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Walter Fuller Archives of the Gulf Beach News [finding aid]

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Walter Pliny Fuller (1894 - 1973)

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The Walter Fuller Archives of the GULF BEACH NEWS



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Introduction to the Collection

Special Collections and Archives purchased nearly 200 individual and unique issues of the *Gulf Beach News* from Lighthouse Books in October 2007. These issues represent the largest and most complete run of this newspaper known to exist. They came indirectly from the collection of Walter Pliny Fuller (1894-1973), a native of Bradenton and early pioneer of St. Petersburg who wrote for local newspapers and earned a notable role as a local historian. Fuller frequently contributed articles for this newspaper. He also authored two first-person accounts of St. Petersburg history, *St. Petersburg and Its People* (Great Outdoors Publishing Company, 1972) and *This Was Florida's Boom* (*St. Petersburg Times* Publishing Company, 1954). The Special Collections Department of the USF Tampa library serves as the repository for Fuller's papers, which cover his business activities and historical research during the period from 1930 through his death in 1973.

Preservation Note

The individual newspapers in this collection reside in acid-free folders and protective containers. Many have suffered substantial deterioration due to the poor quality of newsprint paper and less than optimal storage conditions throughout the years. While preservation measures may slow the physical deterioration of such items, these steps cannot prevent damage from occurring. To prevent further damage to the fragile materials in this collection, avoid exposing them to light for an extended period of time. Please report any tears or other damage so that library staff may take appropriate preservation or conservation measures. While no restrictions limit access to this collection, library staff will evaluate photocopying or digitization requests on an individual basis to ensure the long-term preservation of this unique collection. Patrons using this collection must wear protective gloves, adhere to copyright and fair-use guidelines, and provide proper citation of sources appearing in their research.

Provenance of the Fuller Archives of the *Gulf Beach News*

This collection falls under both the Journalism and Media Studies provenance and the Local and Regional History provenance of Special Collections and Archives, Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, USF St. Petersburg.

Scope and Contents

The contents occupy 2.75 ln. ft. and include 198 individual issues of the newspaper. Inclusive dates cover weekly issues printed between January 1944 and February 1951, with some notable gaps (especially in 1945 and the first half of 1946). Items reside in chronological order.

Collection Overview

Most researchers of Pinellas County history examine the microfilm copies of the *St. Petersburg Times* (available in the Poynter Library) and, to a lesser extent, other local papers such as the *St. Petersburg Evening Independent*, *Clearwater Sun*, *Largo Sentinel*, and *Tarpon Springs Leader*. The *Gulf Beach News* offers a unique perspective of life in the barrier island communities, commonly known as the Holiday Isles, during the mid-twentieth century. This newspaper began publication in the mid-1930s (1934 according to newspaper historian David Shedden of the Poynter Institute), and traced the settlement and incorporation of small, distinctive coastal communities from Pass-a-Grille to Belleair Beach.

The paper combined news with feature stories, including a lengthy transcription of a Civil War journal. Numerous issues in the mid-1940s contained excerpts of the wartime diary of Robert Watson (1835-1911), who served in the Confederate States of America's coast guard and the 7th Florida Infantry Regiment. His diary later appeared in *Southern Service on Land & Sea: The Wartime Journal of Robert Watson, CSA/CSN* (University of Tennessee, 2002). According to that publication, Corinna Lowe Condrick—granddaughter of early pioneer Captain John T. Lowe—transcribed the three handwritten diaries of Watson in 1939. The vignettes appeared in small segments that traced Watson's service for the Confederacy. Regarding more recent hostilities, occasional articles traced wartime activities and restrictions during the final years of the Second World War. Articles on the home front described fire prevention measures, canning practices, and rationing information.

Fuller frequently contributed articles to the newspaper. His "Walter Fuller Says..." and "Florida Ways and Byways" columns covered local and Florida history topics. For example, during the summer of 1948 he wrote an article proudly describing his impact on the corporation that developed large tracts of Treasure Island. He also addressed contemporary issues, such as an oil lease proposal for the Gulf of Mexico and utility tax assessments. The "O'er Land and Sea" column, written by different authors, often described the natural flora and fauna of the region, including armadillos, Australian pines, and sponges.

The focus was primarily on the unincorporated settlements and municipalities of the barrier islands. However, a column known as "The News in St. Petersburg" often appeared on the front page. At this time, many residents of beach communities lacked some regular services. For example, a 20 June 1947 article described rules for burning of rubbish along the sparsely settled islands of Madeira Beach. As communities grew, officials sought new funding sources, such as in the summer of 1948 when a deal with liquor stores provided taxes for the hiring of an additional police officer in one of the beach communities.

Certain advertisers maintained a notable presence. One of the most frequent advertisers, Florida Power (predecessor to Progress Energy of Florida) often took out large spreads. Many had an instructional message, such as a 28 January 1944 ad that taught the readers—geared toward female homemakers—how to mend damaged wires and plugs. Another wartime ad reminded readers that electricity provided the backbone of the war effort. As cooler temperatures arrived in December 1948, a Florida Power advertisement extolled the virtues of using an electric blanket rather than bundling under multiple layers of covers. The Peninsular Phone Company (later GTE and now under Verizon) often placed large advertisements in the paper.

At a time when both conservative and progressive Floridians continued to support the Democratic Party, the *Gulf Beach News* took a decidedly pro-Republican viewpoint for the time. The editors often traded barbs with Nelson Poynter. They also followed the political aspirations of a young Bill Cramer. Their pro-Republican position reflected the political proclivities of many of the residents who settled along the Gulf Beaches in the years following World War II. These transplants, often from the Midwest, tended to embrace the Republican Party as conservative newcomers who started to reshape the political dynamic in ways that would continue into the twenty-first century.

List of Newspapers

1944: Jan. 28; Feb. 25; Mar. 3; Mar. 10; Mar. 17; Mar. 24; Mar. 31; May 5; May 12; May 19; May 26; Jun. 9; Jun. 23; Jun. 30; Jul. 14; Jul. 21; Jul. 28; Aug. 4; Aug. 11; Sep. 1; Sep. 8; Sep. 15; Sep. 22; Sep. 29; Oct. 20; Oct. 27; Nov. 3 (27 issues)

1945: Jul. 20; Jul. 27; Aug. 3 (3 issues)

1946: Jun. 7; Jun. 14; Jun. 21; Jun. 28; Jul. 5; Jul. 12; Jul. 19; Jul. 26; Aug. 30; Sep. 6; Dec. 6; Dec. 13 (12 issues)

1947: Jan. 10; Jan. 17; Jan. 24; Jan. 31; Feb. 7; Feb. 14; Feb. 21; Mar. 21; Apr. 4; May 2; May 9; May 16; May 30; Jun. 20; Jun. 27; Jul. 4; Jul. 11; Jul. 18; Jul. 25; Aug. 1; Aug. 8; Aug. 15; Sep. 12; Sep. 26; Oct. 3; Oct. 10; Oct. 17; Oct. 24; Nov. 7; Nov. 14; Nov. 28; Dec. 5; Dec. 12; Dec. 19; Dec. 26 (35 issues)

1948: Jan. 2; Jan. 9; Jan. 16; Jan. 23 (*Extremely brittle; damaged*); Jan. 30; Feb. 6 (*Extremely brittle; damaged*); Feb. 13; Feb. 27; Mar. 5; Mar. 12; Mar. 19; Mar. 26; Apr. 2; Apr. 16; Apr. 23; Apr. 30; May 7; May 14; May 21; May 28; Jun. 11; Jun. 25; Jul. 2; Jul. 16; Jul. 23; Jul. 30; Aug. 13; Aug. 27; Sep. 3; Sep. 10; Sep. 17; Sep. 24; Oct. 1; Oct. 15; Oct. 22; Oct. 29; Nov. 5; Nov. 12; Dec. 3; Dec. 10; Dec. 17; Dec. 31 (42 issues)

1949: Jan. 7; Jan. 14; Feb. 4; Feb. 11; Feb. 25; Mar. 4; Mar. 25; Apr. 1; Apr. 8; Apr. 15; Apr. 22; Apr. 29; May 6; May 13; May 27; Jun. 3; Jun. 17; Jun. 24; Jul. 8; Jul. 29; Aug. 12; Aug. 26; Sep. 9; Sep. 16; Sep. 23; Oct. 7; Oct. 14; Oct. 21; Oct. 28; Nov. 4; Nov. 18; Dec. 2; Dec. 9; Dec. 16; Dec. 23; Dec. 30 (36 issues)

1950: Jan. 6; Jan. 13; Jan. 20; Jan. 27; Feb. 10; Feb. 17; Mar. 3; Mar. 10; Mar. 17; Apr. 7; Apr. 14; Apr. 21; Apr. 28; May 5; May 12; Jun. 16; Jun. 23; Jul. 14; Jul. 28; Aug. 4; Aug. 11; Aug. 25; Sep. 1; Sep. 8; Sep. 15; Sep. 22; Sep. 29; Oct. 6; Oct. 13; Oct. 20; Nov. 3; Nov. 24; Dec. 1; Dec. 8; Dec. 15; Dec. 22; Dec. 29 (37 issues)

1951: Jan. 5; Jan. 12; Jan. 19; Jan. 26; Feb. 2; Feb. 9 (6 issues)