

## **VERNON LAMME**

1892 - 1979

Vernon Lamme was born in 1892 in Atchison Kansas, and attended Midland College in Atchison.

Vernon and his father travelled to Florida in February of 1912 to stake a claim on a plot of land for their family. Earlier that year large tracts of land on Merritt Island which previously had been reserved by Teddy Roosevelt, were made available for homesteaders.

In the years after, Vernon worked to help his father clear the land and plant citrus, and also began to write stories about the homesteading life for the Atchison Daily Globe. In 1919, Vernon became a local correspondent for Jacksonville's daily paper, the Florida Times-Union, and in 1920 gained additional work as a stringer for the Cocoa Tribune. He sold his columns to other papers including the Tampa Tribune and the Miami Herald. Over the next decade, Vernon would begin to explore Florida and would settle down (for a time) on the west coast, where he held various writing and editing positions for the Naples Transcript, two different papers in Fort Meyers, and the Collier County News.

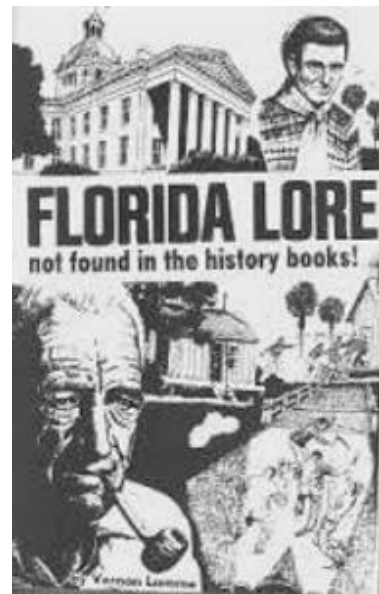
With the dawning of the 30's, Vernon began to augment his journalism career by engaging in volunteer work as an amateur Archaeologist on projects for the Smithsonian. These projects would eventually lead to paid work as a field supervisor overseeing excavations in the Miami area. Called back by his first career, Lamme moved to Tallahassee and began writing about state politics for the Fort Meyers paper, the Winter Haven Herald, and was picked up as a correspondent for the International News Service. While in the capital, Vernon authored a bill establishing the position of Florida State Archaeologist and got it introduced into the State Senate. The bill was passed into law, and in mid-1935 Vernon managed to get himself appointed to the position that he had created.

Lamme's career as Florida's first Florida State Archaeologist was a little rocky [pun intended]; he was suspended from the position halfway through his first year of the job, but with the help of his connections in the State Senate, was re-instated a bit more than a year later. A few months after that, Vernon left the position for a job as a state citrus inspector. Archaeology was still more than a hobby, and Lamme began working on sites located south of St. Augustine on property that would become known as Marineland, ultimately working there and introducing visitors to the artifacts. Once again, Vernon was re-appointed as Florida's State Archaeologist in 1940. He remained in that position until 1942 when he resigned to take a job as a federal agent responsible for investigating fraudulent activities related to ration coupons.

Vernon left the public sector and moved to South Florida, returning once more to his original career, working for the Deerfield Beach Observer and the Boynton Beach Star. He continued to write weekly columns for the Observer into his 80's.

In 1973, Lamme wrote his first book, Florida Lore Not Found in the History Books, and had it printed by Star Publishing in Boynton Beach. Vernon's wife Louise worked with him on Florida Lore, and the book was illustrated by Vernon's son Robert, who, with newspaper ink in his blood, worked as an artist in the Advertising Department of the Miami Herald.

The trio published a second book, More Florida Lore, in 1978. Both books are compilations of Vernon's columns, recollections from his younger days as a homesteader on Merritt Island, stories he collected as he travelled around the state, and descriptions from his field work as an Archaeologist. The books have local appeal as they mention the people and places we associate with Merritt Island pioneering and include some very enjoyable personal anecdotes. One story notes that in the family's early days of homesteading, Vernon and his father had to coax his mother to come out to the island which she claimed was outside of the United States.



Vernon himself has a direct link to the early Merritt Island settlers - his uncle on his mother's side, Harley [Pete] Bell, was married to Fanny Sams. This connection is referenced in one of Vernon's columns, which those who have a taste for politics will enjoy:

Vernon met a man named Park Trammell when he bought an orange grove from his aunt Fanny. Trammell was a lawyer from Polk County who went on to become the first mayor of the city of Lakeland, was elected to the Florida House of Representatives and later to the State Senate. Park became Attorney General of Florida, the 21st Governor of Florida, and served four terms in the United States Senate. He had the distinction of never having lost an election. Vernon interviewed Trammell when he was a U.S. Senator, and asked him how he achieved that record, and the Senator's response was essentially that he didn't rock the boat and kept away from the controversial issues. When Senator Trammell died while in office in 1936, Vernon wrote a column about him, summing it up with "Trammell died in his office, having never been defeated for office during his lifetime. He was a fine man but I cannot recall anything he ever did."

Vernon died in May of 1979.

