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VOYAGE
OF THE
EUPORIA**

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 2

**HOLIDAY
2021**

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THE VOYAGE OF THE EUPORIA BY DANIEL ANDERSON

The Xenakis family of Greek sponge divers is challenged at every turn as they sail north from Key West to Apalachicola. Enticed by rumor of endless sponge gardens in the Northern Gulf, Mac, Niko and Kos brave nature's fury and confront hostile competition along the way. Join them aboard the sponge ship Euporia for the adventure of a lifetime in this tale of the Forgotten Coast's lost sponge diving industry.

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SERIOUS SNACKS BY DANIEL ANDERSON

On some menus, they're classified as appetizers – on others, starters...or tapas. Naming conventions aside, these "snacks" are often a customer's first impression of an eatery. Not quite entrees, but serious food nonetheless, these apps feature premium ingredients, hearty portions, and thoughtful recipes perfectly prepared. No wonder diners keep coming back for more!

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A DECENT ENOUGH SORT BY DANIEL ANDERSON

An intriguing cast of characters – among them a hooch-peddling shopkeeper, a moonshiner, a madam, an affable Federal Agent, and a butcher with a pet bear – populate the Apalachicola Bowery in this account from 1931. Prohibition may have been the law of the land, but residents of Old Florida's River City lived by their own set of rules.

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SHOP SMALL THIS FALL! BY DANIEL ANDERSON

Shopping Florida's Forgotten Coast is a memorable, productive and entertaining experience. The region is home to a diverse collection of privately-owned small businesses offering an incredible array of goods and services. The vibrance of our coastal towns shines through in the offerings of local merchants, and patronizing them positively impacts our small communities.



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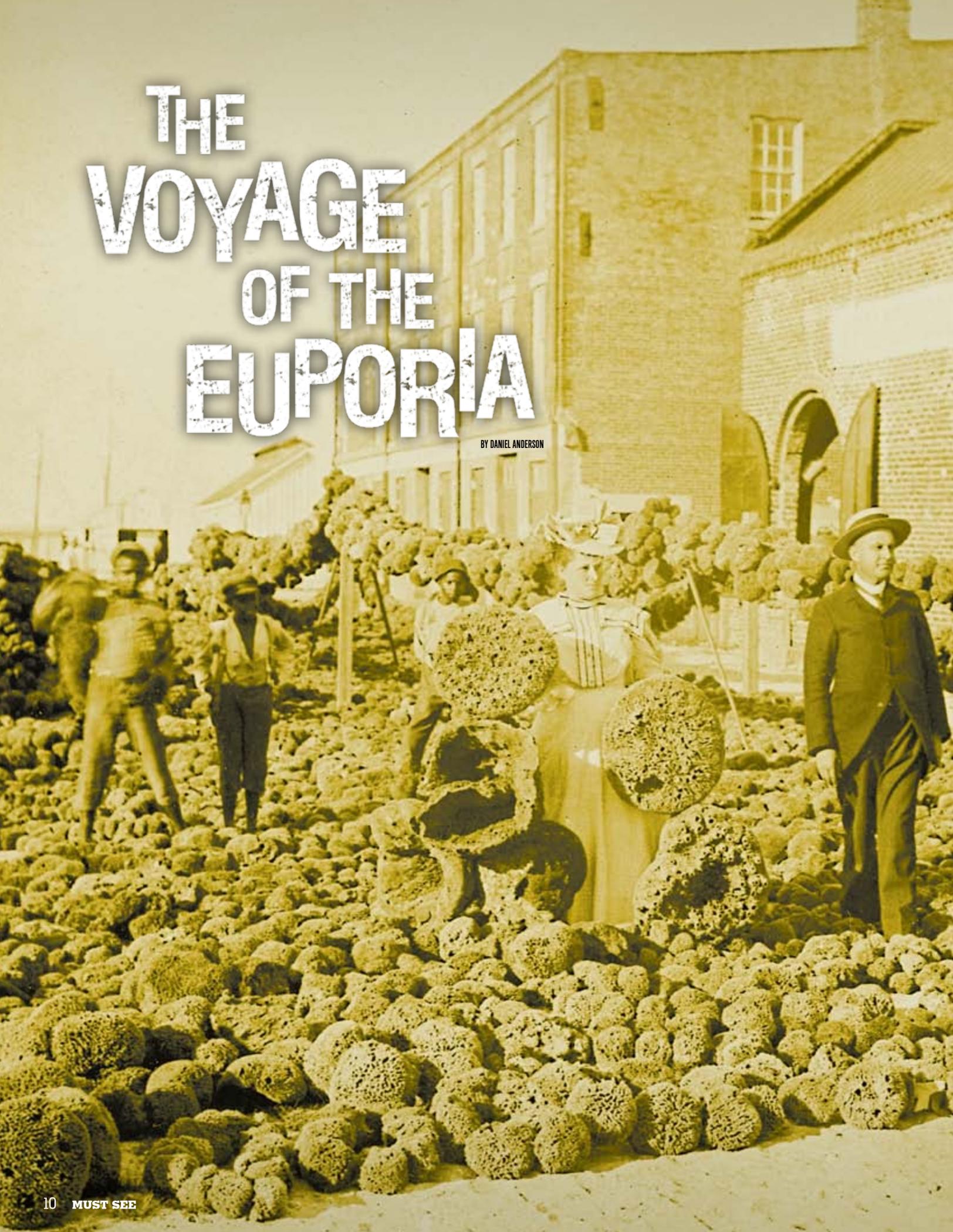


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THE VOYAGE OF THE EUPORIA

BY DANIEL ANDERSON





A TALE FROM THE NORTHERN GULF'S LOST SPONGE DIVING INDUSTRY

Konstantinos Xenakis kept one eye on the air pump as he carefully fed hose over the gunnel. It was tedious, but Uncle Mac's life was, quite literally, in his hands. Routine and tedium were a big part of life on a sponge boat. Mac Xenakis, Kos' uncle and captain of the *Euporia*, had taught him that – along with “never let boredom lower your guard.” *Good advice for a sponger*, Kos thought, *even if it doesn't apply to this trip*. Kos glanced toward the bow at his cousin, still bruised and battered, tending to a stringer of massive sponges. Hardworking Niko was Mac's son, but he had a reckless streak that worried his two shipmates. By unspoken agreement, Niko never manned or serviced the pumps and hoses aboard the *Euporia*. Anyway, there was plenty of other work to keep him busy. Recklessness aside, Niko was one helluva sponge diver – just like his father.

Niko called across the deck, observing that Mac had been down quite a while. Kos just nodded. Niko was worried about the knock to the head Mac had taken two nights earlier, but knew he could signal Kos on a stringer line dedicated to that purpose if there was a problem. Two sharp tugs if all is well, three long pulls if in trouble, five sharp tugs to end his dive, and no more than a couple of minutes between signals. He'd been down for several hours, and Niko had hauled up, cleaned and covered five full stringers of “woolies.” As if on cue, the line jerked in Kos' hand. Five quick tugs. Mac was ready to climb back aboard. Niko wondered aloud if the fishing had gone bad. So did Kos, but he just concentrated on bringing Uncle Mac topside – always a challenge with the heavy diving suit.

Ponderous weight belts and bulky helmets made every sponge diver's gear clumsy. The Xenakis' diving suit, or *skafandro*, was even worse. The helmet was oversized, and heavier than those used by most sponge

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divers. In the water the equipment proved its worth, however. More glass and special vents to eliminate fogging meant better visibility – perfect for the deeper, darker waters in the northern Gulf. Kos recalled the meeting in Key West when Alexander Fortunas recommended they bring the *skafandro* north to Apalachicola...

Fortunas, a retired sponge diver turned entrepreneur, stood on the dock and looked over their cargo as he spoke with Mac. After weeks of fishing, the deck of the twenty-eight foot *Euporia* was loaded with so many sponges, he couldn't have come aboard if he'd wanted to. The conversation concluded with satisfied smiles as Fortunas shook hands with Uncle Mac and tipped his hat to Kos and Niko. They parted ways with a promise to share a drink upon the *Euporia's* arrival in Apalachicola. As they carted their take to the Key West Sponge Exchange, Mac recapped the discussion for his crew.

"We're headed north, boys, as soon as the weather breaks. He says the sea floor from Cedar Key to Cape San Blas is covered with woolies at five fathoms, and they are fine. I believe him – our families go all the way back to Kalymnos. We've all heard the rumors, and there's no denying he's made his fortune up there. Think about it, boys! The same work for three or four times the pay. All we have to do is get there!"

As it turned out, getting there was easier said than done. As the mild Florida Keys winter gave way to spring, strong winds turned calm waters to a churning, foamy froth. The *Euporia* and her crew couldn't even work, let alone make the long voyage north. It was nearly April before Mac, Niko and Kos crossed Florida Bay and made their way to Cape Sable. From there, the plan was to steadily make their way up the coast, approach Apalachicola along the five fathom curve from Cedar Key, and gather a boat full of sponges along the way.

The crew bought and loaded enough supplies for four weeks, figuring the trip would take three. Mother Nature had other plans for them, however. Two nights out of Cape Sable, a storm rolled across the Gulf of Mexico. Six foot waves snatched the *Euporia*, anchored for the night, against her mooring lines. Mac Xenakis pulled anchor and headed west, fearing his vessel would be pushed ashore by the storm-tossed sea. As the sun rose, the storm abated. Land was nowhere in sight. The experienced captain headed east and north, knowing

he would return to Florida's west coast eventually. It wasn't long before Kos spotted the shoreline on the horizon, but the long night had rattled captain and crew.

Four days later, the morning dawned red. A menacing squall line sent the *Euporia* scurrying for safe harbor. Tucked into a sheltered cove near the northern edge of the Everglades, Kos, Mac and Niko rode out the storm. Unfortunately, high winds and rough seas kept them there for two more days. Kos started to wonder if they were ever going to see Apalachicola. "Eleven days out of Key West, and we're not even a third of the way there," he calculated. The *Euporia* was going to need to re-supply. Nine days later, Mac made the decision to visit Cedar Key.

The rumors had made it all the way down to Key West. *If you're Greek, stay away from Cedar Key.* Kos and Niko had overheard deckhands aboard a conch sponge boat discussing it. "They're killing Greeks up there. I heard they put three in jail and burned it down around 'em. Crazy damn crackers." When the boys told Mac the story, he'd laughed and said "No crazier than these conchs 'round here." Still, when Mac announced his intention to stop at Cedar Key, Kos was shocked. Mac and Niko told him not to worry. "There won't be any trouble. Quick in, quick out. Our money spends just like everyone else's," they said. As it turned out, they were wrong.

A miserable afternoon spent navigating the treacherous waters surrounding Cedar Key had Kos on edge. He'd been sounding off the bow for hours – more tedium – and Uncle Mac refused any risk to the *Euporia's* hull. The sun was setting by the time they anchored a stone's throw from the town's waterfront. Kos and Niko lowered the dinghy while Mac opened the strongbox and pocketed just enough money to pay for supplies. Kos watched over the rail as Mac and Niko paddled shoreward. "An hour. Maybe two." Mac said. "Keep the lantern burning so we can find you." He stayed busy. There was always work to do aboard a sponge boat. Two hours, then three, passed quickly.

It was nearing midnight by the time Kos convinced himself that something was wrong. He snuffed the lantern and slipped overboard. After slogging his way to shore in the waist deep water, he quickly located the dinghy. Quietly working his way past the boatyard and makeshift chandlery, he thought, *This is no Key West.* As he neared

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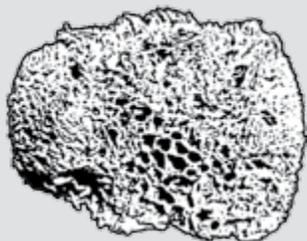
COMMERCIALLY VIABLE SPONGES OF THE NORTHERN GULF OF MEXICO

In 2007, after a decades-long moratorium, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission reopened the waters of the Forgotten Coast to sponge diving. Divers are now able to harvest sponges as far west as Cape San Blas. Depleted stocks have rebounded, and regulations regarding harvesting methods encourage stewardship. Divers must slice the sponges off no less than one inch above the attached base. This leaves sufficient regenerative tissue for the sponge to regrow. Sponges can fully recover in just 2 to 5 years. Sponge divers also thoroughly squeeze sponges after they're harvested, releasing thousands of reproductive spores before removing them from the sea. These spores are then carried by ocean currents until they attach themselves to structure or rocky bottom, creating new sponge colonies.

Sponges are typically harvested in waters less than 33 feet deep. Although sponges thrive in deeper water, increased bottom time, better visibility and little or no need for decompression usually keeps commercial sponge divers in the shallows. The northern Gulf of Mexico is home to four species of commercially viable sponges – Sea Wool, Yellow, Vase and Finger Sponges – all of which can be found in local waters.

SEA WOOL SPONGE

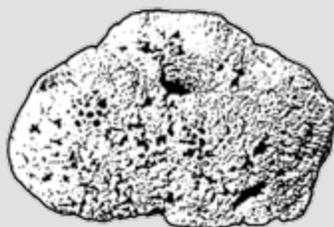
Hippospongia lachne



"Woolies" were always in demand, brought top dollar at auction, and were the foundation upon which Old Florida's sponge industry was built. Typically found in deeper waters, Sea Wool Sponges are very soft and absorbent. Whole small specimens are perfect for bathing!

YELLOW SPONGE

Spongia barbera



Valued at roughly half the price of an equivalent Sea Wool Sponge at auction, "Yellows" were much in demand for commercial applications. Yellow Sponges are abundant, found at nearly any diver accessible depth, and are firm, durable, absorbent and gently abrasive. Excellent for exfoliating!

VASE SPONGE

Ircinia campana



Historically, demand for Vase Sponges was low. Today, popularity as decorator accents for home and bath has demand, and prices, on the rise.

FINGER SPONGE

Axinella polycapella



Finger Sponges were rarely harvested by Old Florida's sponge divers. Today, they are much in demand for use in tropical and nautical designs.

Sponges must be processed after harvest. Every sponge has a multi-layered membrane containing "gurry" that must be removed. This is accomplished by exposing damp sponges to air and heat, thereby releasing a gas that degrades the membrane. What remains, essentially the sponge skeleton, is repeatedly rinsed with water and dried in open air. Natural sponges are hypo-allergenic and have many uses. Bathing, cleaning and painting top the list, but sponges also serve medical, industrial and aesthetic purposes.

the town center, he heard voices coming from a nearby building. Kos eased in that direction. It was an argument, but a very quiet one. "What're we posta do with 'em now? Can't keep 'em in jail. Jus' need 'em gone," followed by, "Ain't gonna be no problem. Remember, we got the law on our side. All we do is..."

Kos had heard enough. He sprinted for the dinghy, nearly paddled past the *Euporia* in his haste, and then turned around and scrambled aboard. After emptying the strongbox, he ripped the ship's bell from the cabin wall and headed back to Cedar Key. Kos began ringing the bell as soon as his feet hit dry land. He rang it outside every door and window on his way back to town, leaving a long string of angry and confused residents in his wake. Hopefully enough would follow, wondering what was going on. *They had better.*

The street was lit when he arrived back at the building – the jailhouse, Kos could now see. Several men were standing outside. Kos immediately began shouting, "Where is the Constable? I must speak with the Constable!" A disheveled man stepped forward and opened his mouth to speak. Kos cut him off and yelled, "You have my shipmates under arrest. They are no doubt guilty. I am prepared to pay any fines and leave with them immediately." And he kept on yelling. A crowd was gathering on the street. *Thank God*, Kos thought.

Faced with so many witnesses, the Cedar Key Constable's hand was forced. He produced Mac, groggy from a head blow, and Niko, looking much the worse for wear, in short order. He and a handful of men escorted the three Greeks back to their dinghy, took their valuables and every cent Kos carried, and shoved them off. Kos paddled away, followed by threats should they ever return. *Little chance of that*, he vowed.

Once aboard the *Euporia*, Kos and Niko pulled the dinghy aboard and prepared to raise anchor. "No way we're staying here," Niko stated. A still befuddled Mac protested, explaining the risk of running aground and being trapped in Cedar Key. Terrified and exhausted, Kos and Niko kept watch while Mac slept, but the rest of the night passed uneventfully. At first light – out of water, low on supplies and penniless – the *Euporia* sped away from Cedar Key on a falling tide. It was late afternoon when Mac awoke to find his vessel on a westerly course under

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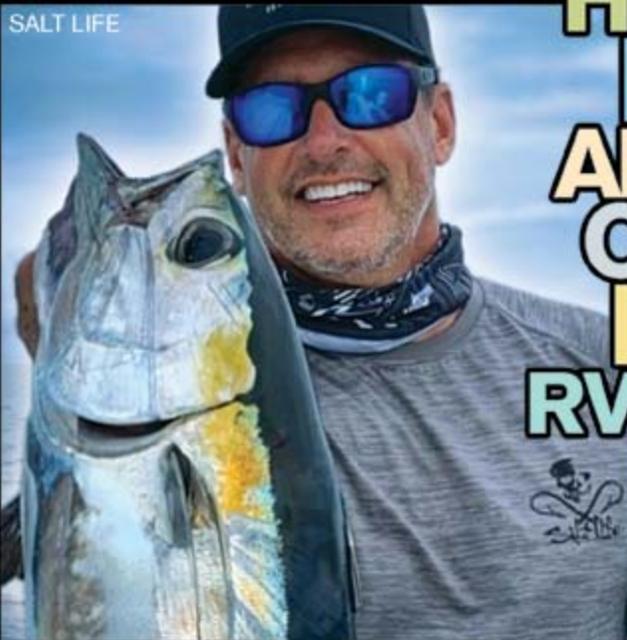
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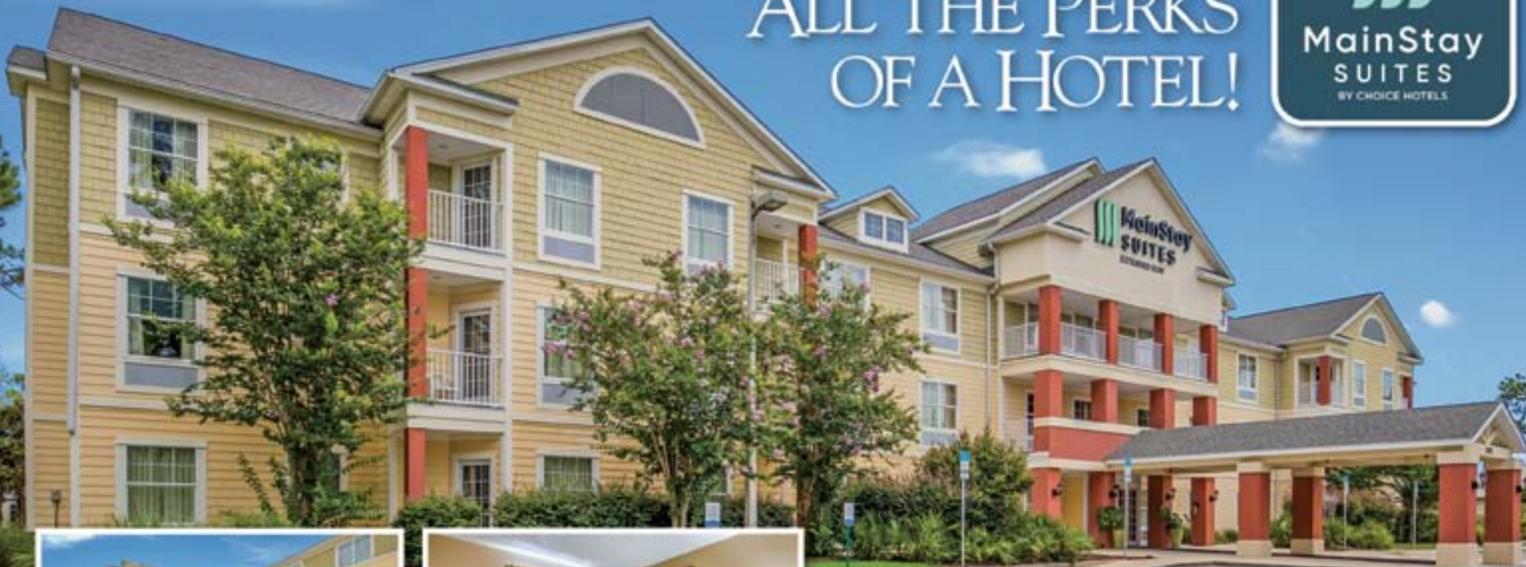
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gray skies and a steady rain. Kos and Niko were catching water in anything that could possibly hold it. A quick glance at their barrels eased his fears somewhat. The boys had been busy – drinking water they had in plenty. Mac quickly inspected the boat, everything seemed in order. He headed aft, where Kos and Niko manned the tiller.

Kos turned as Mac approached the stern, and was surprised to see tears in his Uncle's eyes. "No mistake, boys, I thought we were done for." He cupped Niko's chin, assessing his injuries. "Looks like you'll survive, son, thanks to your cousin." He stepped over to Kos and wrapped him in an embrace. "I remember hearing enough noise to wake the dead, and the next thing I knew, we're in the dinghy. Not sure what you did, but I'm sure glad you did it."

"I lost everything in the strongbox, and we're almost out of food," Kos admitted. His Uncle Mac just smiled. "The sea will provide. She always does. Let's help her along." Mac studied his charts and estimated their position, then had Kos take a few soundings. "Too shallow," he muttered as he angled the *Euporia* toward deeper water. Mac then instructed Niko to drop a pair of hand lines off the stern. A few minutes later, Kos grinned as Niko let out a "whoop" and brought in the day's first catch, a fat Spanish Mackerel. "Told you so," Mac mumbled.

By sunset, the *Euporia* had reached the five fathom line. Mac dropped anchor, and grimly began prepping the boat for the next day's work. Kos and Niko joined in, no questions asked. They were broke, and they all knew the only way out of their fix was hard work. If they didn't make port in Apalachicola with a load of sponges, they'd have to hire on with another captain. Kos didn't even want to think about that – good men had lost vessels in similar situations. Uncle Mac could not lose the *Euporia*.

The next morning dawned clear and bright. Kos polished the lens on the sponge glass – essentially a glass-bottomed bucket – and placed it in the dinghy. Usually calm, Mac seemed anxious as they lowered the boat. He nodded to Kos as he hopped in the dinghy and Niko cleated the tow line. The boys heard a splash before the tow rope had even drawn tight – Mac was already out of the boat! Thirty seconds later, Mac broke the surface with his knife in one hand and a fat Wool Sponge in the other. "Drop anchor! Time to suit up! It's like a garden down here." He tossed the sponge into the

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dinghy and dove again. A minute later, Mac surfaced at the stern of the *Euporia* with two more woolies in hand.

As Niko retrieved the dinghy, Mac donned the *skafandro*. Several hours and 122 sponges later, Kos felt those five short tugs on the stringer. After seeing Mac safely on board, Kos snapped out of his reverie and Niko asked the question on both their minds. "Has it gone bad?" Mac grinned at his son. "Suit up and see for yourself. And don't bother with anything but woolies!"

Kos inspected the *skafandro*, reset the pump and hose, and reminded Niko to signal every few minutes. As Niko descended, Kos settled back into routine. Mac, normally reserved, chattered excitedly about their catch and prospects. "Woolies and yellows every place I looked. Never seen the like. Vases and fingers, too, but no time to fool with those this trip. We'll fill the boat in a week!" Kos, accustomed to sponge fishing in the Keys, had his doubts. A full load meant two weeks work, and that because the *Euporia* was relatively small." They were both wrong. Niko sent up six more stringers that afternoon – 117 woolies, 17 yellows, and one giant vase that he affectionately named "Drinkin' Money."

For two more days, the sponge divers worked their way west. They filled the *Euporia* to capacity with sponges and worked round the clock preparing their catch for market. High in spirits and low on water, they made their slow way to Apalachicola. Days later, as they approached the docks, children paralleled them on shore, pointing and waving at the *Euporia's* crew. A smiling dockmaster hailed them to the city's southernmost berth, and deftly secured the bowline Kos tossed his way. The stern swung downcurrent, and Niko hopped ashore to tie off.

Uncle Mac immediately approached the affable dockmaster. As the two older men conversed in low tones, dockworkers gathered near the vessel. A few children sprinted down streets leading away from the water. The dockmaster waved over a porter, and Mac sent him in search of Alexander Fortunas. Townsfolk filtered toward the docks, alerted by the children. A crowd began to gather. Kos looked at Niko, who shrugged in response. He didn't know what all of the excitement was about either. When Fortunas finally worked his way through the crowd, he took one

look at the *Euporia* – barely visible under a blanket of sponges – and bellowed, “Calimaco Xenakis, you may be late, but you certainly do not disappoint! Let’s get that boat unloaded before she sinks!”

Introductions were made at the city Sponge Exchange, and an auction hastily scheduled for the next afternoon. Sponge buyers from New York and Boston had been waiting weeks for a decent shipment of the valuable Florida Wool Sponges. Fortunas assured Mac that the market was ripe, and he would do well at auction – excellent news for the weary captain and his crew.

Mac and the boys were about to retire to the *Euporia* when Fortunas recommended the Franklin Hotel, built just a few year’s earlier. “Jim Buck’s a friend,” he explained, “and he’ll take good care of you.” Mac asked if Buck would accept payment in sponges. Fortunas began to laugh, then frowned as he realized his old friend wasn’t joking. “What don’t I know, Mac?” he inquired. Fortunas listened in stunned silence as Mac shared the particulars of their journey, and couldn’t believe that they’d gathered their entire catch in only three days. “Takes weeks to bring in a load like that!” he exclaimed. “Where’d you find ‘em?”

“Five fathoms, like you said,” Mac answered. As it turned out, local spongers hadn’t been able to fish that deep for weeks. Storms had stirred up the Gulf, and they couldn’t see in the resulting murk. Fortunas credited the *skafandro* for making the difference, but Kos thought desperation and luck had just as much to with it. Fortunas offered to pay for their rooms, but Mac declined gracefully – as Kos and Niko knew he would. One more night aboard the *Euporia* wouldn’t kill them.

The auction went as well as Fortunas predicted – New York, Boston and a few smaller outfits bidding against each other and driving up prices. The wife of a local lumber magnate even paid top dollar for “Drinkin’ Money,” putting a huge smile on Niko’s face. Mac rolled his eyes at Kos – they were in for a long night. A few local spongers left the auction scowling and throwing dark looks at the Greeks. Still skittish from that night in Cedar Key, Kos thought there might be trouble. Fortunas told him not to worry. “Apalachicola is civilized – you’ll see. This place will be as big as New Orleans or Mobile one day.” Kos believed him. *After all*, he thought, *the man had been right about everything else.* 🍷

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SERIOUS SNACKS

BY DANIEL ANDERSON

Shareable starters. Tapas. Small plates. Appetizers. Featured on the menus of every Old Florida restaurant, some are familiar staples – chips & salsa, spicy chicken wings, peel & eat shrimp. Others, however, are more adventurous. Conceived to whet appetites and satisfy cravings, these “snacks” often shape a customer’s first impression of a restaurant. Striving to put their best foot forward, regional chefs take appetizers seriously. Great apps can become calling cards for local eateries, enticing diners to return time and time again.

In some instances, a mental shift occurs. A certain dish is listed as a starter on the menu, but customers re-categorize it as an entree. Shareable? Not any more! This phenomenon does not go unnoticed by local restaurateurs – some of their most popular entrees originated as appetizers. These *Serious Snacks* feature premium ingredients, hearty portions, and thoughtful recipes perfectly prepared. No two are alike, but each and every one is a palate pleasing plate full of flavor.

SESAME SEED ENCRUSTED TUNA *Shaggy Bay Supper Club / Simmons Bayou*

Chef J.R. Grady has taken the restaurant at St. Joseph Bay Golf Club and re-imagined it as the Shaggy Bay Supper Club. He’s made upgrades across the board, including the menu. The *Sesame Seed Encrusted Tuna* is just one example of many. J.R. starts with fresh, locally-sourced *ahi* tuna. Encrusted with tuxedo sesame seeds and flash-seared, the tuna is sliced and served with the center still cool. Accompanied by fresh *St. Joe Grow* wasabi micro-greens and house-made roasted corn & green tomato relish, it’s a delicious showcase of Gulf of Mexico seafood and locally-grown produce.

ANTONIO’S MUSSELS *Provisions / Port St. Joe*

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ANTONIO’S MUSSELS : PROVISIONS : PORT ST. JOE

may permeate the menu, but with *Antonio’s Mussels*, simpler is better. A full pound of fresh black mussels is sautéed in butter and garlic until the shells pop open, then reduced with white wine, roma tomatoes and parsley. Classic and satisfying!



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BAKED BRIE : UP TO NO GOOD TAVERN : APALACHICOLA

BAKED BRIE

Up To No Good Tavern / Apalachicola

Keri Elliott, owner of the Up To No Good Tavern in Apalachicola, can keep it simple, too. Watching her prepare this dish was an educational experience. Confidence in her ingredients – just four of them – was the key. A whole petite wheel of creamy brie is baked, drizzled with Mike's Hot Honey, and served warm with a bunch of juicy purple grapes and multi-seed flatbread crackers. Prepared, plated and ready to serve in what seemed like seconds, it's uncomplicated and unpretentious – much like the tavern itself.

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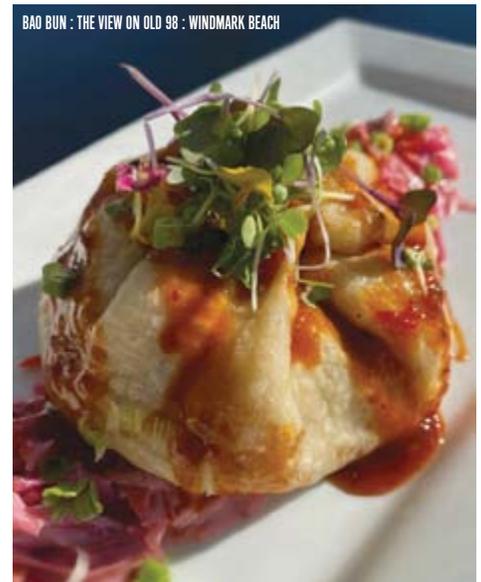
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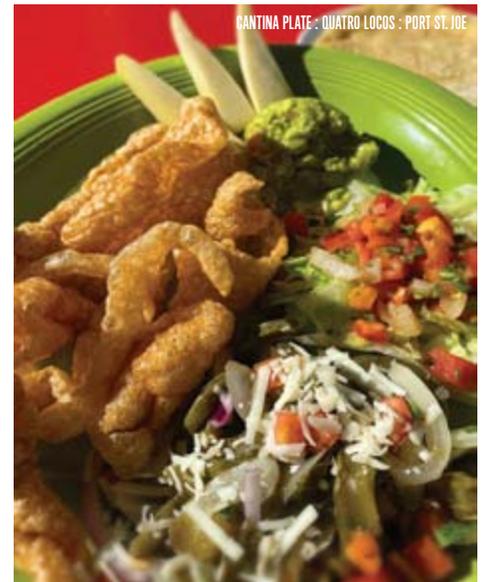
FLORIDA SAMPLER

Cat 5 Raw Bar & Grill / Simmons Bayou

After opening earlier this year, Cat 5 Raw Bar & Grill has quickly earned a reputation for friendly service and excellent traditional Florida seafood. Owner Scooter Acree and his staff are still fleshing out the menu, so new dishes are offered all the time. One of the latest is the *Florida Sampler* – a tasty trio of alligator bites, onion tangles and bang bang shrimp. Whole alligator tail is chunked, tenderized, battered, flash-fried and served with honey-mustard. Yellow onion rings are chicken-fried and served with BBQ ranch. Tail-on butterfly shrimp are fried or sauteed and tossed in spicy bang bang sauce. The plate, quite literally, overflows with crunchy, spicy goodness.

CANTINA PLATE

Quatro Locos Tacos & Cantina / Port St. Joe
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CANTINA PLATE : QUATRO LOCOS : PORT ST. JOE

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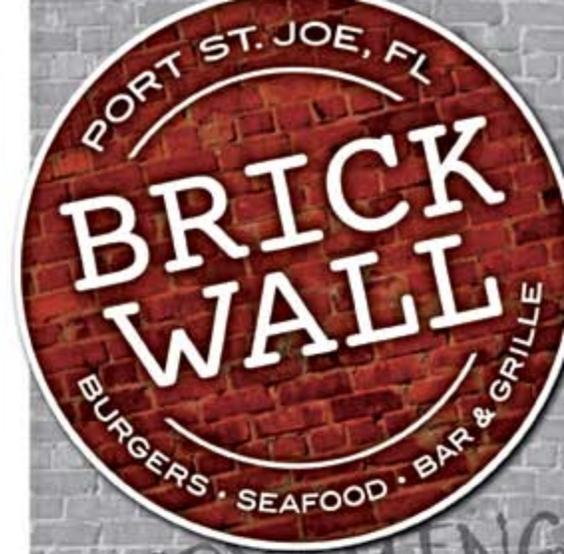
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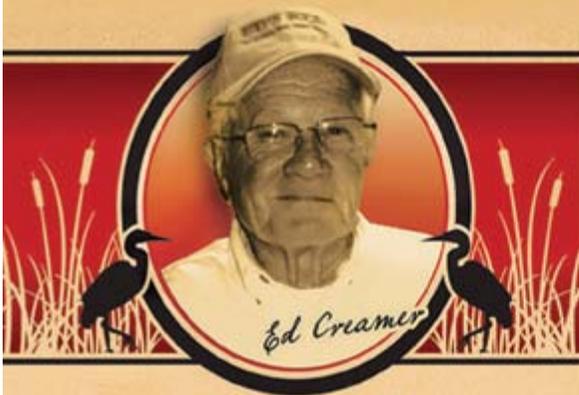
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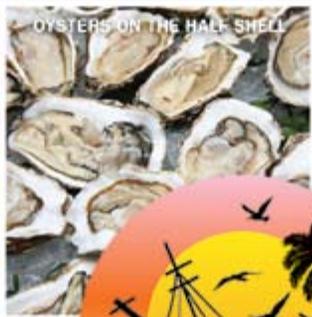
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SHRIMP & STEAK SKEWERS : UPTOWN RAW BAR & GRILL : PORT ST. JOE

SHRIMP & STEAK SKEWERS

Uptown Raw Bar & Grill / Port St. Joe

Located in downtown Port St. Joe, the Uptown Raw Bar & Grill expands upon the Indian Pass Raw Bar menu to include grilled steaks and seafood. The *Shrimp and Steak Skewers* are a welcome addition! Five large Gulf shrimp are seasoned with Greek spices and paprika. Cutlets of prime Angus tenderloin are marinated with lemon and worcestershire, then dusted with Montreal seasoning. Skewered and grilled over open flame, they're served with crisp garlic toast.

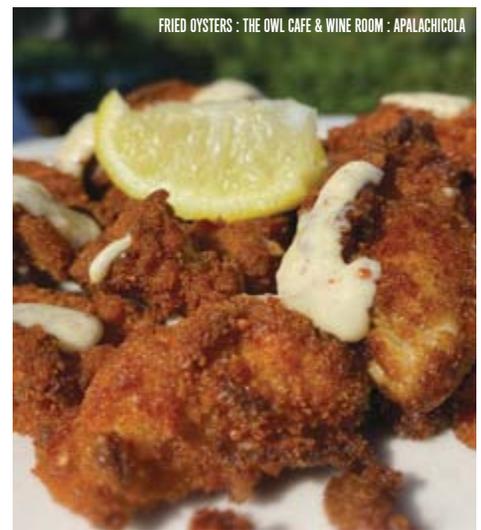


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FRIED OYSTERS : THE OWL CAFE & WINE ROOM : APALACHICOLA

FRIED OYSTERS

The Owl Cafe & Wine Room / Apalachicola

This legendary dish is a Forgotten Coast tradition, and no restaurant fries oysters better than The Owl Cafe & Wine Room in Apalachicola. Fresh, locally-harvested oysters are lightly battered, fried to a deep golden brown, and served with a lemon wedge and the Owl's secret recipe sauce for dipping. They are irresistible, and appear on the Owl Cafe's menu three different times – as an appetizer, an entree, and topping a salad. If I had to select one dish that best captures the essence of Old Florida, this would be the one.



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PROSCIUTTO & PEPPERS : JOE MAMA'S WOOD-FIRED PIZZA : PORT ST. JOE

PROSCIUTTO & PEPPERS

Joe Mama's Wood-Fired Pizza / Port St. Joe

The Prosciutto & Peppers appetizer at Joe Mama's Wood-Fired Pizza is a celebration of authentic Italian ingredients. Smoked La Quercia "speck" prosciutto is served with marinated and roasted red, yellow and green bell peppers, then topped with thin shavings of imported Grana Padano parmesan cheese. Accompanied by yeasty Focaccia crostini griddle-seared with basil olive oil, it's a scrumptious taste of Italy in Old Florida.



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SHRIMP DIP

St. Joe Shrimp Company / Cape San Blas

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A DECENT ENOUGH SORT

BY DANIEL ANDERSON

The sun wasn't much more than a glow over the river when John Barstow, the town butcher, arrived at his meat cuttery for the day's work. He didn't expect to be busy – it was the day before payday, not to mention lots of folks were out of work – but he knew Viv's man Rudolph would be there promptly for the daily "Boarding House" order. Likely it would be his biggest sale of a long, slow day. Still, you never could tell...

Like he had every day since that crazy Greek Kanelos brought it to him, he took the cub out of its pen and marched it out front. As he was chaining it to the column, he decided that he owed the sponge-diverted-logger a debt of gratitude. The bear had brought in customers, and if they only got strawberry sodas for Hercules, that was better than nothing. The bear was pawing at him now – it had really taken a liking to the sweet fizzy drink. Not for the first time, Barstow wondered how much longer he could keep the creature. Hercules seemed to enjoy the treats and scratches on the back, but was almost big enough to be a danger to customers and passers-by.

He kicked the wedge into place under the front door, headed behind the counter, and turned to find Rudolph entering almost on his heels. "Early today," he said with a grin.

"Girls work up an appetite last night?" As usual, Rudolph didn't say a word. Men in his position learned discretion, of course, but Barstow had never heard Rudolph speak to anyone but Viv.

Viv, or Miss Vivian du Lac, owned and operated the Commerce Street Boarding House, and the "hospitality" of Viv's girls was much in demand. Hard working men from the sawmills and snapper boats liked to let off a bit of steam on their rare visits to town, and the Boarding House was the perfect outlet. Viv ran a tight ship, though, and Rudolph's duties changed from errands and maintenance during the daylight hours to doorman after sundown. Viv had Sheriff Porter and Chief Sutton on her side, too, which kept complaints to a minimum. Viv was a good customer and a good neighbor, and that was enough for John Barstow.

While filling her order, Barstow recalled the day Viv arrived in Apalachicola. He was at the Western Union office around the corner when the train pulled in. She stood out like a sore thumb from the moment she stepped out of the passenger car. Rudolph shadowed her then as now, and the pair created quite a stir when word spread that she'd purchased the Boarding House. Inside a week, Cecil Granger invited her into the back of his drug store. As far as Barstow

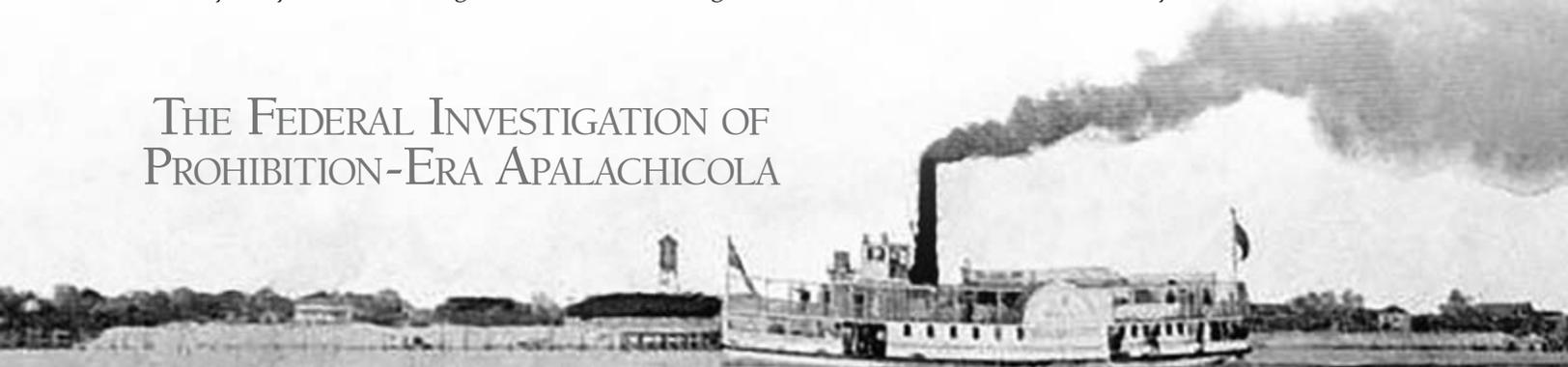
knew, Vivian du Lac was the one and only woman who'd ever seen it.

Rumor said she'd come from New Orleans looking to settle down and avoid trouble. Sometimes rumor was truth. Trouble was easy enough to find these days, and locally came in the form of men in suits with badges issued by the Federal Reserve. That thought made Barstow glance over Rudolph's shoulder toward the steamboat docks. That was when he spotted him. An unassuming man in an unassuming gray suit walking past the warehouse. "I'll deliver the meat later, Rudolph – tell Miss Viv we've got another one sniffin' round." Rudolph was out the door instantly, and John Barstow was right behind him.

Crossing the street to Cecil Granger's Drug Store, Barstow went past the soda fountain to the back door without slowing down. He pushed through the doors yelling, "Cecil, we've got another Fed in town. He must've spent last night on the steamer." Granger's disheveled head appeared from the loft. "Send Charlie to Emmett's house lickety-split," he barked. "I'll tell Fletch."

Charlie was Cecil's son, and the fastest runner in town. John found him behind the counter out front – he had missed him in his hurry to reach Cecil. Emmett Porter,

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who lived twelve blocks away, was the County Sheriff. Fletcher Sutton, the Chief of Police, was close by on night duty at the station downtown. Barstow hoped he had spotted the federal agent in time.

As word spread, the town and its people maintained a sense of calm on the surface, but buzzed like a kicked anthill just underneath. Runners were sent, quietly, to the homes of prominent businessmen. Viv's girls, after tidying their rooms and quickly concealing evidence of the previous evenings activities, left the Boarding House to assist nearby neighbors with similar undertakings. Lookouts were posted on street corners.

Cecil Granger and Chief Sutton returned to Granger's Drug Store. Glass gallon jugs of water-clear moonshine and cloudy bottles of home-brewed beer were quickly stashed behind false wall panels built under the stairs. "Wonder how long this one'll stay, Fletch," Granger said wearily. The Chief responded with an equally enthusiastic "Dunno, Cecil, but it's sure bad for business. And Emmett's not gonna like it, either. He just started back carrying his flask again."

The county Sheriff was notoriously fond of one local brew in particular. He called it "honey rum" and drank it to the exclusion of anything else. Emmett Porter was a good man, and if it took a nip here and there to keep him that way, it was nobody's business but his. Fred Little made the stuff upriver, used Tupelo honey instead of sugar, and wouldn't sell it to anyone but Cecil Granger. The exclusive made Cecil a bit of profit in hard times, and he was grateful for it. That thought reminded him that Fred was bringing another 24 gallons downriver that afternoon. "Little's supposed to be bringin' another load. I need to get word to him to hold off. Road's too wet for the Ford. Mind if I send Charlie up on your horse?"

As Charlie Granger, on horseback, sped north on Market Street, Federal Agent William Baxter became suspicious for the first time since his arrival in Apalachicola. Sent to the town for a routine check, Baxter had heard rumor of stills in remote areas further inland. Hints of corruption had reached his superiors, too. Like most agents, Baxter himself didn't think much of the 18th amendment, but he had a job to do. He had little interest in raiding speakeasies or saloons. Every town had a few, and for every one shut down, a new one would pop up. The letter of the law was "manufacture,

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transport, and distribution of alcohol.” He chose his targets accordingly.

That boy on the horse, obviously in a hurry, got his attention – especially after seeing the police brand on the animal’s flank. Baxter decided a visit to the police station was in order. The station secretary, Clara, brightened visibly when he entered, and was more than helpful. Turned out the woman could tie the truth into knots, but he wouldn’t learn that until later. She told him, “the Chief is probably having lunch at the Riverside Cafe. One block over and three down to the left.”

Instinct, or luck, told Baxter to take another route. As he made his way down Commerce Street, he saw the County Sheriff entering a shop. While passing by, he noted the sign above the door. It read “Granger’s.” There was a meat market across the street, and a Boarding House two doors down from that. It’s as good a place as any, he thought, and I’ll be able to keep an eye on that drug store. A beautiful woman met him at the door and curtly informed him that she had no rooms to let. The trip to the Riverside Cafe netted a tasty lunch but no Police Chief, and after a few inquiries on the street, Baxter checked in to the Franklin Hotel.

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“Name’s Baxter,” Viv told the men gathered in the back room saloon at Granger’s. “He’s been poking around my place. I told him I was full. Hah! Rudolph sent him to the Franklin. Dottie passed word he’s paid through next week.” That bit of information caused some grumbles and an outburst from Sheriff Porter. “Next week! Fletch, let’s round up Cal Mackey and put together a dog and pony for Agent Baxter. Cal’s got unpaid bills with Barstow and half a dozen other solid citizens. We’ll straighten him out and get Baxter gone at the same time.”

That plan lasted until the next morning when Agent William Baxter was the first customer through the doors at Granger’s Drug Store. “Nice bear over there,” he said to Charlie’s back. “Name’s Hercules,” said Charlie as he turned to greet his customer. Baxter couldn’t believe his luck – this was the same kid he’d seen sprinting out of town on the Chief of Police’s horse. “That was a fine animal I saw you riding yesterday. Yours?” The boy replied, “Nope, belongs to a friend of my father.” Then he clammed up tighter than a bank vault. After a cup of coffee, Baxter left so the boy could tell his tale. Sensing an opportunity, the Federal Agent bided his time.

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"I never saw him," Charlie said. "I left town straight away." His father, the Sheriff, and the Chief of Police all assured him that he did nothing wrong. "Just bad luck, son, plain and simple, and you weren't the one that led him here. You were still riding when he turned in at the Franklin, and Dottie says he never left."

"Make no mistake, gentlemen. We're in a real pickle," Viv told them. "Rudolph could take care of him – that's how it's done back home – but we're trying to put those days behind us." That comment raised some eyebrows from the men, who protested that Baxter was inconvenient, but seemed a decent enough sort. Viv smiled – this was one of the things she loved about Apalachicola. Then she asked, "Shall we buy ourselves a Federal Agent, gentlemen?"

Later on that afternoon, Charlie Granger knocked on a second story door at the Franklin Hotel. Bill Baxter wasn't the least bit surprised to see him. Visibly nervous, the boy stumbled over an invitation to meet with local businessmen at his father's store. Baxter accepted. Charlie walked with him to the meeting, and loosened up enough to chat along the way. *This is a good kid*, Baxter thought. *These are good people*.

The "businessmen" at the meeting turned out to be three he expected – Cecil Granger, Emmett Porter, and Fletcher Sutton – and three he did not. John Barstow ran the butcher shop across the street. Miss Vivian du Lac was proprietress of the "boarding house," and apologized for her earlier snubbing. Fred Little was introduced as a trusted associate. Baxter liked them all. They confirmed his suspicions and welcomed him with open arms. Federal Agent William Baxter had found a home.

A few hours later, it was back to business as usual in Apalachicola. Fred Little headed upriver accompanied by John Barstow and Hercules – one of Baxter's conditions was that the bear had to go. The men returned the next morning with the delayed batch of Honey Rum. Emmett Porter helped them unload. With assistance from Viv, Sutton, and Granger, Agent William Baxter was able to intercept enough contraband to keep his superiors guessing. After all, seizures and arrests were documented by the County Sheriff and the Chief of Police. Rudolph returned to the meat market each morning with Viv's order. He never once spoke a word to John Barstow. 

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SHOP SMALL THIS FALL!

BY DANIEL ANDERSON



Thoughtful holiday gifts are feel-good expressions of love and appreciation, and are as much a joy to give as receive. 'Tis the season for gift-giving, and, for many of us, that means shopping. Shopping locally is a gift in itself – the kind that keeps on giving! The impact of shopping small – at locally-owned and operated businesses – is enormous, especially in our tiny communities. Shopping locally provides numerous and dramatic benefits.

Visitors, residents and business owners alike reap the rewards of shopping small.

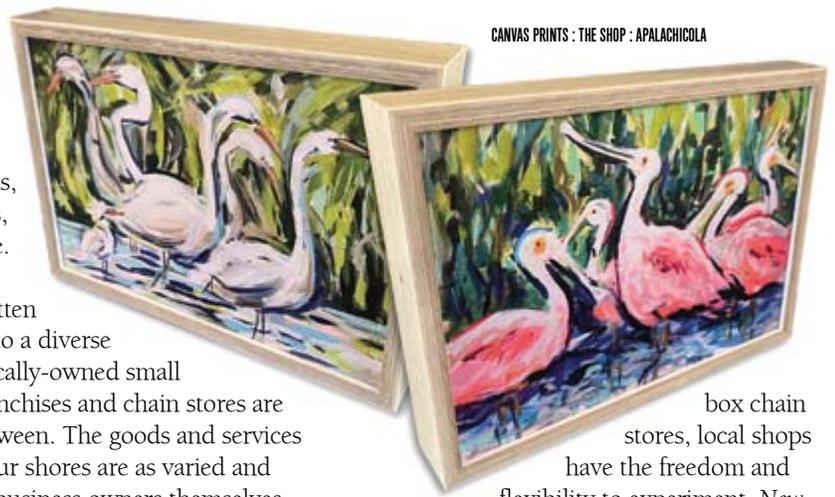
The more successful the enterprise, the more it bolsters, improves and sustains the community in which it operates. Thriving businesses grow, creating jobs, expanding offerings, attracting consumers and fostering new ventures. Money spent with independent regional businesses is 400% more likely to recirculate through the

WINE DECANTER : BOTTOMS UP : APALACHICOLA

local economy. Taxes collected fund city and county public services, schools, first responders, roads and more.

Florida's Forgotten Coast is home to a diverse collection of locally-owned small businesses. Franchises and chain stores are few and far between. The goods and services offered along our shores are as varied and colorful as the business owners themselves, and provide memorable, productive and entertaining experiences. The unique flavor of our coastal towns is enhanced – possibly defined – by the vibrance and character of local merchants, their offerings, and their facilities. Most are owner-operated, too. Consumers contribute to the livelihoods of owners and staff. In turn, as providers, they enhance customer quality of life. These relationships engender respect, friendship, trust and a priceless sense of community.

Old Florida businesses offer an incredible variety of merchandise, as well. As corporate buying strategies dictate inventory in the big



CANVAS PRINTS : THE SHOP : APALACHICOLA

box chain stores, local shops have the freedom and flexibility to experiment. *New and different* are as present as *tried and true*. In addition, regional merchants are the primary providers of locally-sourced artisan goods. Demand for these products is at an all-time high, and many cannot be found anywhere else.

Now that you know “why” you should *Shop Small This Fall*, it’s time to discuss “where?” Most would suggest downtown Apalachicola and downtown Port St. Joe, and those are two excellent options. Both towns feature easily walkable historic shopping districts populated by dozens of shops, boutiques, galleries and outstanding restaurants. Day

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trip destinations in their own right, Port St. Joe and Apalachicola turn shopping small into a big deal. There is, however, more to the story.

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LOCALLY-MADE SOAPS - GENERAL STORE - INDIAN PASS

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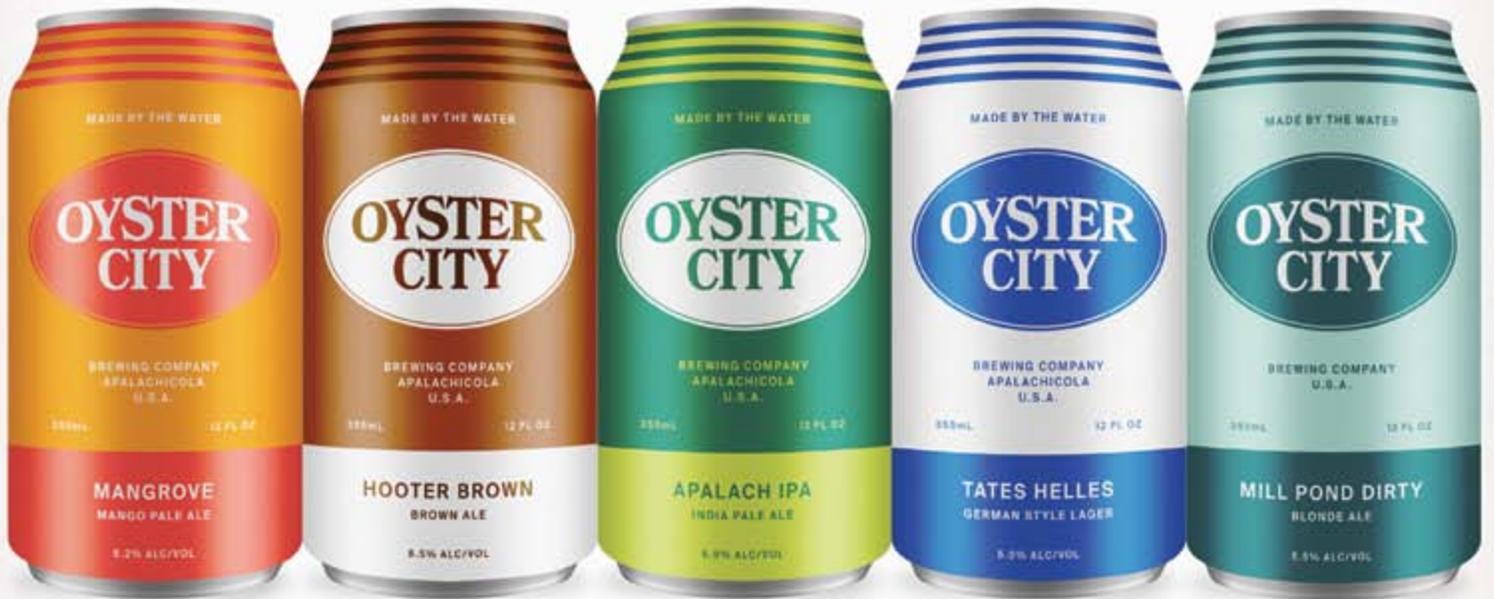
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