

# Indian Spring Cemetery

5400 Indian Springs Road, Punta Gorda, FL 33950

**Charlotte County History Services**  
**2050 Forrest Nelson Boulevard, Port Charlotte, FL 33952**  
**941.629.PAST (7278)**

**Special Thanks to:**  
**Charlotte County Genealogical Society**  
**Charlotte County Public Works**

**Burial plots in Indian Spring Cemetery are still available for purchase by contacting Public Works Administrative Services at 941.575.3600.**



Indian Spring Cemetery, resting near the banks of Alligator Creek, is one of Charlotte County's historic pioneer cemeteries. The land was donated for a public cemetery by early settler James L. Sandlin on December 14, 1886.

The name Indian Spring may predate the original platting of the cemetery. The burial grounds once surrounded a small spring thought to have been used by indigenous peoples as a fresh water source. In late 19th and 20th century obituaries, it was simply noted as the "Creek Cemetery" and then briefly in the late 1920s as "Pineapple River Cemetery." Of the 95 early settlers recorded in the 1900 census, 49 are buried in Indian Spring Cemetery.

The 40-acre cemetery has been owned and maintained by Charlotte County since 1948. Indian Spring Cemetery is divided into 14 sections, containing space for over 6,000 interments.

The oldest markers are located in the southern boundary of the western portion following the Alligator Creek border.

## 1. Site of original Indian Spring

**2. John H. Bowman (1857-1903)**, on a 4th term as city marshal of Punta Gorda, was murdered at his home on Taylor Street when shot through his front window. He was known as an imposing figure on a mission to clean up the rough, frontier town with a record of 40 murders committed in 18 years. The identity of the killer is a mystery to this day.

**3. Ollie Bracket “Big Six” (?-1894)**, owner of “Castle Hall,” a bawdy house at the end of West Marion Avenue just before what is now Punta Gorda Isles. “Big Six” was notoriously known throughout the state. The attending physician at time of death discovered that she was born male and may have used the guise to escape the law. \*\*No headstone viewable\*\*

**4. Clay Chadwick (1879 - 1953)**, developed Englewood Beach (historically known as Chadwick Beach & Punta Gorda Beach). He and his brothers, Steve and Hubbard, owned fish camps as commercial fishermen. Steve’s home is presently the oldest house on Manasota Key.

**5. Charles G. Davis (1846-1917)**, was the conductor of the first passenger train owned by the Florida Southern Railroad that arrived in Punta Gorda in 1886. He stayed in Punta Gorda and started a pinery (pineapple farm) in 1890. Davis is credited with introducing the large Smooth Cayenne pineapples to the area in 1895. Between 1902-1917 Punta Gorda was the principal supplier of pineapples for the nation.

**6. Albert F. Dewey (1857– 1935)**, owner of the Charlotte Harbor Stevedore Co. and the steam tug boat, *Albert F. Dewey*, which he used to tow phosphate barges from the Peace River to Boca Grande Pass. The *Dewey* handled all the phosphate through Punta Gorda and could tow a thousand tons of phosphate a day.

**7. Harry R. Dreggors (1871-1962)**, founded the Punta Gorda Fish Co. with Eugene Knight in 1897. The PG Fish Co. was important to the economy of Punta Gorda up into the 1960s. Dreggors was also on the Board of Trustees for the school in Punta Gorda which opened in 1911.

**8. Albert Waller Gilchrist (1858-1926)**, early Punta Gorda settler, founder, real estate broker, lawyer and 20th governor of Florida. He platted Indian Spring Cemetery in the 1880s, which fittingly serves as his final resting place. Many sites across the state are named after him, including Gilchrist Park. To this day, children enjoy ice cream on Halloween in downtown Punta Gorda because of the governor’s kindness.

**26. Henry W. “Baker” Smith (1870-1943)**, owner of Smith’s Bakery and Grocery, Smith Arcade and the Bayview Hotel in Punta Gorda. Smith was also a County Commissioner in 1927-28.

**27. Virginia Taylor Trabue (1832-1924)**, early settler and wife of Isaac Trabue, founder of Punta Gorda. She founded the Good Shepherd Episcopal Church (1886) which continues to hold services. A neighbor donated her plot in Indian Spring Cemetery. Her mother, Charlotte Scarborough Taylor, was the first female entomologist in the United States.

**28. Willie A. “Miss Billie” White (1879-1969)**, a Western Union Morse Code telegrapher for 52 years and first area telephone operator. She has three commemorative emblems on her headstone: 50 Year Morse Operator, Member Wireless Pioneer, Member Eastern Star. Willie’s good friend, Thomas Edison, would delay his departure to Fort Myers just so Willie could transmit his telegrams.

**Potter’s Field**, historically used as a paupers burial section for adult indigent burial. This section is not currently in use in Indian Spring Cemetery.

**Baby Land**, an area originally specified for free infant burial.

**Indian Spring Cemetery** is also notable for its large assortment of “tree stone” monuments, signifying members of the Modern Woodmen of America, a fraternal organization started by Joseph Cullen Root (1844-1913) in 1883, and Woodmen of the World, also started by Joseph Cullen Root, in 1890. Modern Woodmen and Woodmen of the World gravestones resemble logs or tree stumps, often with broken or sawn limbs indicating a life cut short. They vary greatly in size and design; some are elaborately hand-carved, others are simple stone monoliths. The monuments were designed by the home office of the organization and sent to local stonecutters, but artistic leeway was often taken in interpreting the patterns, particularly in height; tree stump designs typically range from three to five feet tall.

The Woodmen marker program was discontinued in the 1920s, but tree stone monuments are found throughout the USA, most commonly in the South and Midwest.





**17. James Lipscomb (1871-1956)** Punta Gorda City Marshall from 1908-13 and first Charlotte County Sheriff from 1921-1941. Charlotte County was formerly DeSoto County until 1921.

**18. Marcus McGehee (1847-1926)**, Confederate veteran, private Co. A 1st Regiment, Georgia, Infantry, Brigade of Gen. John B. Gordon. Settled in Punta Gorda in 1896.

**19. Francis Peabody McLane (1877-1889)**, oldest marked gravesite in Indian Spring Cemetery. Son of George W. McLane (1842-1916) and Emma Peabody McLane (d. 1911). George McLane was a Civil War veteran who served as a Mayor of Punta Gorda, Justice of the Peace and a Commissioner of DeSoto County before Charlotte was formed.

**20. James Morgan (1859 - 1903)**, bought acreage along Alligator Creek in 1884 and planted a citrus grove. He married James Sandlin's sister, Martha Suzanah Sandlin. The Sandlin and Morgan families shared many enterprises.

**21. Vernon Peeples, Sr. (1930 – 2015)**, local historian, Florida State Representative 1982 to 1996. Author of *Punta Gorda and the Charlotte Harbor Area: A Pictorial History*, received the Peace River Valley Historical Society Florida History Award. Published Tampa Bay history articles in the Florida Historical Quarterly.

**22. Byron Rhode (1904 – 2000)**, son of Docia & George D. Rhode, he came to Punta Gorda at the age of 2 years old. He was a local historian whose recollections were captured in the book, *Punta Gorda Remembered*.

**23. James L. Sandlin (1858-1903)**, arrived in 1884 in the company of the Tolbert Morgan family when they acquired extensive acreage on Alligator Creek including the cemetery grounds. He was married to Mary Lula Seward of Bartow. He was a mayor of Punta Gorda.

**24. Robert Kirby Seward (1873-1951)**, brother of Mary Seward Sandlin, was the founder of the Punta Gorda Herald. The first issue was printed on February 17, 1893. Now owned by the Sun Coast Media Group, the Punta Gorda Herald is still in publication.

**25. Katie Sloan (1866-1891)**, assistant postmistress of Punta Gorda from 1888 –1891. She was with child when dogs attacked her in the streets of Punta Gorda which led to her death shortly after. Her gravesite is the only one in the cemetery with two burials.

**9. Epfraem "Abe" Goldstein (1848-1906)**, a furniture dealer, came to Punta Gorda in early 1887 from Savannah, GA. In a hurry to have a home ready for his wife Friederike and son Harry, Abe made a deal with the carpenters building the Hotel Punta Gorda. The carpenters started work at daybreak and by nightfall had finished a two-story house beside the Goldstein's furniture store. The Goldstein's became the first family to reside in the new city. Harry grew up to be a well-known, talented violinist.

**10. Harry Goulding (1908 - 1992)**, known as "Mr. Hibiscus", was a world-renowned hibiscus hybridizer with nearly 500 registered cultivars. Along with hundreds of awards, American Hibiscus Society (AHS) awarded him "Best in the World" 5 times. The local AHS is named the Harry Goulding Chapter in his honor. He also worked as a fisherman who moved on to bookkeeping and eventually vice-president and secretary of the Punta Gorda Fish Co.

**11. Thomas R. Hector (1838-1899)**, a Scotsman and owner of the billiards hall that was the site of the signing of Punta Gorda's incorporation documents. Hector served as the first City Clerk.

**12. Henry Etta "Tosie" Quednau Hindman (1923-2009)**, served as the Supervisor of Elections from 1966-88 and is remembered for being very active in getting residents to vote. In years prior, she served as a local butcher, school bus driver, and Postmistress of Murdock Post Office.

**13. Norman Hewitt (1874-1951) and Clarence Hewitt (1878-1967)**, owned Hewitt Brothers Garage, Hardware Store and Furniture Store all on E. Marion Ave where the Punta Gorda Post Office is today. Norman owned one of the first cars in Charlotte County, a six-horsepower Rambler Run-About, which led him to the first auto accident of the area in 1906.

**14. John Jack (1872 - 1942)**, was a real estate broker and investor, owned a pinery, was a city manager and mayor of Punta Gorda at the time City Hall was built in 1927.

**15. Captain William H. Johnson (1865-1953)**, owner of W.H. Johnson & Co. He was involved in fishing, was a pilot-boat captain, a real estate broker, and one of the first Charlotte County Commissioners. He was influential in the creation of Charlotte County and its division from DeSoto in 1921. Upon hearing the new legislation, Johnson quickly telegraphed, "We have met our enemy, and they are ours, DeSoto County, like Gaul, has been divided into five parts."

**16. Dr. Julian Jordan (1888-1971)**, was a dentist, mayor of Punta Gorda 1924-5, 1934-5; and, along with his brother, owned the first Picture Show in Punta Gorda. The movie theater was located next to present day Ace Hardware.





Entrance  
Road



Baby Land

3

Potter's Field

12

28

2

21

17

18

6

16

4

5

11

7

15

26

27

20

23

24

9

1

22

25

10

14

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12

19



Alligator Creek