

Wells and Water

The earliest settlers used rain water for drinking as well as for washing, and probably were not upset about the few "wigglers" usually found in this source of supply. Later several shallow wells were put down, most of which could be located from a "fur piece" away by the odor--the so-called sulfur smell really being gas from the millions of tiny critters lying for years in the layers of sand and rock.

The first of the wells that supplied more than one house was built by Harry Laycock not long after the Case Subdivision was started in 1911. It stood southeast of the present telephone building and had a small elevated tank which was filled by a windmill-powered pump. Eventually it furnished some twenty-five houses with water.

Hugh McPhie had a fine flowing well on his property in the Coconut Grove, and a good one was located next to the Gulf Shore Inn. Pipelines from this well supplied water to areas as far away as homes in Venetian Gardens and Palermo Circle. Other wells around the island were developed as the town built up.

Simmons Richardson, father of Mrs. Gene Washburn, was the first to recognize the fact that a growing community needs a satisfactory water system. He bought out the Laycock system in 1922, as well as several of the other small ones, hooked some together, put down new and better wells, erected three or four larger tanks on towers, and provided the island with very satisfactory service.

After the death of Mr. Richardson in 1950 the system was operated by the family for a couple of years, then a new company formed by Gene Washburn, John Waltman and George Allen took over. In 1953 they developed an entirely new system with new wells, an efficient treatment plant and new pipelines and tower.

This in turn was sold in 1965 to Florida Cities Water Company which also bought the small system which supplied the Laguna Shores Area