

[Mr. H. P. Sedding]

26081

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H.P. Sedding,

Consulting Engineer

420 Hilderbrandt Bldg.

Jacksonville, Florida.

Rose Shepherd, Writer.

1880 ENGLISH COLONY, FRUITLAND PARK.

Mr. H.P. Sedding, consulting engineer, associated with the firm of Robert M. Angas, 420 Hilderbrandt Building, is an Englishman nearing 70. Speaking in short crisp sentences, his accent strongly British, he related the following:

“In 1886, while residing at the Hotel de [Grasse?] in London, England, there registered at the same hotel, a man - his name I have now forgotten - who had just returned from Florida, U. S. A.

“He stated he had met some young Englishman, some eighteen, others in their early twenties, who had been induced through an agent for a so-called agricultural school to go to Florida and engage in agricultural training. This man had visited them in their home in England, painting in glorious colors a paradise in the tropics where oranges could be grown in great abundance and with very little effort.

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“Of course, he explained, the work would require a course of training, for which a certain sum was asked to cover transportation, with monthly remittances for tuition.

“The men paid the advance and signed up. They were herded into a freighter for their trip to the United States, which precluded their taking much baggage. They were told their clothing requirements would be very simply. But they took their dress suits, in order to be properly attired should the occasion arise in this 2 ‘paradise’ pictured to them as being settled up by the wealthy leisure class with plenty of time for socialites.

“After a two weeks' journey they finally reached their destination, forming a colony in the section of what is now known as Fruitland Park.

“There was no ‘agricultural school’ or anything resembling it - just rough [shacks?] in Florida's virgin forests. The ‘training’ the young men received was in cutting down trees and grubbing out [palmettoes?], plowing and preparing the land for the orange growers.

“This man said the young Englishmen were in time so short of clothing, they were forced to work in their dress suits, which they evidently concluded was as good a use as any they could put them to, since there were no parties, and their menial work permitted not time for such diversions if there had been.

“He stated he had seen them plowing and doing other work so garbed. They were housed and fed in a sort of rough barracks. Some of these young men he had known as acquaintances in Fleet Street, London, and he certainly was not at all enthused about the situation.

“In fact, he felt the young Englishmen had been duped, deluded and deceived; the actual purpose he believed was a scheme of the promoters to not only secure money for the development of their land, but the necessary labor as well, and the guardians or relatives

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of the young men were bound by contract to keep up their regular remittances to cover their 'instruction'. In other words,

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they paid for the privilege of doing this rough, hard work, and the money collected for their 'tuition' enabled the developers to plant their groves.

"You understand this is all hearsay. I never saw this man again, he was only a passing hotel acquaintance. The conversation with him took place over fifty years ago, and while he spoke with great [vehemenceas?] to his views in the matter and I had [he reasoned?] at the time to doubt his assertions. I do not know how the information might now be substantiated.

"No, I have never been to Fruitland Park in my life, in fact, not even to the Orlando section."