



FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL

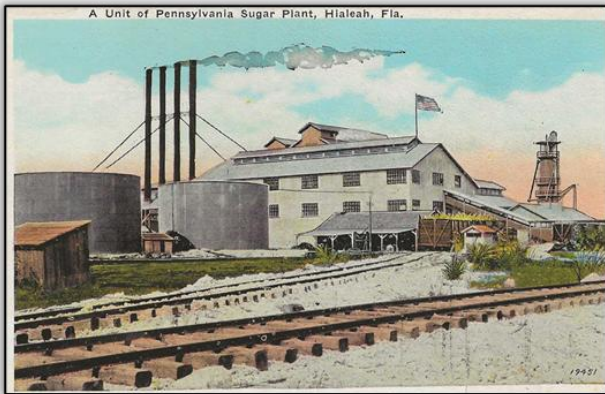
Promoting Philately in the Sunshine State



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The PENNSUCO Experiment



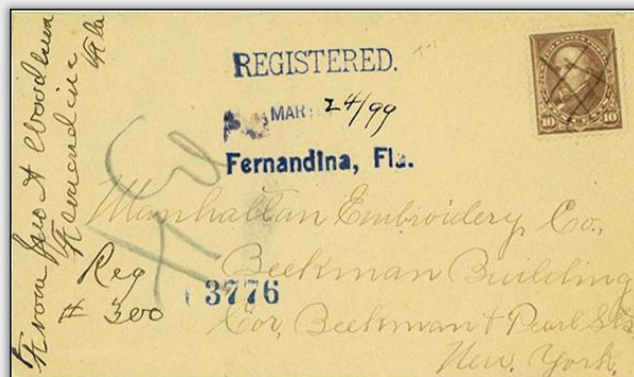
Allen, Florida DPO



USS Sturtevant



Steamship "Indian River"



Fernandina, Fla. REGISTERED

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The PENNSUCO Experiment

By Daniel Maddalino

Created in 1921 by the Pennsylvania Sugar Company¹, a major Philadelphia refinery (1868-1984)², PENNSUCO was an experimental sugarcane mill and plantation (a Company Town). It was originally named Penn-Su-Co. This is short for Pennsylvania Sugar Company and frequently spelled PENSUCO. The town was established in Dade (later Miami-Dade) County, and it was neither incorporated nor had they established a post office until after the end of the experiment and the Pennsylvania Sugar Company had withdrawn from Florida. Mail was directed through the Miami Post Office about twelve miles to the east. A few picture postcards attest to the plantation's short existence.

Sugarcane was introduced to Florida in the late sixteenth century by Spanish settlers³ and successful sugarcane harvesting has always been a two-step process. First, in October, the fields of cultivated cane stalks are set on fire to burn off their leaves and the tops of the cane. Second, a labor force would then cut the fire-cleaned cane using large machetes as shown in Figure 1. This is an unused real photo postcard (Koopel Color Cards, Hawthorne, N.J.) that was made for the sugarcane cooperatives.



Figure 1. Cane cutting in South Florida.

The problem with this tried-and-true harvesting method was that the process raised health concerns from the smoke that impacted nearby communities⁴. Also, the burning of the underbrush can lead to soil erosion during the rainy season. However, the Pennsylvania Sugar Company thought they had come up with a better method. They called it Green Harvesting.

Green Harvesting was an experimental concept in which the sugarcane stalks were cut and stacked in "Open Silos" to dry. Figure 2 is a colorized postcard (J. N. Chamberlain, Miami, FL) showing unburned sugarcane gathered for its Green Harvest cleaning.