

Virginia, in the great war between the States.

There were so many good men there in that day whom I can't recall, all having joined the great majority. It is not likely that there is living today a single man who can tell us from personal knowledge anything about Fort Harvie, and but very few who can tell us anything about Fort Myers in the days of its youth, from personal observation. Yes, it was in 1853 -- fifty-seven years ago -- I was wined and dined in Fort Myers as a welcome guest with these noble men. Still the memory is fresh and vivid. Tampa was the headquarters for the military and was the point of communication from Fort Myers.

The writer well remembers the steamer, Grey Cloud, commanded by Captain Dukes of Tampa. She was to my mind a beautiful boat. I first saw her at Tampa, as she steamed up that little shallow, tortuous channel and tied up to an insignificant little dock, direct from Fort Myers, in the year 1851, about two years before I visited Fort Myers. I believe she was the first steamboat I ever saw, being at that time about seventeen years old. Well do I remember an incident which made my youthful bosom swell with indignation. A young man, whose name I can't recall, was standing on the dock and telling me of a thrilling and dangerous experience in a small sail boat, then anchored out in the stream, which he pointed out. He had experienced a terrible storm at sea. He told me how staunch and safe she was, how she rode the high seas which prevailed, when a man -- I can't call him a gentleman -- who had apparently been reading, sitting on the upper deck of that steamboat, called to this young man and said: "I have been listening to your story, and every word you have said is true. That boat belongs to me, and if I hear you telling anything about that boat which is not true, I will give you a cow-hiding" -- with a terrible oath. So heartless, so unkind, so uncalled for, were these remarks that it made a lasting impression upon my youthful mind. The young man was so touched and dumbfounded that he did not reply, but great drops of tears rolled down his sunburned cheeks. Gladly would I have helped that young man in giving that heartless villain a thrashing, which he so justly deserved.

The next time I saw that beautiful boat was just below Fort Denaud, at a post called Fort Simmons, in the Caloosahatchee River. I was a volunteer in Captain Leroy G. Lesley's mounted company, U.S. service, and was detailed to assist in discharging a cargo from the Grey Cloud. This was in 1857. Other boats doubtless did much service in that day in line of communication and transportation, but the Grey Cloud is the only one I can now recall.

My second visit to Fort Myers was also in 1853 or '54, in the capacity of a guide to Lieutenant Benson and party, from Fort Meade, a distance of about 100 miles, to Fort Myers, all the way a trackless, uninhabited wilderness. The object of this trip was to ascertain if it was practicable to open an overland, through route from Fort Meade to Fort Myers. The party consisted of Lieutenant Benson, mounted, three pack mules, and six footman, detailed for the trip from the garrison of Fort Meade, and myself on horseback as a guide, for which I received one dollar per day in gold. Lt. Benson was a noble, goodhearted man, who afterward became, as before stated, a General in the United States army and was killed in the battle of Malvern Hill, Virginia, during the great war between the States.

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