was standing over near the rope enclosure peeling a grapefruit to eat, somebody came up to him and said, “Do you speak English?” He said, “No.”

This memory offers a vivid and wonderful glimpse into the strange mixture of people and cultures that was circulating in South Florida during the early 1900s. A stunning array of characters passed through the Hanson’s world, leaving behind tantalizing snippets of their presence, captured and preserved in the Hanson Collection of artifacts. Included in a myriad of photos and documents are Thomas and Mina Edison, automobile manufacturer Henry Ford, and rubber and tire magnate Harvey Firestone. The three men were close friends, and world-famous, and they loved the Lee County region. Edison was famous for having said, “there is only one Fort Myers in the United States, and there are 90 million people who are going to find it out.” His statement was used on the front page of the Fort Myers newspaper for many years. Stanley would serve as guide and local reference, to the Edisons, Fords, and Firestone and to their families and guests.

8 Fort Myers Tropical News, 18 March 1930.
Dr. William Hanson’s medical practice no doubt played a vital role in establishing the family’s relationship with Southwest Florida’s Indian population, as well as locals. However, he was not alone in his influence. His wife, Julia Allen Hanson, was a force for social and community activism in her own right. She was an accomplished organizer, speaker, leader, and prolific writer, and was published many times in national and regional magazines and newspapers. It would be easier to list the organizations she was not active in, however, the two that held her attention and to which she devoted unceasing service throughout her life, were the Audubon Society and Florida Federated Women’s Clubs. Julia’s obituary ran in newspapers throughout Florida. She counted among her friends across the state, some of Florida’s most influential woman of the day, including Mina Edison and Florida governor’s wife, May Mann Jennings. An excerpt from a lengthy obituary for Julia offers a glimpse of her remarkable life:

Mrs. Hanson had been confined at home for the last year, but celebrated her 91st birthday November 7th and had retained a keen interest in civic and national affairs up until the end. Known as the “Most Beloved Woman in Florida” and the “Mother of all Woman’s Clubs,” Mrs. Hanson was the first active clubwoman in Fort Myers and over the period of 50 years has been identified with practically every forward looking movement in South Florida. She was one of the founders of the Fort Myers Woman’s Club in 1885 and was president of that organization for 29 years … her father was a well known architect and designed...
the classic approaches to the famous London Bridge. Her brother, Dr. Alfred H. Allen, was one of the most famous chemists and doctors in England ... those who have always known Mrs. Hanson as a beloved, silver-haired woman with a keen twinkle in her young eyes may not know that she was described in English publications as one of the most beautiful titian [auburn] haired girls in all England. She was painted by Byrne Jones and Sir John Millais. She was a society favorite of that time and an intimate acquaintance of such famous figures as the Duke of Wellington, Charles Dickens, Lord Tennyson, Arthur Trollope [famous English cricket player], Prince Arthur, the Duke of Devonshire, and Florence Nightingale. But it is the part that Mrs. Hanson played in the development of South Florida for which she was best known.

The “Woman’s Who’s Who of America” (1914-15) devoted several paragraphs to reporting her many activities. Besides being well-known as a writer, artist, and speaker, Mrs. Hanson played the role of “mother” to everybody and everything in Fort Myers and her refined influence was of great importance in the formative stages of the pioneer community. Her first activity, after coming to Fort Myers from Key West with Dr. Hanson in 1884, was to start working to establish a church in Fort Myers. To this end she fostered two Episcopal woman’s organizations, which raised the funds to build the first church a few years later. But her enthusiasm and ability extended to other fields and she was identified with the organization of the first Women’s Christian Temperance Union [spearheading the crusade for Prohibition], the Woman’s Club, the Friday Musicale, the Palmetto Society, the first reading association which led up to a public library, the Cemetery Improvement Association, and first Lee Memorial Hospital Association, the first Sunday School, and the first Federation of Woman’s Clubs. She also founded the first Needlework guild, and for many years was chairman of the Seminole Welfare Committee of the Florida federation of clubs. She was a deputy commissioner of the Florida Game and Fish Department, and was recognized by the U. S. Audubon Society as a writer and artist on the subject of bird life in Florida. She was instrumental in passage of many laws for the protection of bird life and care of the Seminoles. During the past few years, Mrs. Hanson retired from active participation in many of the organizations which she helped to found, but she retained her interest in politics to the last. On her birthday last year when asked for her opinion of President Roosevelt she replied, “The right man in the right place at the right time.”

With Mrs. Hanson confined to her home, dozens of friends made it a practice to visit her and discuss any important step of any organization in which she was previously a leader. She never lost interest in the trend of the times and her mind was clear and bright until the last few days of her life. She had wanted to live to be 91 and did so. Then she wanted to live until her son, W. Stanley’s, birthday, which was on Wednesday this week. Finally, however, she summoned her immediate family, told them all goodbye, and died peacefully after an active an “beautiful life.”

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10 Julia Allen Hanson Obituary, Fort Myers News Press, 30 Nov 1934.
Much of the Hanson Family Archives began accumulating during Julia’s life. Presumably due to their education and British, privileged background, Dr. William and Julia recognized the unique circumstances of being among the first settlers in a region. Still, most of us of us proceed through our daily lives unaware that by living, we too are creating history. If we receive a letter or card, or write a note or snap a photo, we think little about its future or of preserving it — let alone all the bric-a-brac accumulated by others before we were born. The Hanson family realized they were early settlers on a new frontier, but so did their neighbors. Yet the Hansons created, amassed, kept and preserved what must be the largest family collection of Southwest Florida artifacts in existence. In this they were, and are, exceptional.
A remarkable family amassing an expansive collection of historical memorabilia is the hub of this story, however, there was one individual responsible for producing, or causing to be produced, the majority of Indian related artifacts: William Stanley Hanson, Sr., the “White Medicine Man.” Stanley, as he was commonly called, was the youngest child of Dr. William Hanson and his wife, Julia. He was born in Key West, Florida in 1883 and died in Fort Myers in 1945. “White Medicine Man” was not a family moniker, but an honor bestowed on him by a tribe of Big Cypress Indians.

The Big Cypress is a particular area of Southwestern Florida, on the western flank of the Everglades, so-named because of the enormous, ancient trees that once crowded its landscape. The Indians themselves were Miccosukees, but during the early 1900s no distinction was made between Florida’s two Indian tribes, they were lumped together and called Seminoles. The title, “White Medicine Man,” had actual meaning in that Hanson
did for many years sit on the Tribal Council, however, in many published stories he is
called, “White Medicine Man of the Seminoles.” What the title meant in reality is that the
Indians living in Southwest Florida called upon W. Stanley Hanson, Sr. in times of need
and celebration. They depended on his guidance, wisdom, physical aid, and unfailing
friendship. The newspaper headline for his obituary simply reads: “Stanley Hanson, 61,
Dies; White Friend of Seminoles.”

An intense relationship existed for several generations of Hansons and Southwest
Florida Indians. It is apparent in voluminous, hand-written correspondence and photos.
And in the Hanson Family Archives, letters are very often intact in their original mailing
evervelope, complete with stamp and postmark, so their authenticity is without question.
Here are two examples of typical letters from the Indians to Stanley; both intact with
original mailed envelope:

[punctuation, capitalization, and spelling remain unaltered]

Immokalee Fla
Sep 6, —32
Dear Friend
I will write you today to let you hear from me this leave me all ok. hoping
you the same I am staying in Immokalee now I have been staying with Charley
Cypress at his camp for 2 weeks. Charleys folks are all together at Immokalee
and they had to move from their camp on the account of high water the storm
didn’t doe eney damages only left plenty of water Listen Mr Stanley I’ll tell
you what I’ll do if you will get me a job in Fort Myer some where I’ll be right
over and will appreachate it My wife has bin sick with her stomach and
head for some times but she is improving now Charley wants to know
when you are going to Daytona Beach for he wonts to go with you so please
let me hear from you at once all of the folk down here is out of something to eat
and they are in need bad Will stop for this time hoping to hear from you at
once

your friend as ever

11 W. Stanley Hanson, Sr. obituary, Fort Myers News Press, 5 Apr 1945. HFA DOC 020-086.
Richard Osceola

P.S.
Please come to see me as soon as you can. I’ll be at Charleys in Immokalee and Johnnie Cypress broke the truck down.  

March 1th (36)
Indian Camp Fla
W Stanley Hanson Dear friend
Hanson I write you letter today. Billy Maddlow he get Long Better for that medicines for you. Bring to him. We give him he get all Right. One thing I want to tell you Mrs Cornella Pool she want medicines. I toll her Mr Hanson he know Better I am take you Tampa Fla, he get good Doctor give Right kind medicines

Your friend Josie Billie
Cypress Camp Fla

Josie Billie would rise to be one of the highest ranking medicine men of the Florida Indians for an entire generation.

12 HFA DOC 005-052-054. Letter: Richard Osceola to Stanley Hanson, 6 Sep 1932. Envelope: 005-056.
W. Stanley Hanson grew up playing with Indian children in his family’s backyard. Throughout his adult life, and until his death at age 61, he maintained close relations with all Big Cypress Indians. He also continued the tradition of Indians camping in the yard. During one brief period, after being questioned by a congresswoman as to the number of Seminoles staying behind his house when they came into Fort Myers, Stanley kept a log for several months. It is dated January and February 1935 and the first page is titled in bold, capitalized pencil print: “SEMINOLE ARRIVALS, FT. MYERS, FLA 1935.” A typical entry reads:

Figure 11 Stanley Hanson with Indians in back yard. HFA DOC 015-035
Jan. 10
Wilson Cypress, w 2 gls – 1 sn. 5
Henry & Jr Cypress 2
DP 1-13-35\textsuperscript{15}

Translation: Wilson Cypress arrived on January 10, 1935, with his wife, two daughters, and one son, for a total party of five, and departed on January 13, 1935. In two pages the following Seminole names are noted as arriving and departing: Wilson Cypress, Henry Cypress, Jr. Cypress, Whitney Cypress, John Cypress, Frank Cypress, Billy Osceola’s girl and boy, Robert Billie, Boy Jim, and Robert Osceola. Several of the above names arrived and departed more than once, and almost in every case they were accompanied by wife and children. Most visits lasted only several days, but one party arrived on February 22 and departed on March 2. With this one is a notation, “Frank to hospital.”\textsuperscript{16}

By my calculations, there were twenty-seven Indians camping in the Hanson backyard over a period of 59 days. This is a substantial number of visitors for any family to host, at any time, for any reason. It must have also meant cooking and fire smells, noise, a worn yard, and lack of privacy for the Hanson family. However, there are photos in the Hanson collection, over a period of many years, of the family intermingling with Indians in the yard, as well as Indians sitting on the front porch and steps. Also worth mentioning is the fact that the Hanson house was a typically very small, wooden, “Cracker-style” building near downtown Fort Myers and located on a city lot. It was not a farmhouse on a several-acre home site situated comfortably on the outskirts of town.

In his 1975 oral interview, Dr. John Mahon asked William Stanley, Jr. about the Indians in his yard:

\textsuperscript{15} HFA DOC 019-108. W. Stanley Hanson, log of Indians camping in backyard, 10 Jan 1935.
\textsuperscript{16} HFA DOC 019-109. W. Stanley Hanson notation in backyard Indian log, 2 Mar 1935.
[Mahon:] “Now when they [Indians] showed up in your backyard, how much trouble were they? They’d just turn up in the night, as you said? Did they complicate your life? Were they demanding in any way?”

[Hanson:] They were no trouble. They would come and go day or night … I liked to go out and visit with them. We had a kind of storeroom that they used to stay in a lot, unless it was a large group of them, and they’d bring their own — well, they didn’t have tents as much as they used to have mosquito bars, they called them “flies.” And sometimes they’d have a thing like a sheet they would string up to keep the sun off of them, and I guess it would shed water.

[Mahon:] “But your Daddy eventually had two chickees built?”

[Hanson:] Well now, they were built there during this Henry Ford episode, when the Indians were there working out of them, they built them, I guess. Henry Ford probably paid for the chickees, or paid for the time in building them. I remember that they took down some chickees to ship up to Dearborn and they stripped all the palm fronds off and re-thatched them before they shipped them so that they would be fresh and not as fragile as after they had been dried out for a long time. And they got those thatched up and then Johnny Cypress was thatching the one that he called his house or chickee in the backyard and my father made a comment to Johnny, he said, “Johnny, how come you put them on thicker on this one?”

Johnny looked at him with a kind of disgust and said, “This my house.” He was putting the fronds on probably 50% thicker on the one that he was going to use than the one they thatched to go to Dearborn.

[Mahon:] “Stanley, you told me also that your mother had them sleeping on the front porch, at times?”

[Hanson:] Well, they’d get overcrowded sometimes, but it was just “come in and stretch out.” We had a screened porch; the mosquitoes were bothersome.

[Mahon:] “Just sleep on the boards, or did they have any kind of beds?”

[Hanson:] Well, they probably had a blanket under them … they didn’t have mattresses, but under the chickees they have a platform that they slept on that’s about thirty-inches off the ground, made of split cypress logs … they were used to sleeping on that. They might have had a couple of layers of blankets up under them, but I don’t recall.

The Indians returned Hanson hospitality and friendship in kind. Stanley held many jobs through the years, including Audubon warden, writer, photographer, guide for outsiders who wanted to venture into the “deep fastness” of the Glades, and at times Stanley held one job or another for the U. S. Indian Service. But these were tangential to

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17 Hanson-Mahon Interview, University of Florida, 25 June 1975, p. 25.
the relationships established between the Hansons and Indians. The family was invited to attend all Green Corn Dance [Shot-ca-taw] ceremonies, the highest cultural-social event of the year for South Florida Indians, and also was an exceedingly rare honor, bestowed on almost no whites in the early to mid-1900s. However, it was routine for the Hansons to go. Stanley's son recalls their attendance:

We used to go down to the Green Corn Dance of the Cypress Indians nearly every year. I say we — father used to go I guess every year, for all practical purposes — and very often he’d take my mother and my sister and myself with him ... they always held it during the period known as “the little moon in June,” and it was usually very deep in the Everglades, isolated, where they wouldn’t have unwanted visitors and where they’d have privacy for their ceremonies. Several days preceding the Green Corn Dance they would send up smoke signals at noon so that the other Indians could set a course for the site of the Green Corn Dance. I remember when we were traveling by Model “T” Ford, that we could see the column of smoke in the air way off in the distance, that is, many miles, say thirty or more. I don’t know whether they did it all the time or just when the weather was right for a column of smoke up in the air. My father told me that’s what it was and where it was, and we would head for it. It was usually at least a two-days trip from Fort Myers, because traveling through the woods and swamps was slow. We’d usually camp out on the way, and sometimes maybe twice. They’d usually hold it on an island in a cypress head or hammock. You would hardly know there was anything there; you might go through water getting in to it. If you were traveling on what was known as an ox trail or ox cart trail, the stumps were cut too high for a Model “T” and you had a lot of chopping to do to get in.

[Mahon:] “When you were around the Green Corn Dance, besides your father’s party, were there other white people there, or were you the only ones?”

[Hanson:] I don’t recall any other white people being there. It seems like maybe one time another group of white people may have stumbled into it by accident, or came by, or got into it, but I’m very vague on it.

[Mahon:] “Well, how were you treated, in general, while the Green Corn Dance —”

[Hanson:] Just like one of the family.19

I started researching the Hanson archives the only way I knew how: by reading every legible word and carefully examining items with no words, searching for clues as to what they might be or mean. It was all very exciting — deciphering old letters, trying to guess past rat nibbles and moisture spots, recognizing a name, like Mina Edison or Ernest Coe — and so I read and absorbed as much as possible, for the whole last half of 2010, but then I was finished. I had examined every item accessible to me (there are many more for other researchers to discover) and mentally pieced together as much of a puzzle as was possible using the huge mass of material. But people-collections are not gathered nor organized with a plan in mind, they are scraps, gathered and kept — the valueless (a grocery list) rubbing backs and front with the inestimable (a 1930 crayon drawing done by a Seminole child). The Hanson Collection taught me what research really is.

A few years ago, I was pretty much an academic-world outsider; “Research” was a word with little meaning, a precursor to some new information. “Researchers have found [fill in the blank]” and often their findings turn out to be bogus, which made the word a sort of foggy one for me. Partially through my university journey, I came under the sneaking-suspicion that “research” was a pretentious term for reading. An uneducated person reads “War & Peace,” it’s reading; an educated person does it, they are “researching Tolstoy.” Soon to be awarded my master’s degree, and hopefully to publish
a well-researched book, I still believe both of those early impressions to be true. Researchers are often later proven wrong, and some research is little more than reading and regurgitating what someone else has already worked to discover. However, the Hanson collection was, for me, a torturous and thrilling learning, researching, discovering journey.

In research terms, the burden is much heavier because the material is unexamined, unparsed, and unsifted — meaning other researchers have not had an opportunity to study it, using their wisdom and credentials to interpret for others [me] what it means. It is like the difference between watching a Presidential State of the Union Address, then using your own knowledge and intellect to decipher what it means, and listening to the pundits afterwards explain what the President was really saying. Ideally, researchers hold themselves to a higher standard of unbiased observation, but nothing is always the case. However, it must be granted that a person who has spent twenty years studying Tolstoy will bring more to the reading of *War and Peace* than will a high school student. I am laboring to make the point that research itself has a ridiculously wide-range of value and meaning, and that some is absolutely more legitimate, useful, and full of more complex wisdom than others.

I am a novice researcher. I have lifelong hobbies, such as genealogy, puzzle solving, reading, and treasure (junk) hunting that uniquely equip me to enjoy the act of research. On top of that skeleton, I laid seven years of university education — which actually took thirty because real life kept getting in my way. My hobbies and natural proclivities combined with education became building-blocks and tools for tackling this research project. However, the single most important ingredient was having the sheer
good fortune to land Dr. Gary Mormino as teacher, guide, mentor, and friend. Dr. Mormino is co-director of the Florida Studies Program at the University of South Florida, Saint Petersburg. He is currently one of Florida’s most respected living historians (judged so by the historian community itself), is co-editor of the “Florida Series,” a sub-press for University Press of Florida, and in addition to these admirable attributes, the man is, at heart, an excellent teacher and motivator.

I had only been exposed to the Hanson Collection a few weeks when I went to Dr. Mormino with the “find.” He took an entire day from his life to accompany me from Saint Petersburg to Fort Myers, where he spent multiple hours with me, Woody Hanson, and the Collection. Dr. Mormino recognized the value and potential of what was there, and pushed me, enthusiastically, to pursue it. From the outside it may appear a no-brainer that such a collection was important and worthy, and that would be true. But, I am not a seasoned historian or professional and so it was difficult to trust myself as to whether it really is of substantial importance to a larger audience, or whether I was overreacting to a bunch of family photographs and papers. Dr. Mormino called it, “one of Southwest Florida’s great, unexplored treasure troves,” and thus made it a bona fide area of formal study for me.

So, I finished reading, looking at, thinking about, note-taking, and assigning every document its line on the Hanson Excel Spreadsheet. I knew what I had learned needed writing, plus, to earn my degree I had to write and submit a thesis, which is academically speak for “big researched report on something.” The Hanson Archives did not lack for material and I considered many topics, “matrilineal clan systems of the Florida Seminoles during the Depression years” to “uses of the coontie root.” Coontie is a starchy tuber,
similar to a sweet potato, long-used by Florida Indians as a flour. But, being that the number-one rule for choosing a thesis topic is, “Focus, focus, focus, do not choose a topic too broad,” coupled with the fact that it is in my nature to make things as difficult as possible, I decided to just write the whole story! Never mind the fact that I have a thousand pages of notes and two-thousand spreadsheet lines and hundreds of names of people who inhabited Hanson worlds for four generations — plus, pioneering a new city and county and families being created and marrying and dying and churches being constituted and Indians being changed and bridges built and roads and politics and major events and upheavals, just never mind, I was going to write it all! And so I started researching. And that is when I began to learn what the word “research” really means.

Consider, for instance, one Collection letter to W. Stanley Hanson from Earnest Coe:

[On printed letterhead]
Everglades National Park Association, Inc.
“Promote the Early Establishment of the Everglades National Park”
County Court House
Miami, Florida
June 30th, 1937

Mr. W. Stanley Hanson, Secretary
The Seminole Indian Association of Florida
Fort Myers, Florida

Dear friend Hanson:

This is a tardy acknowledgment of a copy of the minutes of the annual meeting of the Seminole Indian Association of March 23rd. I would have been very glad indeed to have attended this meeting. As you know, I am at heart very keenly interested in the Seminole and concerned with his future welfare, though this interest may not accord with the opinions of some others.

[burn hole in letter] it is, you are doing a splendid and unselfish [burn hole] and I do hope that you are enjoying suitable [burn hole] compensation, as well as the joy of serving.

With all sincere regards,

Very truly yours,
Ernest F. Coe, Director
Everglades National Park Assn., Inc. 20

Such a letter easily registered as worthy of notice because I knew Ernest Coe is commonly called “father of the Everglades.” I had heard of him, possessed a glimmer of starting-point knowledge. I remembered reading that Coe was a selfless, sometimes fanatical advocate for seeing the National Park established. But, what did I really know about him? When did he live? What was his training and interest in the ‘Glades? What was the Everglades National Park Association? Why was its address the County Court House in Miami? What was the Seminole Indian Association? To whom is Coe referring when he writes, “though this interest may not accord with the opinions of some others?” What others? Why would it not accord? Why was Stanley mailing Coe meeting minutes? Why was Coe writing Stanley? What was their connection? When did the Everglades National Park come into existence, and what was taking place in June of 1937?

It did not take long to realize that I do not have enough life-years left to exhaustively sort, investigate, unravel, solve, and document all of the questions and mysteries contained in the Hanson Archives. To write even an overview, a winnowing process was necessary. There had to be a distillation: What is of most importance? Who is of most importance? What can I learn about them and how can I frame that information so that it is useful (and, ideally) somewhat interesting to readers of my book who will never have the privilege of fingerling the old documents? I am convinced wonderful old things put a spell on you, a come-hither hex. What I determined to be of utmost important were:

20 HFA DOC 006-079 Letter: Ernest F. Coe to W. Stanley Hanson, 30 June 1937.
1. The family’s pioneering place in Southwest Florida, which was largely rugged, uninhabited swamp lands before their arrival.

2. The preciously rare information about Indians living in the western section of the ‘Glades and their ongoing interactions with Woody Hanson’s ancestors, both paternal and maternal.

3. The amazing life of one individual who managed to have bestowed upon his person a title more rare, times a ten-thousand, than an Olde English Lordship. People, such as Elton John and Paul McCartney, are still being titled “Sirs” by Queen Elizabeth, however, who has been awarded the title, “White Medicine Man?” More astronauts have walked on the moon than such an astonishing thing!

These three guidelines do not mean that the church histories written and documented by Woody Hanson’s mother are not of vital importance, or the Hanson antique postcard collection, or their hundreds of news-clippings, or the poetry of Julia Allen Hanson, or any other number of specific areas are less worthy of study. These were just my choices for an overview book about the Hanson-Gonzalez South Florida story. The Seminole Indian Association — an Indian-aid organization incorporated and run by the Hansons for several decades — alone is worthy of its own book. As are the life-stories of Dr. William and Julia Allen Hanson. But necessity forced me to choose and so I did. As little focus as the book has, I attempted to keep it aimed at the Hanson family’s place in these three topics.

Once I reduced what I would try to cover to three topics, each of the topics itself contained hundreds of individual names and thousands of questions, to which I did not have answers. This is when I started understanding the word “research.” It means when
you do not know, but you take the time and effort to search, on your own, to look in wherever obscure place you have to, to tease out answers, miniscule and huge, until you learn enough about something to explain it to someone else, and to be as correct as possible in the doing. Sometimes this is small thing, like deciphering whether Milton D. Thompson’s middle initial is “D” or “O.” It is difficult to tell, in old handwriting, but if his descendents ever see his name in a book, they will know. Sometimes the questions are much more meaningful. No one was a bigger advocate for and champion of the Seminoles during the early 1900s in Southwest Florida than Stanley Hanson, so why was he also a major promoter of ramming the Tamiami Trail straight through the heart of their ancestral lands?

I have no doubt that there are historians, researchers, and writers better-equipped and more talented to grapple with this material. However, I am the one in the arena, with the red cape, attempting to be a matador. And being that the Hanson Collection is filled with raw materials, I did not have the luxury to consult with other scholars who have gone before to see whether I was making right or wrong conclusions. I spent more months researching the collection once I got away from it, than I did while buried in it, and still, at times, feel my grasp is tenuous and my understanding shallow. It is also possible that in some instances I may join the ranks of researchers who are later proven wrong. Such are the risks of publishing at all, I suppose.

One last hurdle to understanding the Hanson Family Archives is that there are exceedingly few history books published on the topic of Southwest Florida. There is one major history of Lee County, published thirty years ago, and one of Collier County.

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published over forty years ago. This dearth of cohesive information forced me into much more tedious sources: oral interviews, journal articles published over a period of decades, old newspaper stories, and scraps and bits from a myriad of sources. This is not unlike treasure hunting. You have a list of people and you set off to find any available information about them, or something to do with them, and when you stumble upon answers [references], they are as thrilling as finding a nugget of gold in a pan of sand!

The truth about treasure seeking though, is that if you look long enough, you will gain what you seek — sometimes in tiny, sand-grain amounts and sometimes mother lodes.

GREEN CORN DANCE: “SHOT-CA-TAW”

Some of the most notable items in the Hanson Family Archives involve the Indians’ mysterious Green Corn ceremonies. The Hansons’ interaction reveal the heart of Stanley’s deep and intimate relationship with the Natives, whose sacred gatherings were not the normal domain of non-Indians. A letter from a Miami attorney, O. B. White, written to Stanley in 1936, relates the attorney’s defense of Corey Osceola for some unnamed legal infraction. Osceola had asked for and received permission to have the attorney attend a Green Corn ceremony to offer some sort of explanation to the Tribal Council. O. B. White asked for Stanley’s input and states “in view of the fact that you and I will be the only white people there…”23

The Hansons were a family active in a wide-range of organizations and facets of Fort Myers, Lee County, and the nation — including the Audubon Society, Good Roads Committee, Presbyterian Church, and the Woman’s Club. Yet they were also comfortable following smoke signals for two days through the Everglades to respectfully attend the sacred rituals of the Seminoles.24 That they were respectful is evidenced by the fact that they were repeatedly, over decades, invited to attend. There are even references made, in the collection, that when Stanley was unable to attend in person, runners were sent to keep him appraised and to seek his

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23 HFA DOC 007-043. Letter: O. B. White to W. Stanley Hanson, 26 May 1936.
24 Hanson — Mahon Interview. 25 June 1975, p. 5.
counsel. In one in particular, Stanley is writing to Gordon Adams, District Supervisor of the Federal Writers’ Projects, apparently, in reference to a story that was circulating in newspapers about a Seminole death:

I do not wish to upset an otherwise good story, but to keep myself in the clear and for your personal information, I was not present at the Green Corn Dance when Doctor John’s case came up for trial. The Medicine Men did send in runners three different times to ask my advice, and the last time, after much thought and Divine guidance, I sent my Indian friends word to spare the life of Doctor John on conditions about as you have stated in your story.25

In a 1926 letter from Josie Billie, postmarked with a two-cent stamp from Everglades, the Head Medicine Man of the Seminoles writes to Stanley about the upcoming meeting:

Deep Lake, Fla.
May 21 1926
Mr W Stanley Hanson Dear friend
I get you letter yesterday I will
write you letter today all way
Believe you I wanted you to coming
Green Corn Dance but four weeks
more now Little Moon in June
When you come tell Doctor come with
You friend Jossie Billie26

26 HFA DOC 005-043-044. Letter: Josie Billie to W. Stanley Hanson, 21 May 1926.
Some of my personal Collection favorites also happen to be exceedingly rare and precious items related to the sacred Green Corn Dance — a set of sketches drawn by Stanley of the “Shot-ca-taw” ceremony grounds, and also a letter written by his wife, Clara, to her sister detailing her experiences at the ceremonies she attended with her husband and children.

First, the sketch. Close examination reveals the follow details: “N” with an arrow pointing in the direction of north, “Fire to light grounds for dance,” “Circle Round Fire used by dancers,” “open space for pots,” “Feast House warriors sit,” “dancers stand in front of Master of Ceremonies,” “Squaws and children sit,” “to camps,” “Medicine Men
Sit,” “Sacred Medicine Fire,” “men who watch sacred medicine fire sit,” “Medicine Brew.”27 Just this one drawing provides stunning details about one of the most secretive, sacred ritual events in the life of Florida Indians, during this era.

One of Stanley’s many and various jobs over the years was as a correspondent for the *Tampa Tribune*. He worked for the newspaper for several years as a young man, before his marriage to Clara. The training served him throughout his life, as he wrote many articles pertaining to South Florida nature, business, and Indians for newspapers and magazines around the country. He also wrote for the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s and published extensively through them.28 The Archives contain several of these sorts of writings by Stanley regarding his Green Corn experiences. However, they tend to be more scientific and done from a reporter’s perspective, not unlike the ceremonial grounds pencil sketch. However, his wife, Clara, in a letter to her sister, captured the event from a different perspective. Her letter contains seven pages of detail — too lengthy to include in this forum — but she writes, “I suppose there were about 100 Indians gathered from surrounding camps, pretty equally divided as to men and women and plenty of children, also three babies one month old . . . I have never seen happier children or ones more bubbling over with laughter and less quarreling.” She describes in vivid detail a game of ball played by young men and women, and gives details of ceremonial dances performed: “In the evening they danced in a circle around a camp fire . . . whenever the women danced, the children did too . . . two or three young women had box turtles, filled with dried seeds, fastened to their ankles which they rattled in perfect time. We saw the Lizard dance, Wood Pecker, Snake, Sand Hill Crane, Alligator, White

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27 HFA DOC 004-002 Green Corn Dance ceremonial grounds sketch by W. Stanley Hanson.
28 University of South Florida, Special Collections Library, Tampa, FL. WPA Files.
Flag, and others.” She writes of the infamous “Black Drink,” and its purging effect of participants, and of business handled during the ceremonies, and of the general atmosphere surrounding the proceedings: “When they came to camp, each family brought their dogs, pigs, chickens, and oxen. To keep the gnats from the oxen, they built smudges and the oxen would stand over the smoke. Also, they would stand perfectly still while the chickens jumped up and picked the ticks off of them. The Indians were anxious to please. One day a dog stole a loaf of bread. I called to Johnnie Cypress to look at the dog. He said, ‘shall I shoot him.’”

In a small, black, cracked leather book with “Memo Book” imprinted on the front, Stanley recorded, in his neat print, details of the Green Corn Dance rituals — including dances: Two Hand, Screech Owl, Little Lizard, Chicken, Quail, and Switch Grass. Along the side of the page, with these dances listed in Table of Contents fashion, he wrote the word “NOCTURNAL.” Several lines below he adds: Flag. Whether all but “Flag” are danced at night, is conjecture. Stanley records them in anthropological style, with

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29 HFA DOC 020-096-103. Letter: Clara Petzold Hanson to her sister, Alice, 17 June (no year).
straight-forward detail. I will not include all dance details here, as they tend to be repetitious, but one seems in order:

LITTLE LIZARD DANCE

Men form in front. M.M. [medicine men] start off in circle, single file, being joined by women on second go round. Men go thru many dance antics. Every now and then dancing round women to place as procession proceeds. The frequent swinging of partners, or woman behind each man, is done in this dance. The idea being to show antics of the lizard searches among the leaves and brush for food.

Lasts about 20 minutes, the constant chanting of M.Man with use of rattle being heard above the singing of the male dancers.30

The reason Stanley wrote this book full of details is unknown. It is dated 1933 and he had, by this time, been attending Seminole sacred ceremonies for many years. The same memo book contains many pages of detail from the Indians’ most sacred gathering. The Hanson Family Archives memo book31 is worthy of its own scholarly study and publication.

30 HFA DOC 019-091, 092. W. Stanley Hanson, “Lizard Dance” at Green Corn Ceremony, 1933.
31 HFA DOC 019-114. Memo Book written by W. Stanley Hanson, 1933.
Between 1935 and 1943, in an effort to help move the country out of the Great Depression, the federal government instituted a project to put millions of Americans to work. Their jobs were broad, from building bridges to sewing to writing, and were commonly called, “WPA jobs,” — for Works Progress Administration. One of the excellent results of this government program was that it paid countless “boots on the ground,” including women and minorities, to observe and report sights, sounds, and voices from every area of the country. WPA writers were often uncredited, as they were basically staff-writers, but their names are on the original submissions and, in Stanley Hanson’s case, he kept typed copies of the writings he submitted. Most, though not all, of his also are housed in the WPA papers held in the Special Collections library at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Some of Stanley Hansons writings and photos are also found in printed WPA material, such as the, “WPA Guide to Florida: The Federal Writers’ Project Guide to 1930s Florida, Written and Compiled by the Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Florida.”

After having read many hundreds of Stanley’s writings — personal correspondence, speeches, articles, journals, and WPA papers — there are still many scattered writings that do fit any obvious purpose or category. I believe many of these were started with the idea of becoming a submission to the WPA. Some made it to
completion and publication; others did not. Cash money was as tight for the Hanson family during the post-Depression years as for everyone else, and Stanley’s primary business had been real estate. The real estate economic collapse was severe in Southwest Florida, during the 1930s and 40s, and did not entirely recover for decades. Stanley struggled to earn money by every means available to him, including WPA writing. During these years he had a wife, two children, a mother, and countless needy Indian friends depending on him. This is one of Stanley’s typical writings for the WPA, concerning Green Corn ceremonies:

The picturesque Green Corn Dance festival of the Florida Seminole is held each year either in May, June or July, and is the great event in the lives of these Indians. This occasion is the religious-political affair of the Seminoles’ year, in which all tribal matters are heard and adjusted before the beginning of the New Year, which begins during the ceremony of the Green Corn Festival. The judicial measures are in the hands of a Council of Medicine Men, which decrees penalties for violations of their rules, banishment from the tribe being the worst possible form of punishment decreed (similar to life imprisonment with us). The death penalty among the Seminoles is extremely rare, and has only been imposed once in the past fifty years. The Green Corn Dance is conducted today as it was one-hundred years ago, and all events having to do with the Seminoles existence is depicted in the many dances that go to make up the Green Corn Dance Festival. The attendance at the Green Corn Dance is compulsory, and all Indians in good standing must attend at least one of the places where the annual meetings are conducted. The Indian families gather for days in advance of the opening of the Dance, and await the ceremony of the “black drink,” which is freely taken by all the communicants. This drink is made from the Ilex Vomitoria [sic] acts as an emetic, and cleanses the user ready for participation in the events to follow. Following the administration of this sacred drink, the Medicine Men open the dance, which continues each night thereafter for five nights. The following day is a great day of feasting for the males, who are served with the great variety of foods carefully prepared by the women and brought forward to a point near the eating house, in large pots and pans, there to be left by the women, who must not approach the feast house of the men. The day after the feast is one of fasting.32

32 HFA DOC 004-003. W. Stanley Hanson, WPA writing on Green Corn Dance, undated.
Stanley wrote hundreds of informative pieces for the WPA, covering a wide range of subject, including but not limited to: Indian Reservations, customs, dress, arts, history, tribal life, fishing, food, hunting and more. Many contain vivid and colorful details.

CHARACTERISTIC DRESS: Male (younger generation), bright colored calico shirts, designed by Indian women who take great pride in their original creations; the younger (male) wear modern store pants. Male (older generation), shirts, fully as long as a modern woman’s dress, belted with a waist band; the older (male) generation do not wear pants; they do, however, go in for gorgeous colors. On great fiesta occasions, the tribal medicine men wear colored turbans of gayly [sic] colored cloth, plumed with three ostrich feathers.33

Stanley also wrote for the WPA on a myriad of subjects not associated with Southwest Florida Indians, such as: railroads, highways, Fort Myers, Edison-Ford winter homes, local architecture, local sporting pursuits of hunting and fishing, history of the region, agriculture, tourist camps, hotels, and more. These writings are full of valuable information and insight into Southwest Florida during the 1930s.

AGRICULTURE:
Thomas Alva Edison’s dream of a sea of waving goldenrod to insure the United States an emergency rubber supply should tropical markets by cut off, is being continues by his own trained staff of experts in botany and chemistry, with the support and cooperation of the Department of Agriculture. The work was brought to practical completion at the time of Edison’s death, and thousands of persons

33 HFA DOC 001-002 (excerpt) W. Stanley Hanson/Carl Liddle, WPA Papers, undated.
have visited the miniature rubber plantation started by Edison in Fort Myers just across McGregor Boulevard from his winter home.\textsuperscript{34}

TOURISM:
Outside of Fort Myers, in Lee County, there are many resort hotels, many of them located on small islands connected to the mainland by bridges, boat ferries, railroads, or boat lines . . . Best known is Gasparilla Island on which is located Boca Grande; also ranking high in interest are Sanibel and Captiva islands. All three of these islands are rich in pirate lore. Boca Grande has two golf courses and is connected to the mainland by automobile, ferry, and railroad. At Boca Grande, the hotels are the Boca Grande Inn, Gasparilla Inn, and Palmetto Inn. These islands are popular for their “island resort colonies,” due to the fact that many of the same tourists come back every year. And every year they bring more friends along to increase the colony.\textsuperscript{35}

FOOD:
[Lee County] features fresh seafoods, many taken from Lee County waters . . . in addition to the pompano, mackerel, bluefish, snapper and mullet, other seafoods are crawfish, crabs, clams, shrimp, and scallops. Chowders made from a variety of saltwater fish are available. Another treat is coquina broth made from delicate little clam-like shellfish found in abundance on the beaches. Located on Fort Myers Beach is the only coquina broth factory in the United States of any great importance. This canning factory also puts up turtle meat and turtle soup. Doctors and nurses have discovered that coquina broth has wonderful restorative powers and is fine during the convalescent periods when patients have a difficult time taking nourishments.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} HFA DOC 001-060 (excerpt) W. Stanley Hanson, WPA Papers, 2 Oct 1936.
\textsuperscript{35} HFA DOC 001-065 (excerpt) W. Stanley Hanson/Carl Liddle, WPA Papers, undated.
\textsuperscript{36} HFA DOC 001-079 (excerpt) W. Stanley Hanson/Carl Liddle, WPA Papers, undated.
Saint James City (not incorporated), located at south end of Pine Island on San Carlos Bay, was developed by a group of wealthy business men from Casias, Maine. All building materials of spruce and white pine being brought by ships from Maine. The town was platted in February 1887.

The promoters built the San Carlos Hotel, at that time one of the largest resort hotels in Florida, boasting the comforts of the period, and entertaining many of America's best known men and women, among them President Chester A. Arthur, the Armours and Palmers of Chicago; Sir Robert Booth, Gore and others of the British nobility, who made Saint James their winter headquarters while enjoying the wonderful climate and unexcelled fishing of the section.

Before the extension of the railroad down the East Coast to Palm Beach, Saint James City was one of the two most popular winter resorts in Florida.

Allowed to deteriorate after a short time, following the death of the main promoters, the 'city' was in practical ruins.
The Hanson Collection contains many WPA writings submitted by Stanley that were not published, or if they were, are not readily available or credited. These papers contain a veritable wealth of information on Indians, Lee County, and even the Everglades, and are almost entirely written from Stanley’s first-person experience and knowledge. This body of writing provides a collective, consistent observation of every facet of an entire region, from an intelligent, thoughtful person born into it. Anthropological writing is often done by observers sent into or through an area to observe and document their experiences, as was the case for most WPA writings. Outside-observers can offer unique and valuable perspectives on a region, its people, customs, and idiosyncrasies not even recognized by those native to it. James Agee accomplished this brilliantly in Deep South Alabama in the late 1930s in his Let Us Now Praise Famous Men. However, the Hanson writings offer a comprehensive look at an area and its history, people, culture, industries, nature, outstanding features, and much more, from a boots-on-the-ground perspective. The Hanson WPA papers would serve as an excellent thesis or book topic, and would also be a valuable resource for any new history writing covering Lee or Collier counties, or Southwest Florida in general.
NON-INDIAN FEATURES OF THE HANSON COLLECTION

There are probably as many non-Indian related documents in the Hanson Family Archives as there are Florida Indian centric; I say “probably” because Mr. Woody Hanson is continuing to scan and number items that I have never seen. A seemingly inexhaustible supply of boxes, drawers, files, and shelf-matter exists and is continuing to be unveiled. When an item appears in this thesis with a black number visible on it, it is because Mr. Hanson has personally and cautiously slipped the paper into a plastic sleeve, attached a sticky HFA DOC number to the outside of the sleeve, scanned the sleeved-item, and placed it in a notebook for safe-keeping. Mr. Hanson allowed no one but himself to perform this task, as it insured he would see, handle, read, and view every item in his family’s possession. The Excel spreadsheet served the same purpose for me. Also, at great trouble and expense, Mr. Hanson has arranged for safe and fire-proof storage of the documented parts of the collection, as well as made multiple copies of scanned images, and stored them in diverse and safe locations. Ideally, the Collection would be housed in a museum, in precise humidity and light conditions, readily available to scholars for study. However, next to a museum, it is in hands as good as could be hoped for.

The parts of the Collection pertaining to Southwest Florida Indians would naturally attract the attention of anyone fortunate enough to peruse the Collection. Items pertaining to Florida Indians do make up a substantial part of the overall mass of
material, plus, the exotic nature of the subject matter — people of the ‘Glades — naturally attract interest. The Seminoles and Miccosukees were also elusive and rarely documented subjects during this era. The growth of Lee and Collier counties, roads, waterways, transportation, sporting pursuits and tourism could all be documented by any observer who cared to notice, post Civil-War through modern times. However, this was not true for Florida Indians. They lived in areas highly inaccessible, due to high-water, lack of roads, and wild animals (or at least the perceived threat of alligators, snakes, and biting bugs), plus, they were famously reticent and uncommunicative with outsiders. This elusive, secretive quality to their existence only heightens interest in them, then and now. Couple these tendencies with their habit of wearing colorful, highly decorative clothing and accessories, and the Indians inspire natural fascination. Their presence in the Hanson Archives is the same.

However, there do exist many facets of the Collection not directly centered around Natives that offer rich opportunities for future study and original scholarship. These include postcards, family letters, church histories, local histories, regional folklore, genealogical research, poetry, Southwest Florida histories written and never published, a clipping library, rare Florida books, and thousands of photographs with subjects as diverse as imagination allows — from nature to architecture to people. This list is by no means exhaustive or all-inclusive. The Collection is too large and diverse for definitive categories of any sort. Still, when trying to create a skeleton guide, of sorts, for the Hanson Family Archives, these areas must at least be mentioned.
POSTCARDS

Woody Hanson’s mother, Mary Ellen Gonzalez Hanson (1921-2004), was an avid collector, organizer, genealogist, and local historian. She recognized the inherent preciousness of the family trove and spent decades seeking items she believed would benefit its overall scope. Judging by what she concentrated on, several areas of collection seemed very important to her, including: antique Florida postcards, genealogy, Florida newspaper clippings, and local history, including church histories.

Thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Hanson, the Collection has several thick notebooks full of pages of acid-free plastic sleeves, each holding multiple Old Florida postcards. They were not scanned or numbered at the time I was working on the collection, so I have no idea of their exact number, but would estimate there are multiple-hundreds, if not a thousand or more. Woody Hanson said his mother’s goal was to collect every postcard ever made with Florida Indians or Southwest Florida as a subject. They dated to the 1800s, were often hand-colored and exquisitely beautiful. They are colorful and in pristine condition, capturing enduring images of people, buildings, landscapes, and attractions. Some were used, some not, and often the cancelled cards contain additional interesting snippets of life. I do not doubt Mrs. Hanson came close to attaining her goal of a comprehensive library of antique Florida postcards.

Figure 15 Antique postcard, Indian wedding
Hanson courtesy photo
NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

In similar fashion, Mrs. Hanson kept, organized, and added to a collection of newspaper clippings started by her mother-in-law, Clara Petzold Hanson (1886-1961). This is no random set of snipped newspapers, but official clippings purchased from Florida Clipping Service, a company owned and run by famed Florida journalist, Russell Kay (1892-1977). Kay was a personal friend of the Hansons, and after the death of Clara’s husband, W. Stanley Hanson in 1945, Kay wrote Clara a personal note, on “Florida News Service” letterhead:

Figure 16 Newspaper clippings in the Hanson Family Archives. Hanson courtesy photo

April 7, 1945
Dear Mrs. Hanson:

I was shocked and grieved to learn of Stanley’s death and news reached me just as I was leaving Tallahassee for Tampa.

I have instructed the readers in our clipping bureau to watch carefully and mark every reference and shall be happy to send you these clippings gratis. Only wish I could do more to help you at this time. There is so little a person can say or do.

Sincerely,
Russell Kay
Editorial Director

Many of the clippings in the Hanson Archives date in the 1930s, so it is obvious the Hansons were longtime customers of the clipping service. The clippings themselves, during my time with the Collection, had not been individually scanned and numbered so are not a part of the Excel spreadsheet, nor do I have detailed knowledge on what subjects, they might in fact, cover. However, the ones I saw did appear to be overwhelmingly related to Florida Indian and Hanson news. I would estimate there are hundreds of these clippings, all stored neatly folded in acid-free plastic sleeves, secured in notebooks. Worthy of note: Florida Indian researcher and writer, Patsy West, was loaned all Hanson clippings in 1989 and allowed to photocopy them. In a 1991 letter, she thanks the Hansons — Woody Hanson’s mother and father — for the loan. She writes, “I have finally completed photocopying the newspaper clippings which you so kindly allowed me to borrow for at least two years! I certainly apologize for being so slow in getting the job done.” If Ms. West did indeed copy all of these clippings, then that part of the collection does exist outside of Hanson holdings, in its entirety. One of the most

38 HFA DOC 013-039. Letter: Russell Kay to Clara Petzold Hanson, 7 Apr 1945.
valuable aspects of the clippings being in this “clipping” form is the blue tag attached to each carefully cropped article. The blue note identifies the paper in which the original article appeared, sometimes the city of the paper’s publication, and always the date of its publication. Directly underneath is the title of the article attached. This supplies all information needed for proper reference and citing for every article. Also, the Hanson Archives contain the original printed paper, not a photocopy. It is a magnificent collection of themed-news, probably unreplicated anywhere else, and another area of unexplored and invaluable historical treasure.

CHURCH AND LOCAL HISTORIES

The past three generations of Hanson wives — Mary Ellen Gonzalez, Clara Petzold, and Julia Allen — were avidly interested in recording and keeping local and family history. The Hanson Family Archives are in the condition they are largely because of the efforts of these women, who had the foresight and patience to create, recognize, and keep. All three were intelligent, inquisitive, and capable, as evidenced by their many contributions and notations throughout the Archives. Julia, Clara, and Mary Ellen were active in their churches, and interested in seeing their histories properly recorded. Rev. Dr. A. Waldo Farabee, Sr. recently published a comprehensive book about the creation of
all Lee County churches. In his preface and numerous time throughout the book he credits work done and records shared by Mary Ellen Gonzalez Hanson. He also recounts a detailed story of the early Hanson family’s contributions to the founding of the first Episcopal Church of Fort Myers, as recorded by Julia Allen Hanson herself, before her death in 1934.40

The Collection has many pages of church and local histories written by different family members, including: W. Stanley Hanson, Julia Allen Hanson, Clara Petzold Hanson, and Mary Ellen Gonzalez Hanson. These were not scanned and numbered during my period of research, so were not thoroughly read by me. I did see them, as well as miscellaneous writings by members of the original Manuel A. Gonzalez family, such as a small book about the Caloosahatchee River and local Lee County history compiled in 1932 by Thomas A. Gonzalez, descendant of Manuel.41 However, like so much of the Hanson Archives, these await discovery and publication by someone with the desire and patience to explore and piece together the unknown details no-doubt contained in these writings.

There are many hundreds of pages of genealogy and other research undertaken by Woody Hanson’s mother. These along with many areas of the Collection almost certainly hold knowledge of interest and importance to historians and


South Florida researchers. Even Woody’s father, William Stanley Hanson, was engaged in writing a book about his experiences in the South Pacific during World War II. He and his wife, Mary Ellen, also sat for a fascinating oral interview with Dr. John Mahon in 1975 that produced thirty typed pages of detailed information about the Hanson family and their lives in Lee County.\[42\]

Mr. Woody Hanson will likely read this segment of this paper and be immediately struck by the myriad of other areas of future study and undone scholarship. He does, in fact, know and have an overall grasp of the Archives that I will certainly never attain. He has now spent years immersed in its “vast fastness,” as people long-described the Everglades. I acquiesce to his broader-deeper knowledge and to the relatively cursory nature of my own. However, for the purposes of this paper, the postcards, newspaper clippings, genealogy, church, and local history writings were the areas that most struck me as being particularly ripe areas of future research. There are also several long shelves filled with old books, unique to Florida and the Southwest Florida areas in particular. These would certainly be beneficial to researchers, as well. However, it is possible, if not probable, that they might also be found in Special Collections libraries around the state, and thus accessible to scholars, through admittedly greater effort than sitting in the Hanson office with the loaded shelf stretched before the researcher. The other items in the Collection, mentioned in this segment, would likely not be available anyplace else, but are unique and singularly found in this family’s Archives.

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EXCEPTIONALLY UNIQUE TO THE HANSON COLLECTION

The Hanson Archives offer a profusion of opportunities for original research and scholarship on a multitude of subjects. The thought of even making a list of potential areas of future study is daunting! However, tucked in among the tangled mass of history subjects, are several items so unusual and singular, they await study and further discovery as stand-alone items of mystery. These are rough diamonds in the trove, awaiting polish and light.

A. LECHEVALLIER LETTER

One of these is a letter written in quill-pen-and-ink by famed (and infamous) bird-plume hunter, Frenchman A. LeChevallier to Dr. William Hanson.\(^\text{43}\) It is two pages long and dated, “24 Augt 1889.” Longtime Florida culture observer and author, Jeff Klinkenberg, wrote of the author: “Chevelier, arguably the most notorious plume hunter who ever drew breath in North America, was the scourge of pretty birds from the Everglades to Tampa Bay. He even lived for a spell in southern Pinellas County, along wading-bird-infested Boca Ciega Bay. Frenchman Creek near today’s Maximo Park is named after him.”\(^\text{44}\)

\(^{43}\) HFA DOC 007-061. Letter: A. LeChevallier to Dr. William Hanson, 24 Aug 1889.
The Hanson letter is written in French and, to my knowledge, has not even yet been translated. I did make an attempt at transcription, using a French-to-English online dictionary, but the handwriting is in cursive and 123 years old. The letter is in excellent condition, but writing styles were much more decorative a century ago and can be difficult to decipher. I was able to determine that it is discussing property jointly owned by the men, as well as a contract of some sort, and monies to be repaid. Tavernier Key, presumably in the Florida Keys, is also mentioned several times.

Figure 19 A. LeChevallier letterhead, 1888 letter to Dr. William Hanson. Hanson courtesy photo

Several aspects of this artifact are astonishing. One, it is apparently written in the Frenchman’s own hand, as it is signed, “A. LeChevallier, Key West.” Two, it is on engraved letterhead, which provide incredible details into the Frenchman’s bloody business. And three, the letterhead is printed “Key West, Fla.,” but is scratched through and replaced with, “Chatham Bay.” Chatham Bay, of course, is the home of the infamous accused murder, Edgar Watson, who was gunned-down by a posse of his neighbors in
Chokoloskee in 1910. Watson arrived in the Chatham Bay area in the early 1880s, so presumably would have been a local figure when this intriguing letter was penned by LeChevallier to Dr. Hanson. The story of Watson’s time at on Chatham Bat at Lostman’s River was made famous by a series of books by Peter Matthiessen.

The small box, visible in the upper-left corner of the letterhead, reads: “EGRETT FEATHERS, and any kind of BIRDSKINS, for Fashion & Natural History. BIRDS EGGS, Curiosities, Shells, &c. Four First Prizes and TWO DIPLOMAS.” The masthead reads: “A. LECHEVALLIER, NATURALIST,” and “Chatham Bay, 24 Augt 1888” is hand-penned, following the headline. The Frenchman begins, “Doctor W. Hanson, Esq., Fort Myers, Fla., Mon cher Doctor,” which in English means, “My dear Doctor.” It concludes two long pages later.

This letter is a mystery. No other items in Hanson Collection, that I reviewed, appear to have any relation to LeChevallier. However, there was obviously at least one business connection or real estate deal between the Doctor and the Frenchman.

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45 HFA DOC 007-061. Letter: A. LeChevallier to Dr. William Hanson, 24 Aug 1889.
Another area of unique curiosity in the Collection is a small bundle of art — and by “bundle,” I mean literally that they were old paintings and drawings on odd-sized pages and multiple surfaces, rolled together in a scroll. This art was not, at the time, part of the scanned, numbered items bound in books and included in the Excel spreadsheet. However, Mr. Woody Hanson did provide me high-quality scanned copies of several pieces, six in all, and even just these would make a most interesting study for an art historian. Three appear to have been drawn using some combination of charcoal and water colors, but with very distinctive up-and-down, linear markings; very apparently not the work of an amateur.

W. Stanley Hanson, the “White Medicine Man,” served as a guide for many different people into the Everglades and to visit with the Indians, including President
Theodore Roosevelt, who actually wrote a personal letter to Hanson, a document that remains a part of the family Archives. In a 1932 letter to Mr. A. J. Hanna of Rollins College, W. Stanley Hanson writes:

During my long residence here, I have camped with and my services have been engaged by:
- Theodore Roosevelt
- Thomas A. Edison
- Mrs. Thomas A. Edison
- Henry Ford
- Charles Livingston Bull (Illustrator)
- Irving Crump (author)
- John K. Small (Curator, New York Botanical Garden)
- Otto E. Jennings (Curator, Carnegie Museum, Pittsburg)
- Dr. Frederick A. Cook (Discoverer, North Pole)
- Miss Frances A. Densmore (Bureau American Ethnology)
- Miss Mabel F. Knight (lecturer, Roxbury, Mass.)
- Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson (President, Audubon Society, NY)
- Nevin O. Winter (author, etc., Toledo, O)
- John B. Tanner (President, International Accountants So. Chicago)
- Hon. H. J. Drane, M. C. (Florida)
- Charles W. Ward (conservationist)
- Kent Curtis (author)
- Perle Poore Sheehan (author)
- and many others.

Whether any of this art is the work of Charles Livingston Bull or another artist of the day is unknown to me or Woody Hanson, but I suspect some of it was done by a person with some art training, and not in the Hanson family, because of the limited number of pieces and the fact that they are unsigned. Most of what the Hansons wrote, they included a name and date, even if it was a poem.
Of the six scans Mr. Hanson provided me, three of them are apparently children’s drawings. All three scenes are of landscapes, with elements that include glades, cabbage palms, fences, and an Indian village. Woody believes them to be crayon drawings done by Indian children and given to his grandfather, W. Stanley Hanson. He may be correct because one of them does have a signature and date that reads: “Stanley H. Cypress, 1-27th 1943.” There were several Indian children named after W. Stanley Hanson; they are found in various Federal Census records, and were known to the Hanson family. The Indians bestowed on W. Stanley Hanson the Indian name, Stansee Hansee, and some version of this is often found in census records, such as the January 1, 1937 census: “Stanley Hansee Cypress,” born 1926, son of Johnnie and Mary Cypress, brother of Buck, and sister of Julia.

Stanley H. Cypress. Unnumbered watercolor painting in Hanson Family Archives, of glades with palm trees, 27 Jan 1943.

INDIAN DICTIONARY

W. Stanley Hanson is credited with being among the first non-Indians to understand that there were two distinct and separate tribes of Indians living in Southwest Florida: Miccosukees and Seminoles. The two groups shared many similarities in culture, but they also had differences and one of them was language. Stanley Hanson not only learned to speak both dialects, but he began work on an Indian-to-English dictionary. He wrote detailed, phonetic translations in neat print in small memorandum notebooks, for Indian words.

Figure 23 W. Stanley Hanson dictionary

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These Hanson dictionaries not only contain colors, such as “white, HOT-KEE and black, TO-CHA,” but also directions, “north, HO-NEE-CIE, south, WA-HA-IEE, east HA-SIA-NA-EE, and west, KA-THA-IEE,” but also general language words. Hanson also attempts to list every Indian residing anywhere in the Everglades and Big Cypress regions, by their English and Indian names, along with a myriad of details. An enlargement of just one entry shows a wealth of information noted by Hanson. This one gives four English names: “Charlie Buster, Charlie Billie <old>, Charlie Billie <young>, and Connie Billie.” In addition to the Indian names, he adds that Charlie Billie <old> is Billie Fewell’s son, and that Connie Billie is dead.

Figure 24 Detail of Hanson dictionary entry

It is my understanding that Mr. Woody Hanson provided copies of these invaluable documents to researchers at the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. They should provide a wealth of detailed information not likely available anywhere else. Not only were extremely few non-Indians able to speak in the Native’s own language, in the early 1900s, but those rare individuals who did learn were most often traders, cattle ranchers, and hunters who learned rudimentary communications just

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51 HFA DOC 019-150. W. Stanley Hanson dictionary page, colors and directions.
52 Ibid.
53 HFA DOC 019-159. W. Stanley Hanson dictionary page, Charlie Dixie to Coffee Tiger.
to allow for necessary exchanges. Stanley Hanson knew the Indians, their familial relationships with each other, and the nuances of their language. He began his acculturation in childhood and never broke close relations with his Indian friends, even unto the day of his death.

These detailed memo books are filled with a mass of information that would be of particular interest to linguists or those studying the genealogical history of Florida Indians.
ADDITIONAL FACETS OF HANSON TREASURE

The Hanson Family Archives contains so many facets offering absolute unique and one-of-a-kind original historical matter, that even in a paper of this length it is impossible to do justice to the potentials. Different parts of the Collection capture exquisite glimpses into the lives of innumerable people, spanning the gamut from a story about an individual, F. C. M. Boggess, getting stuck in a tree with a panther, to decades worth of records documenting a lifelong relationship between the “White Medicine Man” and Josie Billie, the highest-ranking medicine man for an entire generation of Indians. The Billie-Hanson relationship was so deep and enduring, that thirty-five years after W. Stanley Hanson died, Josie Billie, shortly before his death at the age of 93, made the trip into Fort Myers to personally ask Hanson’s son to speak at his own funeral. Billie did this out of honor and respect for his old friend. The younger Hanson did as he was asked, and was the only non-Indian to

Figure 25 (L to R) W. Stanley Hanson, Jr, Josie Billie, Woody Hanson, Billie nephew

54 HFA DOC 002-025 “The Florida Panther,” anecdote written by W. Stanley Hanson, 16 Oct 1936.
participate in the old Medicine Man’s funeral.

In the letters between Julia Allen Hanson and Clara Petzold Hanson, the Collection captures the growing relationship between pioneering women who raised families, while being unusually active participants in the formation of their burgeoning community. The two began writing in 1908, shortly after W. Stanley and Clara Petzold met, and continued on through the time of their marriage in 1910, when Clara moved to from Tarpon Springs to Fort Myers. Julia and Clara also continued active correspondence with a variety of other people until their deaths, in 1934 and 1961 respectively, and the Hanson Archives contain many of these letters. They offer unique perspectives on everything from politics to raising children to progress being made establishing the Everglades National Park to observations made at a sacred Green Corn Dance. The women were both educated, thoughtful, insightful, and smart. Their letters reflect their genuine love for family and the changing world around them.

Julia was also a writer of poetry, and some is quite good. I have several personal favorites, but will include two here for the sake of showing the quality of her writing. She is a fascinating figure, well-deserving and fully worthy of her own biography:
THE PRIMROSE PATH

A Persian kitty, perfumed and fair
Strolled out of the kitchen door for air
When a tomcat lean and lithe and strong
And dirty and yellow came along

He sniffed the perfumed Persian cat
As she strutted about with much éclat
And thinking a bit of time to pass
He whispered: “Kiddo, you’re some class”

“Which is fitting and proper,” was her reply
As she arched the whisker over her eye
“I am ribboned, I sleep on a pillow of silk
And they bathe me daily in certified milk

We should be contented with our lot
I try to be happy, but happy I’m not
And I should be joyful — I should, indeed
For I am most highly pedigreed.”

“Cheer up,” said the tomcat with a smile
And trust your new-found friend for a while
You should escape from your backyard fence
What you need, my dear, is experience.”

New joys of living he then unfurled
And told her tales of the outside world
Suggesting at last with a luring laugh
A trip for two down the Primrose Path

The morning after the night before
The cat came back at the hour of four
The innocent look from her eyes had went
But the smile on her face was a smile of content

And in after days when the children came
To the Persian Kitty of pedigreed fame
They weren’t Persian — they were black and tan
And she told them their Pa was a traveling man

by Julia Allen Hanson, Fort Myers, Florida, March 3, 1924

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OLD AGE

What does it mean to be seventy-four,
With most of a life gone by?
To look back on a journey of many years,
Oft made 'neath a stormy sky.
Sometimes the path was rough and steep,
But often the sun shone bright;
And e'en in the deepest valleys were found,
Sweet glimpses of Heavenly light.

So I can look back upon sun and shade,
Intermingled with smile and tear;
And remember the joy of the bridal wreath,
And the tears that fell on the bier.
But now, there comes a season of rest,
The day is nearly done;
There's leisure to think, to read, to pray,
While awaiting the setting sun.

What are the thoughts of seventy-four,
When that sinking sun dips low?
The thoughts are most dreams of other days,
Of the friends of long ago.
I dream of childhood's care-free hours,
Of youthful joys that fleet,
Of love, and wedded happiness,
Of motherhood so sweet.

And perhaps, among the dreams of age,
The dearest and the best,
Are the dreams about the little ones,
Who slept upon my breast.
Oh! Many are the dreams of age,
So clear t'would almost seem
That dreaming is the real life,
And real life is the dream.

Does hope still live at seventy-four?
Ah yes, but yet in truth,
The hope of age is far removed
From the hope of restless youth.
The aged hope that clouds will pass,
The sun shine bright and warm,
For tidings of the absent ones,
For rest, and peace, and calm.

They hope that love and tender car,
Will fail not 'till the light
Of earthly day shall fade away,
And God shall send the night.
And sure and steadfast is the hope
To safely “cross the bar,”
And meet, once more, the loved and lost,
In those bright realms afar.

by Mrs. Julia A. Hanson, 1917

Julia was nowhere near her life’s end or useful service at age 74, she would live another seventeen full years. However, “Old Age” honestly, candidly, captures a time in this remarkable woman’s life, and stands as a relevant testament to a genuine and age-old human condition. This writing is typical of so many others, in its depth and pertinence, in the Hanson Archives.

In addition to notebooks full of personal Hanson letters, there were unusual and singular events in which family members participated. W. Stanley Hanson was a member of the first-ever expedition that traversed the Everglades in automobiles, before a road was ever built. This group of intrepid men named themselves the “Trail Blazers” and their trek made nationwide news in 1923. Their nearly three-week journey was credited with spurring the completion of the Tamiami Trail, the first road built across South Florida, connecting Miami with Tampa. Thomas Edison and Henry Ford entrusted the

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58 HFA DOC 012-059. Julia Allen Hanson poem, Old Age, 1917.
Blazers with a bottle of grape juice to be delivered to their Miami friend, William Jennings Bryan. A bottle that did not survive the harrowing, but fascinating trip.\textsuperscript{59}

Sea Captain Manuel Antonio Gonzalez (1832-1902) was patriarch of the first pioneers to settle Fort Myers, before it was a city or located in the county of Lee.\textsuperscript{60} Julia Allen Hanson started the first Women’s Club in Southwest Florida, and kept original club notes, projects, and correspondence—held within the Hanson Archives. W. Stanley Hanson was one of the early wardens for the Audubon Society, active in stopping the bloody business of bird plume harvesting. He was a contemporary of Guy Bradley, the game warden famously martyred in the dirty war between those who would legislate the trade and plumers.

The Seminole Indian Association, the Indian aid organization created and administered by the Hanson family, also spurred a mass of written records—minutes, correspondence, membership lists, news clippings, and speeches—that remain intact in the Collection. The speeches, in particular, offer vibrant anecdotes and insight into the Natives during the early to mid-1900s. The Association held annual meetings, where officers were elected, board members appointed, and updates and prospective aid work discussed. These

\textbf{Figure 27} S. I. A. Minnie Moore-Willson\textsuperscript{ card.}
\textit{Univ of South Florida, Special Collections Library, Seminole File}

\textsuperscript{60} Grismer, 275.
meetings were attended by Association members, as well as press representatives. Reports and speeches from these meetings were also often printed in their entirety in the Koreshan newspaper, *American Eagle*. The Hanson and *American Eagle* archives provide comprehensive documentation of the activities of this significant organization. The Seminole Indian Association was also the only one of its kind in Southwest Florida, and on the entire Gulf Coast of the state! It is thus historically significant and worthy of scholarly attention.

Over a period lasting more than four decades, W. Stanley Hanson was enlisted by different governmental entities for help contacting and dealing with Southwest Florida Indians. The requests took a wide variety of forms, from a 1930 telegram from Florida Governor Doyle Carlton, requesting Hanson’s help ferreting out truth to a rumor that two Indian boys were to have their ears cut off as punishment for petty theft,\(^{61}\) to serving as Federal Census taker, and registering Indian men for military service in World War II. Hanson also worked directly for the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs in several minor capacities over a wide-range of years. These various jobs produced paper records, including photographs, writings, and

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\(^{61}\) HFA DOC 010-111. Telegram: Florida Governor, Doyle E. Carlton to W. Stanley Hanson, 1 Aug 1930.
completed forms. These make up a fascinating segment of the Hanson Family Archives.

They include original census records, military registration forms, reports, telegrams, letters, ledgers, and more — all of which represent an assemblage of little-known information regarding South Florida’s most elusive residents. Often these documents include details as small as physical characteristics, such as height, weight, or even a missing finger. It is my understanding that Mr. Woody Hanson has also provided scans of these records to researchers at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.
WONDERFUL THINGS

In 1922, archeologist Howard Carter was the first to peer into the unopened tomb of Egyptian Pharaoh, Tutankhamen, commonly known as “King Tut.” Carter had worked for three-decades to find the singular treasure that would become synonymous with his name. Before the tomb door was officially opened, Carter, his sponsor, Lord Carnarvon and his daughter, Lady Evelyn Herbert, snuck to the tomb in the dead of night for what amounted to a sneak-peek at the treasures within. Carter later wrote:

With trembling hands I made a tiny breach in the upper left-hand corner. Darkness and blank space, as far as an iron testing-rod could reach, showed that whatever lay beyond was empty, and not filled like the passage we had just cleared. Candle tests were applied as a precaution against possible foul gases, and then, widening the hole a little, I inserted the candle and peered in, Lord Carnarvon, Lady Evelyn and Callender standing anxiously beside me to hear the verdict. At first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle flame to flicker, but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues, and gold — everywhere the glint of gold. For the moment — an eternity it must have seemed to the others standing by — I was struck dumb with amazement, and when Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand the suspense any longer, inquired anxiously, "Can you see anything?" it was all I could do to get out the words, "Yes, wonderful things."\footnote{Howard Carter, The Tomb of Tutankhamen. (New York: Dutton, 1972), 35.}

The Hanson Family Archives are not filled with the glint of gold, nor will they likely ever command the world’s attention. However, for the history of South Florida and its native Indian population, the Hanson Collection is much more valuable and important than any Egyptian tomb full of jewels and gold. The Hanson papers and photos
are overflowing with details, brilliant and ugly, of the people who settled this region. It holds secrets of their struggles, motives, aims, goals, desires, and failures. All the gold in Tut’s tomb could not purchase the historical, genealogical, cultural, social, political, anthropological tangled web of information contained in this five-generation collection of bric-a-brac.

I understand Howard Carter’s reaction: “I was struck dumb with amazement as my eyes grew accustomed to the light and details . . . emerged slowly from the mist.”63 That is exactly the effect spending time with the Hanson Collection had on me, and I believe would have on any person with any interest in the history of Southwest Florida and its people. It is a stunning, astonishing body of historical artifacts; it has been my privilege to be the first academic granted full access to the materials for a prolonged period of time. It is the current Hanson family’s desire that their holdings be preserved and studied in the future. However, at this time, it is not their desire to hand the entire collection over to one university or museum, though several have approached asking to be considered as a permanent

63 Ibid.
repository. This handing-over, lock, stock, and proverbial barrel, would forever remove from the Hansons the ability to have say-so in the use or distribution of the contents, and they have so far kept the Archives private. This conundrum currently makes access to the materials and the security of the artifacts themselves a quandary, one that is not yet solved at the writing of paper. I never removed one historical item from the Hanson offices. I moved to be near the collection, and traveled to the office every weekday to research the material and create the Excel spreadsheet. I also did extensive outside research on different members of the family and on areas affecting them, such as genealogical records and the Tamiami trail blazing expedition, and any information I gathered, I copied it directly to Mr. Woody Hanson. We maintained an open and aboveboard relationship throughout the research process. Mr. Hanson was accommodating, helpful, encouraging, and a man of his word, from our first meeting and still. I do believe there are unlimited opportunities for other scholars who will surely come after me, to work with Mr. Hanson and find him to be as great an ally for them as he has been for me.

Southwest Florida is infamous for being a hideout of pirates. Gasparilla and Sanibel are barrier islands believed to be sites of buried pirate treasure. If I had stumbled upon a chest filled with gold, while digging a sand-castle moat, it could not have brought me the prolonged thrill of working on this Hanson material. It is truly one of the Wonders of Southwest Florida.


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HFA DOC 004-002 Green Corn Dance ceremonial grounds sketch by W. Stanley Hanson.

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HFA DOC 007-061. Letter: A. LeChevallier to Dr. William Hanson, 24 Aug 1889.
HFA DOC 010-111. Telegram: Florida Governor, Doyle E. Carlton to W. Stanley Hanson, 1 Aug 1930.


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HFA DOC 015-035. Stanley Hanson with Indians in back yard.


HFA DOC 017-111. Indian boy with dog.

HFA DOC 017-270. Indian woman and child, March 1931.

HFA DOC 018-122/123. *Fort Myers News Press* article. Undated, but the author, Manuel S. Gonzalez, died in 1935, so it pre-dated his death.

HFA DOC 019-103. W. Stanley Hanson Memo Book.

HFA DOC 019-108. W. Stanley Hanson, log of Indians camping in backyard, 10 Jan 1935.

HFA DOC 019-091, 092. W. Stanley Hanson, “Lizard Dance” at Green Corn Ceremony, 1933.

HFA DOC 019-109. W. Stanley Hanson notation in backyard Indian log, 2 Mar 1935.

HFA DOC 019-114. Memo Book written by W. Stanley Hanson, 1933.

HFA DOC 019-150. W. Stanley Hanson dictionary page, colors and directions.

HFA DOC 019-159. W. Stanley Hanson dictionary page, Charlie Dixie to Coffee Tiger.

HFA DOC 020-096-103. Letter: Clara Petzold Hanson to her sister, Alice, 17 Jun [unk].

UNNUMBERED

Cypress, Stanley H., Unnumbered watercolor painting in Hanson Family Archives, of glades with palm trees, 27 Jan 1943.