

October 2007

Cornerstone of Tax Relief Thrown Out

Property Tax relief has been the focus of government in Florida for the last couple of years since the housing price boom inflated property taxes so rapidly, forcing some owners to sell. In June it was the subject of a Special Session of the Legislature after the normal session failed to reach a settlement during its allocated time. Cities and Counties were told to cut or cap their tax collection revenues, but the cornerstone of the legislation was placing a constitutional amendment on to the presidential primary ballot on January 29th. Voters were to be asked to approve a super-sized homestead exemption. This would give resident homeowners a one-time chance to keeping their existing \$25,000 exemption (before the taxable rate kicks in) and a 3% annual cap (Save Our Homes – SOH) on taxable increases. This current system means that neighbours in similar properties pay very different amounts in property taxes for the same services. The alternative on offer, and endorsed by the Florida Association of Realtors and promoted by Governor Crist, is to have a Super-Sized exemption of 75% of a home’s value up to \$200,000, and an additional 15% of the value between \$200,000 - \$300,000. The SOH cap would be eliminated. This would be a one-time only choice for the current home of the resident, upon moving they would automatically go into the new system if this is approved. A Circuit Court Judge in Leon County has said the amendment should not appear on the ballot in its current form, saying that it is too misleading. Mayor Eric Hersh of Weston had challenged the amendment. In its decision, the court ruled that the ballot summary read by voters calls for “preserving application of Save-Our-Homes provisions until an irrevocable election is made.” The Judge called that misleading, saying the amendment would actually phase out the existing property tax. The government has filed an appeal in the Supreme Court but it faces a deadline of October 28th. Under Florida law, a proposed change to the constitution must be created at least 90 days before the election in which it is to appear. Another Special Session of the Legislature is planned for late October, (the fourth special session this year) so a re-write could be accomplished in time. If a ruling is not forthcoming from the Supreme Court before January 29th the question could still go to the voters ‘as is’.

Committee to Monitor Rentals

On October 1st the Marco Island city council meeting discussed possible regulation of short-term rental properties together with existing code requirements. There is currently no regulatory ordinance of rental homes, but codes do cover noise levels, parking rules and the number of un-related individuals who can live in a single family residence. Following many complaints from residents, and at the suggestion of one of the councillors, a committee was formed to monitor the rentals. It is not clear at this time what teeth, if any, the committee may have. The committee is made up of representatives from the Marco Island Area Association of Realtors, the chamber of

commerce, a rental agency, four members of the general public, Police Chief Roger Reinke, Code Enforcement Director Eric Wardle, Community Development Director Steve Olmsted and a non-voting chairperson from City Council.

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Florida Homes and Travel

October 2007

From the Editor

As the UK heads into autumn, figures published by yet another survey pronounced that around 75% of people would be arranging an autumn getaway. Of course October and November are very popular months for homeowners to visit their homes, as it is the 'quiet' season in Florida. So we were very glad when Budget Rent a Car extended the upgrade offer operating all summer, around to March 31st (Christmas and Easter excepted of course!). Alamo, recently back in the market with competitive rates, also have an upgrade available with the same black-out dates, that is state-wide, not just Sanford as was indicated to us initially. We are hoping that Dollar will get into the fray with an upgrade too!

Next month will see a new style to the newsletter together with a brand new heading. The existing heading has seen us through since 1989 very ably. Those of you who have received a letter from us in the last couple of months will have seen our new letterhead, and we hope this will take us forward for the next 20 years!

Governor Crist has had to call a third and fourth Special Session of the Legislature in October to strip \$1 billion from the budget, income to the state has fallen as the housing market has stalled, and to discuss the property tax amendment due to go to the ballot on January 29th as mentioned on page 1.

We apologise if this issue is particularly late reaching you due to the Postal strike upsetting our normal delivery schedule.

Correction: The developer of Tierra Del Sol is not Park Square Homes as written last month. It is in fact American Leisure Real Estate Group Inc

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Jan Marie Doughty CPA

[Certified Public Accountant – USA - Licensed in Florida] has been assisting UK owners of Holiday Rental property in Florida for the past twelve years with:- Federal Tax Returns [1040NR], Tangible Personal Property Tax Returns Withholding Certificate applications

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Call for a chat or to obtain further details.

Tallahassee Climate Data – October - 1948- 2000 (All in degrees Fahrenheit)

The average high temp is	80.8°
The average low temp is	56.8°
The highest temp (on Oct 2 nd 1959)	94°
The coldest night temp (on Oct 30 th 1973)	30°

Average Florida Mortgage Rates

With zero points	July	Aug	Sep
Fixed 30 yrs	6.75%	6.99%	6.87%
Adjustable 1 yr	6.50%	6.56%	6.58%

Note: Mortgage rates are published as a service to readers to indicate trends and must not be relied on in entering into any agreement. Source: www.hsh.com

How to Reach Florida Homes and Travel

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Elle Hubbard

Letters

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News Roundup

Walt Disney Worlds Contemporary, Old Key West and Saratoga Springs resorts have achieved Green Lodging status bringing to 36 the number of Florida hotels with this status.

This probably won't surprise many of you – a survey by Barclays and YouGov has discovered that 41% of Brits now save money by using the holiday home or flat of friends or family and rather worryingly - 13% of those surveyed admitted to only staying friends so that they could make use of the facilities! It is estimated that around £4 billion is saved every year by Brits 'using' free accommodation!

Figures released by Orlando International Airport show that the number of passengers increased this June by 5.21% over June 2006, and that the first 6 months of the year show overall passengers could exceed 35 million if continued for 12 months.

A group of 21 selected passenger airlines reported a system operating profit margin of 8.8 percent in the second quarter of 2007, the highest profit margin since 2000 and the first time since 2000 that airlines have had five consecutive profitable quarters, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) of the U.S. Department of Transportation reported today in a release of preliminary data. The 21-carrier group consists of the seven largest network, low-cost and regional carriers based on operating revenue.

Virgin Atlantic will fit new Premium Economy seats in all its 747 fleet by Christmas taking the seats available per flight from 32 to 62. Premium Economy was introduced by Virgin in 1992 and has seen demand soar by 56% from 2000 to 2005.

BA will increase flights from Gatwick to Orlando from seven to ten flights a week when the new EU-US open skies aviation treaty begins.

If you like to get upgrades on airlines (wouldn't we all, but not possible with two noisy youngsters, strangely) then we have found just the website for you! www.flightbliss.com aims to find the best upgrade deals for all airlines. Here is what it says about BA/Virgin: *"British Airways is gaining ground on arch-rival Virgin Atlantic, both in the comfort of its seats and the opportunity of discounted Business Class travel using mileage upgrades. BA requires 25,000 miles for a Premium Economy to Business Class travel upgrade vs. 40,000 for Virgin Atlantic."*

Passengers at Southwest Florida's airport looking for a pre-flight drink can expect to be asked for ID regardless of age! In order to eliminate under-age drinking whilst not discriminating by appearance the airport has taken the decision to ask everyone for ID, even if they look old enough to be Great-Grandparents!

MoneyCorp U.S. Dollar Update

Over the last month the Pound has added about two cents to its value against the Dollar but boy, has it been tough going! The criss-cross of flights to safety and flights to yield threatened many times to end in a disaster of epic proportions. As September drew to a close it looked as though the 'yield-is-king' fraternity had the upper hand, especially after the Fed slashed 50 basis points from its Funds Rate. The Yen was on the ropes and the Aussie and Kiwi Dollars were punching the air. In the meantime Sterling was fighting a lonely battle, trying to shrug off the effects of the first run on a UK bank since the 19th century. If Sterling manages to move ahead from here it will do so despite the growing threat of a rate cut of its own. But it probably will move ahead; the Dollar still looks shaky.

Subscribers to Florida Homes and Travel who open a Trading Facility will have Moneycorp's £15 fee waived for all transactions they complete with them and will receive a Privilege Card entitling them to commission free currency and a 1% improvement on the exchange rate at any of the TTT Moneycorp currency exchange bureaux locations. Tel: 020 7589 3000.

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Average Daily Hotel Room Rates

Area	Sep 06	Sep07
International Drive	\$88.26	\$85.70
Lake Buena Vista	\$110.84	\$106.63
Kissimmee East	\$86.74	\$90.64
Kissimmee West	\$49.01	\$51.56



Florida Homes and Travel

October 2007

Homes

As the downturn in the U.S. economy and the sub-prime mortgage crisis continues to reverberate around the world the U.S. travel industry is asking – how will it affect us? Economic forecasters had been predicting increases in the number of jobs in the U.S. of 110,000 for August 2007, instead 4,000 jobs were cut and this is bound to have some kind of knock-on effect on a luxury such as travel, but maybe not for some months. Analysts at Pricewaterhouse Coopers have revised their forecast for growth in demand in hotel room occupancy downwards by only 0.1% from 1.4% to 1.3% growth for the remainder of the year.

From 3 September 2007, holiday home owners advertising their property on Holiday-Rentals.co.uk will receive free exposure on 12 leading international websites at no extra charge and with no extra work. This will enable the growing number of holiday home owners who depend on holiday lets to maximise rental income by promoting their property to travellers worldwide. The 12 international websites, operated by parent company HomeAway, Inc. include the number one site in the US, HomeAway.com, the number one site in Germany, FeWo-direkt.de, prestigious partner sites Times Online and USA Today, plus eight local language European websites. Together, these sites receive in excess of 40 million visits each year. The standard advert is £155 (€230) ex. VAT for a 12 month listing. For that price you will receive 4 large colour photos, 27 searchable property features, a customised map and availability calendars, and free text message (SMS) alerts when you receive email enquiries.

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Pulte Homes has topped the rankings by J D Power and Associates of customer service and satisfaction. Centex Homes were second, followed by David Weekly, Beazer Homes and K B Homes in fifth. To qualify for ranking the builder had to have closed on at least 150 properties during 2006 in Polk, Orange, Lake, Osceola, Volusia, Seminole and Brevard counties.

Foreclosures in Florida continue to rise at astonishing rates. In August there were 33,392 foreclosure filings, up 70% from July 2007 and more than twice the total of a year ago.

Following this year's Consumer Choice Act which removed many of the cumbersome licensing hurdles that Cable companies had to go through to service an area, AT & T has announced a \$750 million investment in Florida. A new Cable and Internet service will be rolled out across Florida.

Kolcraft has recalled around 425,000 travel cots/play pens following the death of a child. All of the cots have a changing table with restraint strap. The child became entangled in the restraint strap hanging below the table after being put in the cot whilst the table was still attached. Twelve different Kolcraft travel cots are included in the recall. They can be seen at www.cpsc.gov and follow the link for *Play yards* – or call (888) 655-8484.

Airport security screeners stepped up scrutiny of remote-controlled toys on October 1st after authorities said terrorists could use them to detonate bombs. "Credible specific information" indicates that terrorists are looking at using remote devices that can trigger an explosive, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) said in a statement. The agency said there's no indication of a timeline or a plot. "Intelligence and law enforcement have developed information that terrorists are interested in using remote-controlled toy vehicles as part of their tactics," TSA chief Kip Hawley said in an interview. "There were some dots that came together" he continued. Airline passengers including children who carry remote-controlled toys to checkpoints may face additional screening, such as a pat-down search. Remote devices are still allowed in airplane cabins, though the TSA encourages travellers to put them in checked bags.

Oct 1st was the deadline for insurance companies to submit their rate filings as required by law. They are supposed to pass along savings to customers as part of the insurance reforms passed earlier this year by the Legislature. We will have news on approved filings next month.



Florida Homes and Travel

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Insurance

The Florida Supreme Court ruled on 20th September that insurers are not liable for flood-related damage from the 2004 hurricanes, reversing the decision of 2 district courts and affecting hundreds of civil cases. The impact of this ruling carries over to hundreds of other pending wind – versus – flood cases, including a class action lawsuit against the state-run Citizens Property Insurance.

Just prior to the 2004 hurricane season a district court in south Florida ruled that under Florida's *valued policy law*, insurers must pay policy limits when a covered property is destroyed, even if the damage was partly caused by an uncovered peril – such as flood. As a result of last months' ruling, homeowners will now have to collect loss payments from wind **and** flood insurers – who do not always agree on the percentage of damage caused by their peril. The unanimous opinion written by Justice Charles Wells states Florida's 108 year old *valued policy law* was designed to prevent haggling over the value of destroyed property, not to cover perils that were not insured. He wrote "an insurer is liable for a loss by a peril covered under the policy for which a premium has been paid."

Florida's 'No Fault' auto law expired under its Sunset provision on October 1st. Despite knowing that this day was coming, it has now been decided to add a review of the law, with a mind to bringing it back, to the Special Session of the Legislature commencing October 3rd to address the State Budget. Auto insurers are furious, because if the law is reinstated, all the work preparing for the change-over will have to be undone. Computer programs which have been programmed to account for the ending of the law will have to be rewritten to take account of any changes brought about by reprising the law. Of course all this will cost money, which will in turn be passed on to customers!

In another showcase of research and due diligence, it has been discovered that Citizens insurance cannot offer homeowners discounts due on their premiums for storm-proofing their homes! Last year the Florida Cabinet instructed insurance companies, including Citizens, to double existing discounts for protecting their homes by September 1st 2007. Unfortunately, under Citizens current system the discounts are not capped but cumulative, which could actually present the possibility of the insurer having to pay the homeowner for his policy! To prevent this, officials have decided not to implement any

discounts for now. The discounts were approved in May, but it was not discovered until 7 weeks ago, when they started trying to make the changes, that there was a problem.

Hurricane Season

"For the 2007 Atlantic hurricane season, NOAA scientists predict 13 to 17 named storms, with seven to 10 becoming hurricanes, of which three to five could become major hurricanes of Category 3".

This was the forecast back in June, but the season began quietly. Tropical Storm Andrea slipped in early on 10th May, off the east of Florida. Tropical Storm Barry arrived in the Gulf of Mexico bang on time on the June 1st. We then had to wait nearly two months until July 31st for Tropical Storm Chantal to rise out in the Atlantic, dissipating without landfall. It was another two weeks before Hurricane Dean (Category 5) came along to much publicity over Mexico. At the same time Tropical Storm Erin rose from the Gulf and dissipated over San Antonio.

On August 31st Hurricane Felix (Category 5) followed a similar path to that of Dean across the Caribbean into Central America. In September activity really picked up with Tropical Storms Gabrielle, Humberto, Ten (un-named), Ingrid, Jerry, Karen and Hurricane Lorenzo (Category 1), September finished with Tropical Storm Melissa which was rather a damp squib! Touching wood whilst writing, none of these have affected Florida since the first two early on which really only brought heavy rains. That is not to say there has not been stormy weather in Florida – just not actual named storms. Eustis was hit by a tornado that destroyed some 7 homes, and damaged over 100 others. It was considered an F1, a weak-to-moderate tornado on the Fujita scale.

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Coastal Gazette

Titusville City Council has voted to ban short-term rentals of less than three months. The prohibition applies to most residential zoning districts, although if a property is within 100 feet of a commercial district, the property owner can file an exemption.

Bank of Florida has successfully completed its transition and rebranding from Old Florida Bank to Bank of Florida following the merger in April this year.

Neiman Marcus is coming to University Town Center Mall in Sarasota. The 80,000-square-foot Neiman Marcus will be the luxury retailer's 45th store and it's eighth in Florida, the company's largest market. Since 2001, five of the nine new stores have been built in Florida.

After encouraging gains in the 1990s, populations of loggerhead sea turtles are now dropping, primarily because of commercial fishing, according to a federal review. The report stops short of recommending upgrading the federally threatened species to "endangered" status. But scientists and environmentalists say it should serve as a wake-up call about the future of loggerheads, which can grow to more than 300 pounds and are believed to be one of the oldest species. The Southeast — Florida in particular — is one of the two largest loggerhead nesting areas in the world; eggs are laid and hatched along beaches from Texas to North Carolina. The other major nesting area is in the Middle Eastern nation of Oman.

Twin cyclones formed in the balmy gulf waters off Marco Island on the afternoon of the 18th, hovering side by side before vanishing again. The two waterspouts appeared just after 4 p.m.,

giving Islanders enough time to marvel at the sight and snap a few photos.

Four homes in Sarasota are being given away for free – the catch is that the new owner must move them! Land, including the four homes, is being cleared for a new project called Citrus Square. The developers have said that if the houses are not gone in 2-3 months they will have to be bulldozed.

Florida Public Utilities has increased rates by 8% effective Sept 30th. A second rate increase of between 30 – 35% will take place on January 1st 2008.

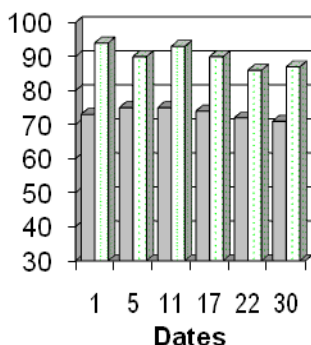
Platinum Properties Update

Hours before the auction of Winslow Estates land (as part of Foreclosure proceedings following action by a group of creditors and buyers); Platinum Properties filed for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy protection. The land was subsequently removed from the auction on the courthouse steps on September 21st 2007.

Under the terms of Chapter 11, Platinum Properties will be protected from creditors and lawsuits whilst they seek to reorganise the company. They must file a plan to the courts within 30-45 days. This must be approved by the courts. The protection will allow Platinum Properties to seek new financing that can be spent on infrastructure and building, rather than paying down past debts. Platinum Properties has three developments; Winslow Estates, Millbrook Manor and Citrus Gardens.

Hopeful owners will be asked by the courts for a one time decision of whether they wish to walk away and lose their deposit, or if they wish to stick with the project.

September Orlando High/Low Temperatures



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October 2007

Water Sports

To experience a new adventure on your next trip to Florida, learn a new water sport. Sunny skies and calm waters make South Florida an ideal spot for trying out sports, like sailing the Florida Keys, windsurfing off Miami's sunny South Beach and snorkelling among the colourful coral reefs. Florida offers great instructional programs at all skill levels.

The gorgeous Hawk's Cay Resort on Duck Key Island (currently undergoing a \$30 million renovation set to be completed by the end of first quarter 2008 - Marina activities are unaffected) offers several great water sports instructional programs. Guests can visit the Scuba centre to gain experience at the resort's accredited dive school before venturing off to one of North America's only living coral reefs. The wakeboard and water-ski school provides the opportunity to learn to wakeboard, ski or kneeboard on the calm, scenic waters of the Florida Keys. Visitors should also check out the resort's Offshore Sailing School, founded by Olympian Steve Colgate. Featuring professional courses, certified instructors and award-winning boats, this sailing program offers participants an unforgettable vacation experience.

Miami is well known for its great nightlife scene, but the city also offers visitors beautiful year round diving conditions with warm waters and good visibility. Located in Miami's stylish South Beach, South Beach Divers is a professional diving centre with instruction for all skill levels. Guests can gain Scuba certification from experienced and enthusiastic instructors before diving into Florida's clear blue waters. South Beach Divers offers dive and snorkel trips to Miami's unique shipwrecks and Key Largo's Marine Sanctuary. With more than 75 wrecks and artificial reefs, Miami Beach provides divers with endless opportunities to discover exciting marine life.

Key West's Sebago Watersports offers instruction and tours in everything from sailing and parasailing to snorkelling and "snuba" diving. Connected to a floating air supply system, snuba diving allows beginners to discover the underwater world of the Florida Keys. For an action packed experience, take the six hour Power Adventure, which includes snorkelling, parasailing, Waverunners, a water trampoline, a banana boat ride and a buffet. Sebago also offers dolphin cruises, seaplane and boat tours, and even ghost tours, of the Dry Tortugas islands.

Guests can set sail on one of Miami's unforgettable ocean experiences with Tropical Sailing Catamaran Charters. Besides taking a sightseeing cruise of the beautiful waters of Miami, guests can experience exciting water sport adventures. Professional instructors will ensure a great time with lessons for all levels of experience for inner-tubing, slalom skiing and wakeboarding. Snorkelling is also available for guests to enjoy a relaxing day of exploring Miami's distinctive marine life. Other exciting water adventures include Waverunners and banana boat rides.

Learn to dive the colourful barrier reefs of the Florida Keys at the Abyss Dive Centre in Marathon. This full-service dive centre offers diving opportunities at more than 50 locations including shallow reef sites rich with marine life and wreck sites featuring unique coral growths and fascinating history. Guests can explore the depths of the Florida Keys while enjoying the gorgeous beaches of Marathon.

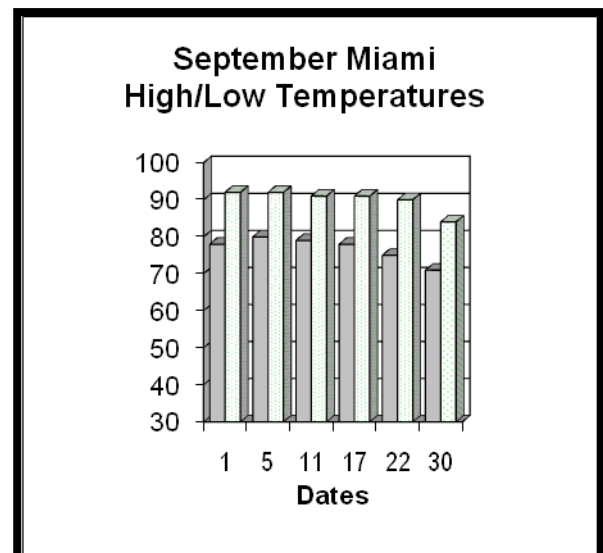
With so many water sports programs, South Beach promises to provide an unforgettable vacation. Discover a new way to enjoy Florida's beautiful and unique beach destinations by taking advantage of these great opportunities to learn a new sport. For more ideas on trying new Florida experiences, visit www.visitflorida.com.

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Did you know?

A museum in Sanibel owns 2 million shells and claims to be the world's only museum devoted solely to mollusks.





Florida Homes and Travel

October 2007

Lake Conway

Our excerpts last month from a Florida history text book reminded Peter Stanhope, of the Florida Brits, of research he undertook in Florida looking at early English settlers. Peter contributed to an historical series run in the Orlando Sentinel, extracts of which are below together with some more history of the Lake Conway area.

Nowadays Lake Conway is located just north of where Sandlake/McCoy Road meets the Beachline Expressway. The lake itself is a chain of 3 main lakes surrounded by subdivisions.

In the spring of 1843 Benjamin F. Whitner Jr., Deputy Surveyor for the territory of Florida, came upon an unnamed lake. His field notes recorded the event as "28.43 chains (Surveyor talk) to clear open lake, (which being unnamed, I have called Lake Conway).

Settlers trickled in to settle around Fort Gatlin (built in November 1838) and there are shops, churches and parks etc still bearing the name Fort Gatlin. The first Church was founded in the 1880's and stood on the corner of Anderson and Conway roads. Around the same time English colonists started following adverts for orange groves in the British papers. Investors were buying large tracts of Florida for around a dollar an acre to sell on with claims of a "certain annual income of at least \$10,000 when the groves had reached maturity."

The British seemed to like the Lake Conway area. The whole episode "seems typically British to my mind, particularly for the period," said Peter. The speculators found a "lucrative source of investment from the landed gentry of Britain", who sent their younger sons out to seek their

fame and fortune.

As younger sons inherited nothing from the family estate it seemed a good idea to send them off to some imagined Utopia in Florida to make a name for themselves. They were fuelled by a monthly remittance to keep them going until they settled in. "They became known as remittance men because they were always waiting from the next check to come through the mail from daddy back home," said Peter.

William Blackman's 1927 *History of Orange County* recounts a lovely tale of new young English arrivals who returned to their Kissimmee hotel and "running true to English form, placed their shoes outside the door to be polished. Much to their disgust they found the shoes in the morning where they had left them, untouched, and were assured by the young English clerk that they were 'jolly lucky' to find them at all."

Captain Dudley G. Cary-Elwes (1873 – 1914) was a particular leader of the English group in the Conway area. Cary-Elwes served with Her Majesty's Third Infantry in Corfu in 1857, India in 1858 and China in 1859 -61 before heading to Florida with his family some 20 years later. Blackman reports that the family 'entertained liberally' at their large house on Lake Fredrika, north-east from Lake Conway. The house boasted stables and tennis courts and became host to regular tennis sessions on a Wednesday for other young English settlers. The English colonists were very sporty, enjoying shooting the local game of deer, quail and pigeon – there were no game laws at the time – and they cycled everywhere so much that a cycle path was created to Orlando. They also founded the Conway Yacht Club and the Conway Polo, rugby and cricket clubs.

As we have read, some of this group had independent finances (the remittance men), but many others had to take local work as labourers, waggoners, carpenters and the like to keep the money flowing as they waited for their groves to mature.

The 'first' English colony came to an abrupt end when back-to-back freezes in 1894-1895 devastated crops. Many English just fled back to England, according to Blackman "precipitately, some 200 together, abandoning groves, homes, furniture, with tables set and dishes unwashed."

Of course the second colony is ongoing now, as Brits continue to try and live the dream. But quite literally replacing the orange groves, vacation homes seem to be the crop either to own or manage!

JOHN A TUFFIN & CO **Chartered Accountants**

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The Legend of Spook Hill

We couldn't have an October issue without a little "spookiness"!

After the Seminoles left the Cherokee nation, they settled in Central Florida away from the white man's lodges to the North. One legendary chief settled on the lake which is now known as Lake Wales. Here he had all the advantages of a high campsite on a lake which offered fresh water and good fishing. It was also close to Iron Mountain which, as the highest point in Florida, was sacred to the Indians' Sun God.

The chief, Cufcowellax, and his people were happy for several years, but then one day a huge bull alligator moved into the lake and began to harass the tribe. Soon it began nightly raids on the village, and the tribe lived in terror of this evil spirit that inhabited their lake.

The legend says that Cufcowellax was a chief of great physical prowess and courage. He had great stature among his people both as a warrior and as a ruler. When he saw his people in constant fear, the chief, fearing for their safety, set out to conquer the evil spirit. His tribal shaman and elders placed him under the protection of the Great Spirit and he began his search.

Though many suns came and went, he could not catch the 'gator. Finally one morning he came upon the 'gator on the northwest shore as it dragged another night's victim into the lake.

The legend says the chief battled the 'gator on land and water for a moon, and then suddenly the great thrashing stopped, and the water of the lake turned red.

The tribe watched the surface of the lake in fearful anticipation. With great joy they saw their chief rise from the water. In the midst of their celebration they saw something else. The great battle had made a smaller lake near the big one. When the chief died, he was buried on the shore of the little lake, Ticowa, and the place became sacred to the Indians.

Discovery of Spook Hill

The Indians lost their camping grounds to the encroaching white settlers. Circuit riders carrying mail between the coasts used the old trail around Lake Ticowa until they discovered that their horses were laboring downhill. It was they who first called the place Spook Hill.

Spook Hill is on North Wales Drive, Lake Wales, which is about an hour south of Orlando just off

US 27. On the rural stretch of road, the town has helpfully erected a sign stating the legend and painted a white line on the road. If you pull up to the white line, leave the car in neutral and get out, you will be able to witness your car rolling up hill!



The town has wholly embraced the legend, the local school is called Spook Hill Elementary, which has given it a totally maintenance free tourist attraction! The legend sign below stands by the spot:



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Florida Homes and Travel

October 2007

Weird News

Animal expert Jack Hanna, formerly seen on the pre-show montage before Shamu's show at SeaWorld, got caught in a rather unusual clinch with a bird of the feather kind. Whilst travelling with a mongoose, a small leopard and a baby flamingo (as you do) he tried to take the flamingo in a 2 foot by 3 foot crate through a turnstile at Ohio State University Airport. This was one of the 10 foot tall varieties with lots of horizontal bars – he slid the box in and then tried to straddle over it to continue pushing, but as most of us know, you can't square a circle! The crate was stuck fast, and Hanna had to climb out over the top to get help leaving the animals and everyone else trapped on the tarmac. It took 3 fire-fighters to lift the cage out over the top of the turnstile. Hanna joked that next time he flies through the airport he will bring a gerbil!

A homeowner went into his loft to fix an electrical short circuit and discovered a lock box containing exactly \$100,000 (What would you do?). He contacted the police to make sure that the money wasn't involved with any crime – it appears not, and now he wants the money back. Enter, stage left, the previous owner, a widow, whose husband was found murdered in 2003, who believes the money should by right be hers. Her husband dealt in expensive and fancy weapons, and many believe that his line of work may have lead to his death. Police searched the house including the loft after his death and found many weapons and lots of cash, but failed to find this money. The money is now in an evidence locker at the Sanford Police station whilst ownership is debated!

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First Watch

First Watch restaurants are the largest chain of privately owned, daytime only restaurants in the US. There are 76 restaurants in 11 states with headquarters in Bradenton Florida. Open from 7.00 am to 2.30 pm every day except Christmas Day and Thanksgiving, all the Breakfasts, brunches and lunches are prepared to order, with breads, muffins and batters created from scratch every day. On arrival you will be greeted with a pot of Sunrise Select premium coffee, complimentary newspapers and Wi-Fi Internet access.

Founded in 1983 with the ethos and slogan "if we can, we will" the restaurants have been frequently recognised with awards: For sixteen consecutive years, First Watch has been a recipient of Sarasota Magazine's Reader's Choice Awards, in such categories as "Best Breakfast," "Best Power Brunch" and "Best Healthy Restaurant." The Orlando Sentinel awarded First Watch "Best Breakfast" destination in a recent reader's poll, while the St. Louis Senior Circuit proclaimed, "First Watch gets a five-star rave."

Some special menu items include:

Omelettes; Acapulco Express™; Chorizo, avocado, green chillies and onions, smothered with melted cheeses and topped with sour cream. Served with a side of freshly made salsa

Floridian French Toast™; Sourdough French toast, sprinkled with wheat germ and powdered sugar, covered with bananas, kiwi and berries

Joaquin Yahoo™; an open-faced Mexican-style frittata with mushrooms, broccoli, celery, zucchini and onions. Topped with our homemade freshly made salsa, melted cheeses and sour cream. Served with an English muffin.

Won's Oriental™; Teriyaki chicken breast, fresh veggies, water chestnuts and whole cashews, sautéed in our own sweet and sour dressing, piled atop fresh Romaine, crunchy oriental noodles and Mandarin oranges.

Pecan Dijon™; Fresh Romaine, seasoned chicken breast, bacon, avocados, Georgia pecans, tomatoes and shredded cheese. Drizzled with warm Honey Dijon dressing.

There is also a glorious selection of sandwiches. The full menu, along with nutritional notes and locations can be viewed at www.firstwatch.com.

The newest locations to open are Marquesa Center, 13030 Livingston Road, Naples and 2125 S.E. Federal Highway, Stuart.



Florida Homes and Travel

October 2007

Theme Park News

Cypress Gardens has been sold again for the third time in just 12 years. Previous owner Ken Buescher will remain as CEO of the park following its sale at a bankruptcy auction to Mulberry-based Land South Holdings for \$16.8 million. Buescher was in \$135 million debt, and was forced to sell Cypress Gardens Adventure Park, and his other park, Wild Adventures Theme Park in Valdosta, Ga, as part of parent company Adventure Parks Group LLC's Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Buescher said no employees would lose their jobs, and all annual passes would be honoured.

The Popeye ride at Universal Studios Islands of Adventure was superficially damaged by flames following a fire in a diesel truck in the early hours of the 11th September. There were no suspicious circumstances and no one was injured.

Following the high profile recall of various toys manufactured in China, Walt Disney Corp have announced that they will begin random testing of the toys manufactured on their behalf to ensure their safety.

Disney theme parks have increased parking charges by \$1 to \$11 per day.

Disney Cruise Line is to double in size from two to four ships by 2012. The new vessels will be significantly larger at 124,000-tons and 1,250 cabins compared with the existing 83,000-ton ships – Disney Magic and Disney Wonder – which each have 875 cabins.

We told you last month that Walt Disney were going to extend their promotion "A Year of a Million Dreams", well now they have launched an online catalogue of the dreams they will be granting – of course there are no price tags – you just have to hope that you get lucky! Browse the dreams at www.disney parks.com/dreamscatalog

High School Musical

If your youngsters spent the summer waiting for the British TV premier of this successful Disney film (like mine), then this press release is just for them:

While millions of "High School Musical" fans are buzzing about Disney Channel's recent big hit, "High School Musical 2," Walt Disney World Resort in Florida brings the global "High School Musical" phenomenon to life with a new high-energy interactive street party featuring new hit songs and dance acts at Disney-MGM Studios.

The spread of "Wildcat Fever" has guests literally dancing in the streets to the new "High School Musical 2: School's Out!" The new show is inspired by the hit Disney Channel original movie "High School Musical 2."

A high-energy cast of talented performers invites audience members to join in the fun of the show, which showcases five great new songs from "High School Musical 2" and one from the original show.

"High School Musical 2: School's Out!" replaces "High School Musical Pep Rally," which was inspired by the original movie. "It's been a blast working with the talented young cast of "High School Musical 2: School's Out!" said Angie Howard, show producer. "They energize Hollywood Boulevard with the tunes from the show, and with the incredible dance moves inspired by the Wildcats' summer fun. You can tell they really enjoy it, which makes it even more fun for our guests."

Drawing its inspiration from the new movie, which follows the "High School Musical" characters as they head out for summer jobs and vacation, "High School Musical 2: School's Out!" entertains and engages audiences in a rockin' musical celebration. The show concludes with an all-out dance finale featuring the latest "High School Musical 2" soundtrack hit, "All for One," and a reprise of the original smash, "We're All in This Together," from the movie that started it all.

"High School Musical 2: School's Out!" performs daily at Disney-MGM Studios, in front of Mickey's Sorcerer's Hat on Hollywood Boulevard.



Florida Lottery Winning Numbers

Date	Numbers
09/29/2007	11 - 17 - 26 - 29 - 47 - 48
09/26/2007	07 - 09 - 12 - 14 - 41 - 44
09/22/2007	01 - 05 - 10 - 21 - 27 - 38
09/19/2007	19 - 23 - 28 - 34 - 35 - 46
09/15/2007	03 - 06 - 25 - 28 - 33 - 37
09/12/2007	10 - 21 - 22 - 37 - 42 - 49
09/08/2007	06 - 10 - 18 - 23 - 27 - 34
09/05/2007	03 - 12 - 18 - 19 - 24 - 45
09/01/2007	04 - 05 - 16 - 25 - 27 - 37

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