Goodrich Island
A Forgotten FL Audubon Bird Sanctuary
FSSR – May 23, 2023
Aerial photos by Jeff Howe
Goodrich Island in the St. Sebastian River was donated by the Goodrich family to the Florida Audubon Society, now Audubon of Florida. The island’s history and status as a bird sanctuary was apparently a surprise to Pam Cooper, the Director of the Archive Center at the Indian River County Main Library in Vero Beach (as well as the rest of us), when she stumbled upon information about the island. It was our surprise when an article about what she uncovered appeared in the September 2022 issue of Space Coast Living magazine. That story is available to read online at https://spacecoastliving.com/x-marks-the-spot.

Pam, with the assistance of the Goodrich home current owners, was able to locate descendants of the Goodrich’s who provided a wealth of information and historic photos of the property in Roseland, FL. We thank them for the use of those photos here in this presentation. Additional aerial photos were provided thanks to Jeff Howe.
James and Ella Goodrich

The Goodrich’s first came to the Sebastian area, from Connecticut, in 1919 and purchased their property in Roseland in 1925, building their home there in about 1927.
Original Goodrich home, built c. 1927 and burned in the 1930s
View of St. Sebastian River from Goodrich home, c.1928
Being one of the only pools in the area at the time, baptisms were often held at the Goodrich’s home. It was a deep pool and therefore had to be partially drained to accommodate. C.1929
Mary Hanmer Goodrich, c. 1928, daughter of James and Ella, with lion fountain which supplied water for the pool from a well.

Mary Goodrich was quite an accomplished young woman. She was the first licensed pilot in Connecticut, a founding member of the Ninety-Nine women’s aviation organization, and a colleague of Amelia Earhart. She was inducted into the Connecticut Women’s Hall of Fame in 2000. Click on each of the images above for a link to more information about Mary Goodrich Jenson.
Goodrich pool deck with Mary’s initials, photo by Jason Hook
Goodrich pool today with original lion fountain. Photo by Jason Hook
Frank and Kay Basiden were neighbors of the Goodrich’s. Frank was an artist and Kay was quite active in civic and conservation issues. Kay’s assistance in Goodrich Island becoming a bird sanctuary is outlined in the following letter and news clipping, provided by Audubon of Florida.

Front porch, Baisden home, Roseland, c. 2010. From the blog “Bless Our Hearts” by Mary Moon. Click here to read more.
FLORIDA AUDUBON SOCIETY
IMMEDIATE July 5, 1986

GOODRICH ISLAND BECOMES AUDUBON SANCTUARY

Mrs. Carl N. Jensen of Wethersfield, Connecticut, has made a gift of an island in the Sebastian River opposite the town of Roseland, to the Florida Audubon Society, in memory of her mother, Elia Reed Goodrich. The gift was accepted with thanks by the Executive Committee of the Society at their June meeting. Attracted to the Roseland area because of the abundance of birds, Mrs. Goodrich spent her winters there until two years before her death in April, 1963. Born in 1871, she made her first trip to Florida with her husband, James Goodrich, and his father, in 1919. Later they bought property in Roseland. Mrs. Goodrich was an ardent conservationist, and petitioned the Governor of Florida to establish a local area including firs and a mill as a State Park. She would probably have succeeded had she had the necessary local support. In 1928 the Goodriches bought the island off their property in the Sebastian River for a wildlife sanctuary, and from that time it was known as Goodrich Island. Over a year ago Roseland Garden Club members were startled to learn that the island was slated for destruction under a project of the Florida Flood Control program, those carrying on this program apparently not realizing that the island was privately owned. Mrs. Frank Beiden contacted Mrs. Jensen, and on the latter's protest other areas were found for deposition of spoil that would exclude this island. Mrs. Jensen then promptly took measures to place Goodrich Island in the hands of the Florida Audubon Society as a permanent wildlife sanctuary, with the natural beauty of the property to be retained.
A Sanctuary For Birds On Islands?

By NANCY JAFFER
TODAY Staff Writer

The Brevard County Commission is exploring the possibility of turning three mangrove islands in the Sebastian River, now on the Indian River County tax rolls, into an Audubon Society bird sanctuary.

Commissioner Richard Muldrew of Melbourne Thursday told the commission the islands belong to Brevard because maps show them north of the county lines, and he suggested they be put “on our tax rolls.”

Indian River County Commissioner Donald Macdonald said he thinks his commission would be “happy to join them” (the Brevard Commission) to make sure the islands are used for bird sanctuaries.

The islands have “very little intrinsic value” because they are so low, according to Macdonald.

“Before they could be used for anything it would require a lot of fill, and we’d all just fight it until we’re bloody as hogs,” he said.

“If Brevard County can establish the fact that they north of the county line. Historical association members feel that by placing the islands in a “perpetual deep freeze” of Audubon Society ownership, it would prevent trespassing on nearby Indian burial mounds that are of historical interest.

Macdonald, who is in his 12th year on the Indian River commission, said the question of ownership of the islands has come up before, but has never been settled.

Standish F. Crippin of Roseland thinks he has the ownership problem solved, however.
Goodrich Island looking northeast, photo by Jeff Howe
Goodrich Island looking north towards Micco, photo by Jeff Howe
Goodrich Island looking south towards Roseland, photo by Jeff Howe
Goodrich Island looking northwest towards Micco, photo by Jeff Howe
Goodrich Island looking west towards C-54 Canal, photo by Jeff Howe
Goodrich Island looking west towards St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park
Photo by Jeff Howe