

## JOHN FRIES LOCATED CENTRAL FLORIDAS PIONEER LANDMARKS

### George Washington of Area Conquered Wildernesses.

There have been men who had a large part in the building of Central Florida. However, no man was as intimately connected with every part of it, or has left a more permanent record than John Otto Fries.

Mr. Fries was a character who always made history in pioneer countries. A man of powerful physique, he was totally unconscious of the comforts of life. Swamps, lakes, streams, wet or cold never daunted him in any undertaking.

He was born in Upsala, Sweden, in 1838, the son of a long line of Lutheran ministers, scientists and educators.

The family attaining prominence in the early part of the 15th century.

He graduated from the University of Upsala. In 1857 he took post graduate work in the University of Stockholm.

Mr Fries landed in Sanford in December 1871. On Christmas day he came to Orlando, following the old Tampa Trail. A lumber wagon, drawn by horse and mule was the only transportation. The one-way cost of the trip was \$10.

It was my privilege to know Mr. Fries as intimately as anyone outside of his family could know him. He had few close friends and only on rare occasions would speak of his work or life.

For more than 25 years he was deputy U.S. surveyor, and for many years county surveyor for Orange and Brevard counties.

Where ever you find a cement corner post marking the section corners, you know that it was set by J. Otto Fries.

His survey of the Everglades and enumeration of the Seminole Indians was a task that many considered an impossibility.

He surveyed and located the county highways, the Tavares-Orlando and Atlantic railway and the Orlando and Oakland, never constructed.

Indian noses counted.

It was an established tradition that the Seminoles would not permit anyone to count them. Fries not only took a census of the tribe, but made friends with the chiefs.

By directions of the Orlando city council, Mr. Fries associated with S.A. Robinson and surveyed and platted Greenwood cemetery. Before they began their work, there were few, if any, records of lots sold or burials made. After weeks of work, search of all records, inquiries of families, the present plat of Greenwood was worked out.

Notwithstanding all the hardships which he endured, he lived a long life.

There has been no man like him in all the history of the state. When you look for the established corners of any property in Orange county that you may own, when all other surveyors have

The writer does not know whether his note books have been preserved and are available or not. If they are, then they should be treasured as a part of the historical records of Orange county.

A man of the woods, unshaven, uncouth in appearance, asking no man to go where he himself would not lead, quick to resent and reprove any work that was not accurate, a martinet, if you please, he was always a gentleman.

As a surveyor, he had few equals. As a citizen he stood for all that was best.

He was made an honorary member of the Geological Royal Society of Sweden, an organization that has been very conservative in bestowing honors.

This quiet, unassuming man, who never was in the limelight, whose life was spent mostly in the woods, left on the records of Orange county something which will go down thru all the years that are to come.