

**1) Land of Opportunity** - After the Second Seminole War ended in 1842, Congress passed the Armed Occupation Act. Any head of family or single man eighteen or over, was able to claim 160 acres of land, south of Cedar Key and Palatka, Florida. The law provided that he live on the land for five years and put at least five acres under cultivation. This Act enabled thousands of people to move to Florida to settle the region.

**2) Pineapples** - During the late 1880's the pineapple cultivation rapidly became the leading industry of the region. Much of the pineapple was planted along the Indian River where the warm waters of the Atlantic ocean moderated the cold temperatures of winter. Warm winters, well drained soil were ideal for the crop.

**3) John Enos Fultz Jr.**, originally from South Carolina, founded a settlement at Spruce Bluff in 1889. His wife having died in Rockledge and his home destroyed by fire, he moved to homestead 160 acres on Winter Creek (about ½ mile south of where you are standing) in a two story house. Other settlers soon followed and included Curt Schroeder, Frank Waner, Jim Nailor, Jake Padget, Ed Winter, Captain Charles Blakeslee from Connecticut, and Harry Hill. Through the 1890's they tried pineapple farming, which was being done successfully all around Stuart, Jensen and up toward Ft. Pierce, clearing the land to make their fortune in pineapples, much of which was transported to northern markets, such as New York.



**4) "Spruce Bluff"** - In front of you is a Sand Pine. It's thought that early residents called this tree Spruce Pine because it looked familiar to them. Was Spruce Bluff named after the tree of North Florida? Or because of the Spruce trees of their native Scandinavian homeland?

**5) Cold** - Eventually the winter frosts affected the pineapples this far inland, away from the moderating effects of the Atlantic Ocean, in the crop production. In addition, they also planted citrus, which is more frost tolerant than pineapple to ensure an income. In order to meet the requirements of the homestead rule, settlers were required to plant gardens in addition to the necessity for survival.

**6) A Sawmill** - William and Harley Crews came to Spruce Bluff in the late 1890's to run a sawmill to meet the lumber needs of the new community. Prior to the sawmill, lumber had to be imported from outside the region, quite a task considering that all cargo was ferried from the river using small schooners.

**7) Other Occupations** - John Fultz rowed and sailed the St. Lucie River to Stuart and back, to deliver mail, was paid \$10 a month. Harry Hill raised bees and promoted the production of honey in local newspapers. Hill soon moved to Ft. Pierce where he helped to establish the Florida Photographic Concern, who we owe for the photo preservation of the history of the surrounding area. With the arrival of the Florida East Coast Railroad in 1894 the area was beginning to boom. In 1895, Fort Pierce's first doctor arrived.

**(The trail now turns right; follow the blue markings)**

**8) Fire** - Fire was a constant threat to the settlers. Summer lightning strikes and carelessness were threats to the many buildings of Spruce Bluff. Because there were no fire trucks back then residents relied on the good old bucket brigade system with water scooped from the river, shallow wells or ponds. These fire plow lines were made in the 1970's to stop a wildfire.

**9) Tough Times** - Times were hard for the settlers. Measles, Malaria, Chickenpox, and difficulties during childbirth took its toll. Many died very young. Mosquitoes were a constant problem. They built crude cabins, some with oiled-paper windows because they couldn't afford glass panes. There were no roads in the area. All supplies and saleable products came up from Stuart or Rio in boats. Occasionally traveling ministers came down the coast on sailboats to preach to gatherings of settlers. Spruce Bluff eventually grew large enough to have a school and post office.

**10) Trouble Ahead** - A freeze in the winter of 1894-95 killed most of the pineapples in the area. When the crop didn't thrive, there were few options. Some settlers left, going to Stuart or Ft. Pierce. Fultz moved north, by 1905 the original families had left Spruce Bluff. When St. Lucie County was formed in that same year, Fultz became the first clerk of the court and lived in Ft. Pierce with his second wife and family. He owned over 600 acres of Spruce Bluff when he died in 1921. Today, very little is left of the small community. Blakeslee Creek and Winters Creek were named after the settlers and are located a short distance away.

**11) The Cemetery** - This small cemetery contains the remains of 7 residents of Spruce Bluff and is all that has survived of the settlement, identified by headstones were 6, which were vandalized and replaced with the marble monument.

1. George Fultz; died July 16, 1906 (38 years old); Son of John and Sarah Fultz
2. Gertrude Fultz Winter; July 6, 1906 (28 years old); Daughter of John and Sarah Fultz; Wife of Ed Winter
3. Arnold Winter; Age 5 years; Son of Ed and Gertrude Winter
4. Infant Girl Crews; Daughter of William Frank and Mary Fultz Winter Crews
5. Infant Son of Charles D. Blakeslee
6. An older Child; Son of Charles D. Blakeslee

**(Trail Continues across the road)**

**12) Life on the River** - All transportation of goods, commerce and settlers relied on steamboats that plied the waters of the Indian River from Titusville to Jupiter during the late 1880's. Most of southern Florida from Orlando south was underwater for a good portion of the year, making travel very difficult except by boat, and everything relied on them from fishing to transportation. Away from the Indian River, the homesteaders were no different, in that small personal row or sail boats were a necessity to survival. Edgartown (now known as Ft. Pierce) was a thriving community up the Indian River and by January 29, 1888 was large enough for a post office to be established.

**(Continue to the right of the cemetery)**

**13) \$\$\$** - Life was difficult for the homesteaders. Many were poor, trying to make a living with the "free" land obtained from the Armed Occupation Act. Supplies were difficult or too expensive to purchase and obtain forcing most settlers to live off the land, using the plants available for daily survival. Rosemary - leaves of this plant were used as a spice in foods and steeped to make a tea. The oil from the plant was made into a perfume.

**14) Blueberry** - *Vaccinium spp.* - The blueberry produces a berry that is rich in vitamins A and C and also used as dye for clothing.

**15) Deer Moss** - *Cladonia spp.* - A ground lichen that is easily destroyed by foot traffic and may take up to 50 years to recover. In moist air they are soft and sponge-like, when dry, crisp and brittle. It was collected as fodder for cattle. Early pioneers believed that milk from cattle fed Deer Moss "becomes wholly cream" and their meat becomes particularly fat and sweet.

**16) Broomsedge** - *Andropogon glomeratus* - Resembles a broom when flowering, the roots of the plant were used to relieve poison ivy itch. Next to the Broomsedge is **Prickly pear cactus** - *Opuntia spp.* - Once the thorns are removed, it was eaten raw.

**(The trail turns right on the pavement then turns left.)**

**17) Wax Myrtle** - *Myrica cerifera* - Produces a waxy berry that early settlers used in making candles. Leaves were used as a seasoning. It's also thought to repel fleas, early settlers planted the shrub around their homes. Twigs were placed in closets or drawers to repel cockroaches. Bark from roots were dried and pulverized to treat colds, asthma, flu and chills. Tea from leaves were used to treat fevers, stomach aches and a gargle for sore throats.

**18) Pennyroyal** - *Piloblephis rigida* - The leaves of the plant were put in a small bag and placed in a pet's bed to repel fleas. The oil from the plant was used as an insect repellent. It also made a minty tea. Next to the pennyroyal is Pawpaw - *Asimina reticulata* - The fruit, fleshy and yellow when ripe, was used as a sauce or relish.

**19) Saw palmetto** - *Serenoa repens* - Fruit when ripe, was a food source. Berries were used to relieve symptoms for colds, hay fever, asthma and bronchitis. A tea made from dried berries was used to build strength during recovery from illness.

**20) Gallberry** - *Ilex glabra* - A very common species in Pine Flatwoods, the berries are an important wildlife food. Early settlers charred the leaves, steeped them in hot water to make a tasty tea. The plant produces a highly flavorful honey.

**21) Slash Pine** - *Pinus elliotti* - Appropriately named, as it was oftentimes "slashed" for turpentine and rosins. The sap was gathered in clay pots nailed to the tree. Many of the older pines in the area still show the characteristic V shaped scars on the trunks. Early settlers used the wood extensively for home construction. The sap was also used as an antiseptic and expectorant.

**22) Goldenrod** - *Solidago* - The flowers were used to produce a deep yellow dye for clothing. Leaves and flower tops were used to make herbal medicines for digestive, urinary problems, wounds, ulcers, cancers, dysentery, gout, colds, eczema and diarrhea.

**23) Oaks** - Six different types of oaks are found in the area: Live Oak - *Quercus virginiana*, Sand Live Oak - (*Q. geminata*), Chapman's Oak - *Q. chapmanii*, Myrtle Oak - *Q. myrtifolia*, Runner Oak - *Q. pumila* and Scrub Oak - *Q. inopina*. Their wood was used for tools and furniture, tannins in their bark for medicines and tanning of animal skins, in addition to treating spider bites.

**24) Dahoon Holly** - *Ilex cassine*—is a small tree that prefers wetter areas bordering marshes and swamps. It has a narrow growth habit of upward pointing branches. An evergreen species, it is easily distinguished by the leaves that have smooth margins with just a few small sharp teeth and a sharp bristle at the tip. This species is dioecious, meaning there are separate male and female trees. Female trees like this one are the ones that possess red berries, which are eaten by many songbirds.

**25) Carolina Willow** - *Salix caroliniana* - Early settlers used the inner bark of the tree as a substitute for aspirin, relieving fever, chills, worms and even dandruff. Leaves, bark and seeds slowed the bleeding of wounds. The bark and leaves were used as a preventative treatment for malaria, as an anti-inflammatory, as well as arthritic and rheumatic conditions. Tea was made from leaves or buds to treat gangrene, eczema and cancer.

**26) Cattails** - *Typha* - Widely used by settlers, all parts of the cattail are edible. Young shoots can be peeled and eaten raw or cooked like asparagus. The immature flower heads (while still green) can be boiled or eaten like corn on the cob. In winter, the roots were cooked like potatoes, or made into a white flour. The leaves were used to weave baskets, chair seats and backs.

**27) Spanish Moss** - *Tillandsia usneoides* - Early settlers used the moss as mattress stuffing, as well as a bandaging material to promote healing of wounds.

**Thank you for the opportunity to learn about our first residents at Spruce Bluff. You may keep the pamphlet for future reference or return it to the pamphlet box for re-use.**

References;  
Martin County: by D.S. Hudson Fpub#FLC 917.5931 MAR  
(newcomers guide to Martin Co, 1973)  
[www.floridata.com](http://www.floridata.com)  
[www.umd.umich.edu](http://www.umd.umich.edu)  
[www.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.plantatlas.usf.edu)

**Spruce Bluff Natural Area** is a 97 acre site consisting of mixed upland and wetland natural communities including; scrub, scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, baygall swamp and depression marsh. This natural area is nestled in the heart of a Port St Lucie neighborhood that lays along the banks of the St Lucie River. The property has two separate unique pasts; as it was once the site of a 1890's pioneer settlement and is also home to one of the largest AIS Native American mounds in South Florida (dating back to pre-ceramic periods).

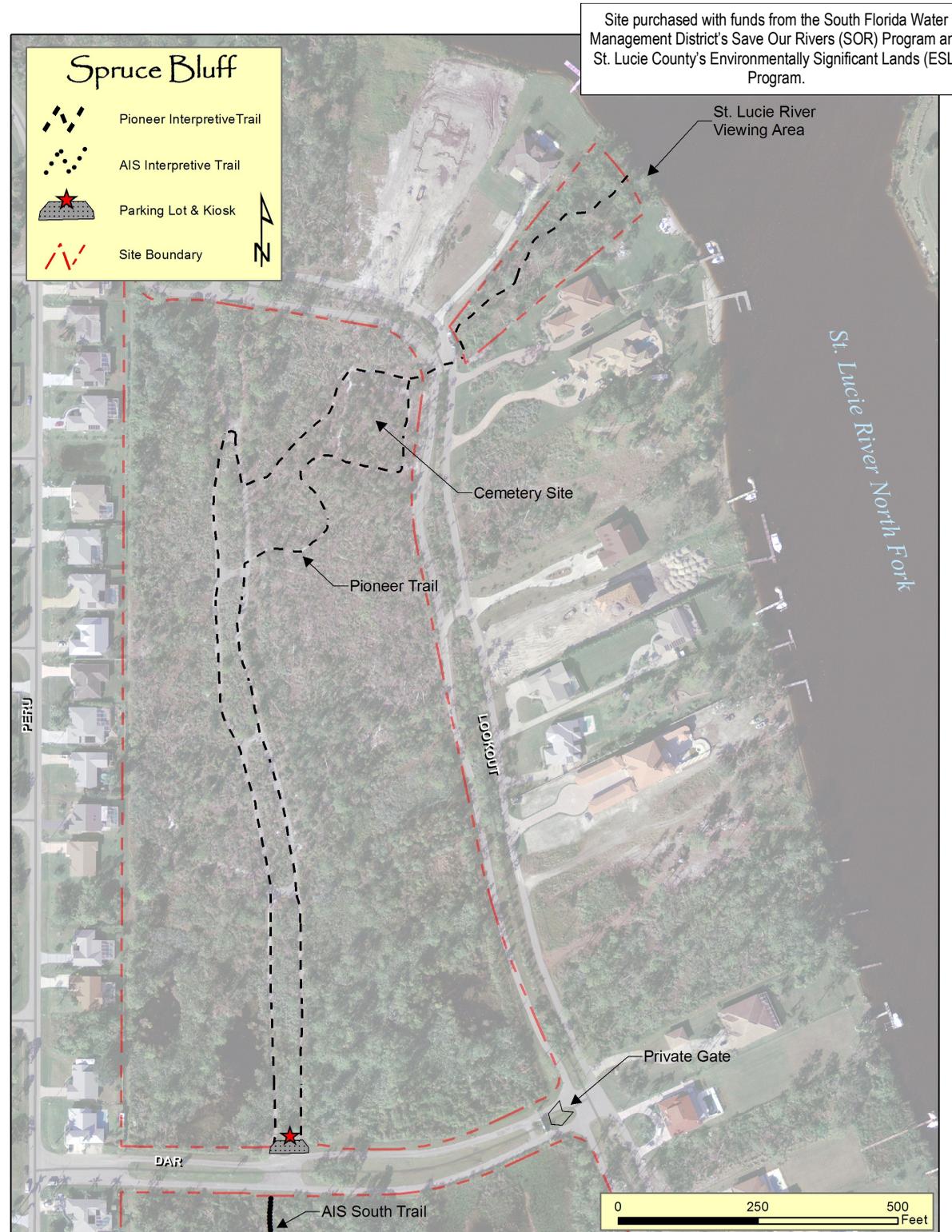
There are two 1/2 mile interpretive trails leading from the parking area, each with a different take on these two very different settlements separated by time.

The trail head and parking area is located off the north end of Southbend Blvd in Port St. Lucie, FL. From Port St. Lucie Blvd, head south on SE Floresta Dr, take a left at Southbend Blvd and the first left **after** the C-24 canal bridge onto Peru St. Travel 0.5 miles and take left onto Dar. The Parking area will be on your left.

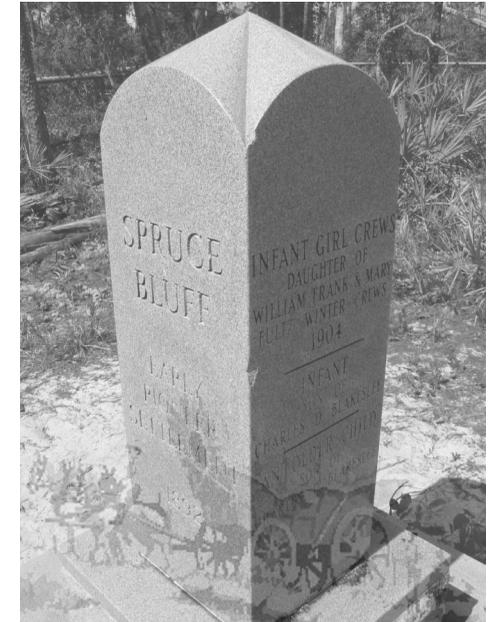
**Guidelines and Safety Information:**

- Be cautious of uneven trail surfaces
- Please remain on the trails.
- Carry adequate drinking water.
- In case of lightning, seek a low area away from trees, fence lines and tall objects.
- In case of emergency, call 911.
- While hiking the trail you may encounter animals indigenous to this area. Please observe from a safe distance.
- Leave all plant life intact.
- Please leave site cleaner than you found it. "Pack it in, pack it out."
- Use at own risk.
- Info here within, is for educational purposes not for medicinal use.

To learn more about St. Lucie County's natural heritage, there are more than 20 self-guiding Interpretive trails located within the Natural Areas Preserves. Each trail describes the most common plants, as well as significant geographical and Historical features of the site.



**Spruce Bluff  
North Pioneer Trail**



**Interpretive Trail**



**St. Lucie County  
Environmental Resources  
Department**

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[http://www.stlucieco.gov/erd/environmental\\_lands.htm](http://www.stlucieco.gov/erd/environmental_lands.htm)

Site Open: Sunrise to Sunset (11/11)