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Capt. Hendry's cattle herds increased rapidly on the previously ungrazed rangeland. He established contact with the Cuban market and was one of the first to ship cattle from Punta Rassa. This necessitated the construction of wharves and pens. As early as 1876, he fenced in a tract of 25,000 acres to improve the grasses for fattening stock for market. Reputedly at one time he had as many as 50,000 head of cattle and was called "The Cattle King of South Florida". In 1891 he began to dispose of his stock of cattle running on the wild range and bought and enclosed a large area of low marsh lands on the borders of the Caloosahatchee River, where he placed Jersey and other improved breeds, crossing them with scrubs, which developed a hardy, valuable strain. With one day's ride he could see his entire stock and personally superintend them. He also had hogs and citrus.

In 1872 a one-room log cabin school was opened. Francis enrolled his younger school age children George, Francis, and Virginia Lee.

In 1876 he was among the citizens of Fort Myers who petitioned for a postoffice. Washington granted the request, but to their chagrin insisted on calling the village "Myers". Repeated overtures to have Washington relent went unheeded. Not until 1901 did the postoffice yield and officially accept Fort Myers as the city's proper designation.

Believing a newspaper vital for the area, he subsidized Stafford Cleveland's first edition of the weekly "Fort Myers Press", which was headed: "Myers, Monroe County, Florida, November 22, 1884".

Francis A. Hendry was chairman of the meeting, held in the schoolhouse at 2nd and Lee Streets, that resulted in the incorporation of Fort Myers on August 12, 1885. The first city officials were: Mayor, H. A. Parker; Clerk, C. H. Stebbins; Marshal, C. L. Oliver; Members of the Town Council, F. A. Hendry, N. L. Langford, J. T. Haskew, William M. Hendry, J. J. Blount, W. A. Roberts, J. O. Breman. Later he became Mayor.

In 1887 another meeting led in a petition campaign for the formation of a new county. Hendry in 1908 remembered, "Well do I remember when the time came to organize a new county by the people of the mainland of Monroe County, and the mass meeting held under the shade of the trees on the present school lot in Fort Myers. Proud indeed am I that when a name was discussed that I-even I-made a notion to name it in honor of the beloved Robert E. Lee. Well do I remember the enthusiasm in adopting that notion." His efforts proved successful for on May 13, 1887 Lee County was established. Along with William Towles, Frank J. Wilson, Peter Nelson, and John Powell, he was selected to the first Lee County Board of Commissioners. This honor was thereafter bestowed on him several times, and he completed his last term only shortly before his death.

Capt. Hendry from 1875-1887 was State Senator from the 24th District, composed of the counties of Monroe and Manatee. From 1893-1905 he was six times elected as Lee County State Representative. He served on important committees and proved an active and influential member.

About 1891, having previously moved to Fort Thompson, he turned the active administration of his stock interests over to his sons, and interested himself chiefly in his citrus groves and his experimental breeding of cattle. He and his wife, believers in Southern hospitality, kept their home open to all who desired to share in their liberality, and they entertained hundreds of guests.

Although he was a veteran of the Third Seminole War, Capt. Hendry was on very friendly terms with the Seminoles. He was among them known