



The Chetwynd Chronicles: The British Colony of Lake County, Florida, 1882-1902

D. R. S. Bott

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An Orange Fever epidemic surged throughout Florida in the early 1880s. Aggressive land agents, not all of them scrupulous, set up shops in nearly every county while their representatives abroad romanced prospective settlers in Europe, particularly England. Lured by the prospect of reaping a fortune from growing citrus, combined with the promise of cheap land, and a healthy sub-tropical climate, a young, entrepreneurial Englishman, Granville Chetwynd-Stapylton succumbed. In the winter of 1882, he set his feet onto land that he described as, “. . .colonial with unbroken pine forest, without road or railway.” Those conditions began to change—rapidly. The Chetwynd Chronicles is the only account ever written about the brief life and perils of the British colony of Chetwynd, located in the northwest corner of Lake County, Florida,—roughly an area between Lady Lake and Leesburg—and of its developer, Chetwynd-Stapylton. Throughout the nearly 20 years of its existence, colonists—most of them English, young, and university educated bachelors—came to learn the citrus culture, stayed a few years, and migrated. Remarkably, over 140 of them are identified and their footsteps followed all over the world.

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