

<b>SECTION-TOPIC</b>	<b>BOOM AND BUST – FLAGLER’S RAILROAD</b>
<b>SUNSHINE STATE STANDARD</b>	<b>Standard 3: <i>Analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in response to the Industrial Revolution.</i></b> <b>SS.912.A.3.13: <i>Examine key events and people in Florida history as they relate to United States history.</i></b>
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	<b>Prominent, Speculate, Investment, Profit, Gilded Age</b>
<b>REQUIRED MATERIALS</b>	<b>Florida East Coast Railroad and Hotel Map, Henry Flagler Reading</b>
<b>DURATION</b>	<b>1 – 50 minute period</b>

**DO NOW OR PRE-READING –**

- Teacher will instruct students to study the **Florida East Coast Railroad and East Coast Hotel Map (see below)**.
- Students will spend 5-10 minutes studying the map and answering the following questions:
  1. Where does the Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC) start (what city) and where does it end (what city)?
  2. List 8 prominent cities on the East Coast of Florida and the Florida Keys at the time this map was created.
  3. List 6 prominent hotels on the East Coast of Florida and the Florida Keys at the time this map was created.
  4. Speculate as to why a map would be made and why only 6 hotels are listed for the entire East Coast of Florida?
  5. Speculate as to why this map only has railroad and steamboat connections and not roadways and highways as well?
  6. After studying the map, is it fair to say Palm Beach could be a center point (or a connection hub) between the FEC starting and ending points?

## **LESSON –**

- Teacher will make copies or project the following article so that students may complete the required reading.
- Students will read the article below before engaging in group (4-5 people) discussions about the reading and the importance of Henry Flagler's Railroad to Palm Beach County history.

### **Henry Flagler: Background**

Henry Morrison Flagler was born in 1830 in Hopewell, New York, the son of a Presbyterian minister. During the Civil War he started a business in salt, which was in high demand as a preservative. When demand ended with the war, Flagler lost his profits. He returned to Ohio, where he joined John D. Rockefeller in making their fortunes from Standard Oil. By the time Flagler visited St. Augustine in 1883 with his second wife, Ida Alice Shourds, he was less involved at Standard Oil and ready for a new adventure.

What Flagler discovered in St. Augustine was poor tourist housing and transportation, which he decided to fix by building grand hotels and improving train travel. He quickly built the Ponce de Leon Hotel, followed by two others. He also purchased the Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Halifax Railroad, which would become the basis for his railroad empire as he expanded Florida's railway system down the east coast.

When Flagler first visited Lake Worth in 1893, the entire area around the 22-mile-long lake was referred to as Lake Worth; the city by the same name would not exist for many years.

Millionaires had already built houses on the barrier island of Palm Beach, including Thomas Adams of Tutti-Fruitti chewing gum fame and Robert R. McCormick of Denver Pacific Railroad.

Flagler, a guest in the elegant home of Frederick and Marsena Nelson Robert, was so struck by the beauty of Lake Worth that he bought land on both sides of the lake. Word spread of his activities, setting off a small boom. People invested in land wherever Flagler did, increasing prices as much as 60%, and brought in existing businesses or started new ones.

Flagler's plan was two-fold: to build a resort hotel in Palm Beach for wealthy tourists and a new town on the west side of Lake Worth for commercial and residential purposes. He made fast work of both. In February of 1894 the Royal Poinciana Hotel opened, in March the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) tracks reached a site across the lake from Palm Beach, and a few weeks later the first train pulled in. The shores of Lake Worth would never be the same.

Most of Palm Beach County's grand hotels—in a different class than the modest inns of the pioneer era—were built in a flurry of construction between 1893 and 1925. The first two were by Henry Flagler: The Royal Poinciana Hotel in Palm Beach was located just south of the present Flagler Memorial Bridge. The Palm Beach Inn (now The Breakers) followed a few years later just across the island. James A. McGuire and Joseph E. McDonald, Flagler's contractors, had also built his Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine.

The Flagler Era evokes the grand living of the Gilded Age in the United States, a period of quick population growth from immigration, extreme industrial expansion that created great wealth, and lavish displays of that wealth, from about 1877 to 1890. But the Gilded Age did not come to Palm Beach until 1894, when the rest of America was still suffering through the Depression of 1893. Flagler not only provided a reason for wealth to come to south Florida, but also a railroad to get it here.

### **Build It and They Will Come: The Florida East Coast Railway**

Flagler's railroad provided multiple benefits not only to Flagler, but also to the wealthy visitors and new residents that it delivered to southeast Florida. The trains also delivered merchandise to improve people's lives and quicken progress, and allowed for speedy shipment of agricultural products to northern cities.

In 1895 the railroad quickly made tracks down the coast to Ft. Lauderdale and Biscayne Bay (Miami). While Palm Beach and West Palm Beach exploded with activity in its wake, other settlements also sprang up along the line. Flagler received land from the State of Florida for installing the railway and bought up other land along the coast, which his Model Land Company offered for sale in smaller parcels. He wanted settlers to create communities that would bring more business to his businesses—farmers to ship produce laborers to develop the area, families to put down roots and bring up children. Flagler thought of these new settlements as colonies, such as Yamato, the Japanese farming community that started on Flagler land in the future Boca Raton.

### **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION** -

**Evaluate** the following question and **formulate an argument** supporting your decision.

What played a more important role in the development of Palm Beach County and Palm Beach Island as far as its relative location in Florida; the previous choice and development of the land by the original millionaire settlers prior to Henry Flagler's arrival in 1893, or the expansive industrialist ideas of Henry Flagler once he arrived in Palm Beach in 1893? Use evidence to support your claim.



\*Florida Memory: State Library and Archives of Florida (<http://www.floridamemory.com/PhotographicCollection/>)

Historical Society of Palm Beach County  
[www.pbchistoryonline.org](http://www.pbchistoryonline.org)  
 Lesson plan by Clint Kovach, Lake Worth High School  
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