

There has been a great deal of recent discussion about the name of our river. Most people when they arrive here are told that it is the Sebastian River. However, the official name of our river is the St. Sebastian River. George Keyes has researched this subject, and on December 21, 1988, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names approved "the names Saint Sebastian River, North Prong Saint Sebastian River and South Prong Saint Sebastian River." Here is the information he submitted to obtain this ruling.

This historical name of our river is described by Bernard Romans, cartographer for King George III, in his book, **A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida**, "the shore stretches nearly south, to opposite the mouth of the Saint Sebastian River in lat. 27° 56"... "in the lagoon and sound many streams of fine fresh water empty themselves; the principal are the rivers St. Sebastian and St. Lucia as the map shows (sic). Romans' 1774 map shows the river as the San Sebastian River."

Don Andres Burgevin surveyed the 20,000 acres of the Fleming Grant for the Captain of the Spanish Militia, Don George Fleming, by decree of the Spanish Government, made June 8, 1819. The entrance to the grant is shown as the St. Sebastian River.

From the book **Observations Upon the Floridas** by Charles Vignoles, published in 1823, we find the river mentioned, "Five miles below the mouth of the St. Sebastian river, distant altogether eighteen miles from the south end of Meritt's (sic) island, and distinguished by a high red sand bluff on the south point of entrance, the stream like the preceding ones has pine lands alone on its banks, etc."

James Gasden surveyed for a road from St. Augustine to Cape Florida for the U.S. Army along the east coast in 1825. In his report to the Quartermaster General he mentions the names of the principal rivers as obstructions to the opening of a road; on the list is the St. Sebastian. He also mentions that a ferry would be necessary on the St. Sebastian River as it was not fordable.

During the Second Seminole War, Lt. Powell of the Navy, attached to the 1st Reg. of Artillery under the command of Lt. Col. Benjamin Pierce, was ordered down the Indian River with 33 small light boats with two hundred men, with a mixed group of soldiers, sailors and volunteers. On Dec. 28, 1837, they camped on a high oak bluff on the north bank of the St. Sebastian River where they were to ascend at night looking for indians.

Following the Third Seminole War, often called the Bowlegs War, we found that Andrew Canova, discharged from the Florida Volunteers, had built a thatched hut near the mouth of the St. Sebastian River where he lived with Ed. Marr for three years until he went to St. Augustine to join the Confederate Army in 1861.

Dr. James Henshall from Cynthia, Ky, made three trips to our local river during the years of 1879-1881, in his book **Camping and Cruising in Florida** he states, "the St. Sebastian from its mouth to this point is from a fourth to one half mile in width, and a mile long. Here it separates (sic) into the North, West and South Prongs."

In 1889, Dr. Frank Chapman, from the American Museum of Natural History, ascended the South Prong to the headwaters of the St. Sebastian River while on a search for Carolina

Paroquets. We find Chapman's description of the river from a paper read 1 November 1889. "The St. Sebastian River is a beautiful river; no words of mine can adequately describe it. Half mile wide at its mouth, it narrows rapidly, and three miles above appears as a mere stream, etc."

Sylvanus Kitching wrote to his friend in England on Feb. 11, 1898, "Yesterday a party of over twenty of us went out on the St. Sebastian River on a fishing picnic."

When Indian River County was formed in an Act of the Legislature, Session 1925, Chapter 10148 (no.126), Approved May 30, 1925, some of the description reads in part, "line intersects the medial line of the South fork of the St. Sebastian River; thence Northerly down the middle of said stream to the main stream of the St. Sebastian River; thence down the middle of the St. Sebastian River to its confluence with the Indian River, etc."

After the Sebastian Area Historical Society was founded in 1985 we found a variety of names had been in use for our local river. Some were Sebastian Creek, St. Sebastian Creek, Sebastian River, San Sebastian River, San Sebastian Bay, and St. Sebastian River. On Nov. 1, 1988, the historical society filed a request with the United States Department of Interior, Board of Geographic Names for a correction to restore the original historic name, St. Sebastian River, located in Latitude 27 °, 15" and Longitude 80 ° 29'29"W.

The society received a reply from the Board on Nov. 15, 1988, which states "This will acknowledge your proposal to have the name Saint Sebastian River made official for Federal maps and other publications. This proposal has been submitted to the Board on Geographic Names by the National Ocean Service, and the name is on the docket for Board consideration."

On Dec. 21, 1988, a letter was sent to the society from the United States Board on Geographic Names which states, "We are pleased to inform you that the Board on Geographic Names, at its Dec. 8, 1988 meeting, approved the names Saint Sebastian River, North Prong Saint Sebastian River and South Prong Saint Sebastian River. These names will be published in Decision List 8804."

On Sept. 18, 1989, the Indian River County Board of County Commissioners approved the corrected name St. Sebastian River. In November 1993 Indian River County, through the efforts of the Friends of the St. Sebastian River, placed signs at both ends of the bridge on CR 512 which indicate South Prong St. Sebastian River.

The Intracoastal Waterway chart #11472, published by the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Ocean Service, corrected in 1991, now records the Saint Sebastian River instead of the old designation Sebastian Creek. The signs on the US1 bridge over the same body of water remained Sebastian River until about 1994 when the Florida Department of Transportation changed the signs to read St. Sebastian River.

Dolph Map Co. of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, corrected their road maps in 1991 to read St. Sebastian River. Dolph Map Co. now does the printing for Rand McNalley.