

THE GREAT OUTDOORS



Author explored the historic triangle in Green Cove Springs and brought a bit of unknown history to town residents. Photo: Michael Ein

Mary's Winters

Author retraces Mary Treat's annual trek from southern New Jersey to her Florida study grounds.

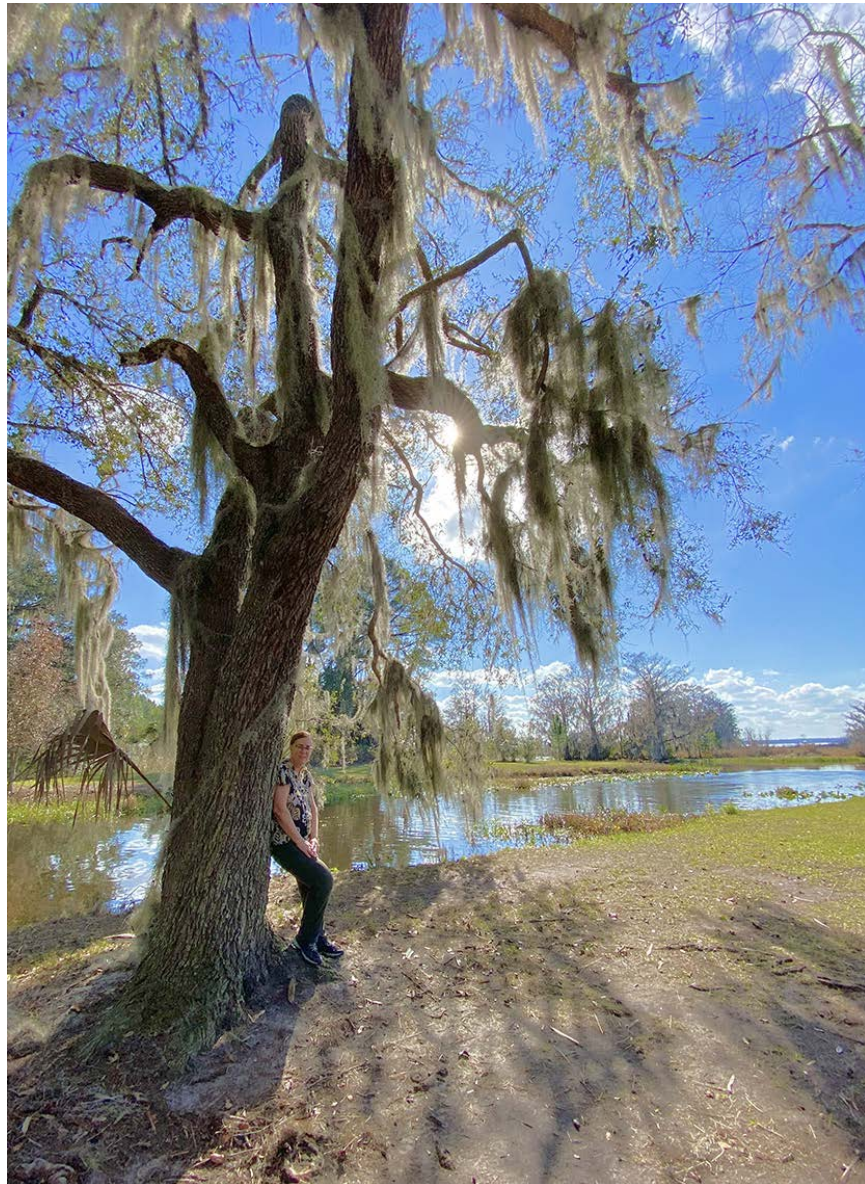
*By Deborah Boerner Ein,
Editor, SNJ Today*

My husband and I took a road trip south to Florida and Alabama after Christmas to visit family and friends. It was a bit of a whirlwind tour but long overdue as we had not visited there

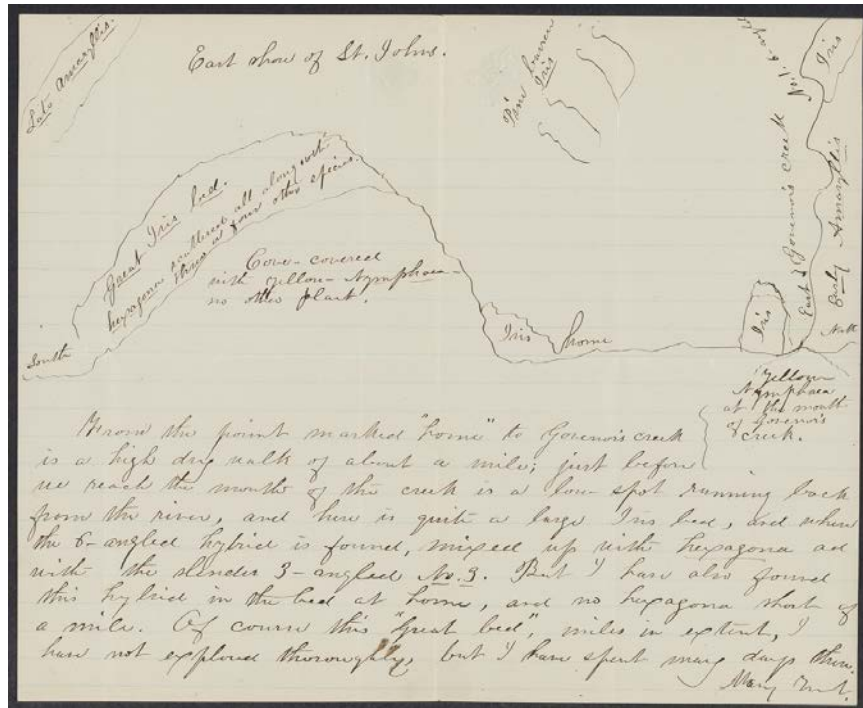
since right before the pandemic,
Christmas 2019.

For me, the trip doubled as an opportunity to visit Green Cove Springs, Florida, which is where Mary Treat spent several winters in the 1870s. Treat is the subject of my recently published book, *Mary Treat: A Biography*. As you might recall from reading one of Jane Galetto's columns in this space ("A Good Read," in the November 9, 2022 issue), Mary Treat was a notable entomologist, botanist, plant pathologist, writer, and teacher, who lived and worked in Vineland even as she corresponded with the likes of Charles Darwin and others in these male-dominated fields.

"It is really fitting, given the background of Mary Treat, that the present-day editor of this weekly newspaper in Vineland would tackle the job of researching and compiling a book about Treat 99 years after her death," Galetto wrote. "We are very fortunate that Deborah decided to undertake this task and give us a biographical picture of this local personage."



Live oak trees, often draped in moss such as this one, predominate northern Florida. It was in these trees that Mary Treat discovered a gall oak wasp that was named for her. Photo: Michael Ein



Harvard University - Library of the Gray Herbarium / Asa Gray correspondence files of the Gray Herbarium, 1838-1892 (inclusive). Correspondents General Tom-Tz. Botany Libraries, Archives of the Gray Herbarium, Harvard University Herbaria, Cambridge, Mass.

Map: Harvard University/ Library of the Gray Herbarium

For starters, just getting to Florida, mostly along I-95, had me wondering how much harder it would have been to make this annual trip in the 19th century. Treat would have likely traveled by steamboat, railroad, stagecoach, or a combination thereof. A trip that took us some 16 hours and the better part of two days would have taken her much longer, in possibly rough seas and over wild terrain. She probably made stops to study other areas of the Atlantic coastal plain; towns such as Wilmington, NC are

mentioned in her writings and correspondence.

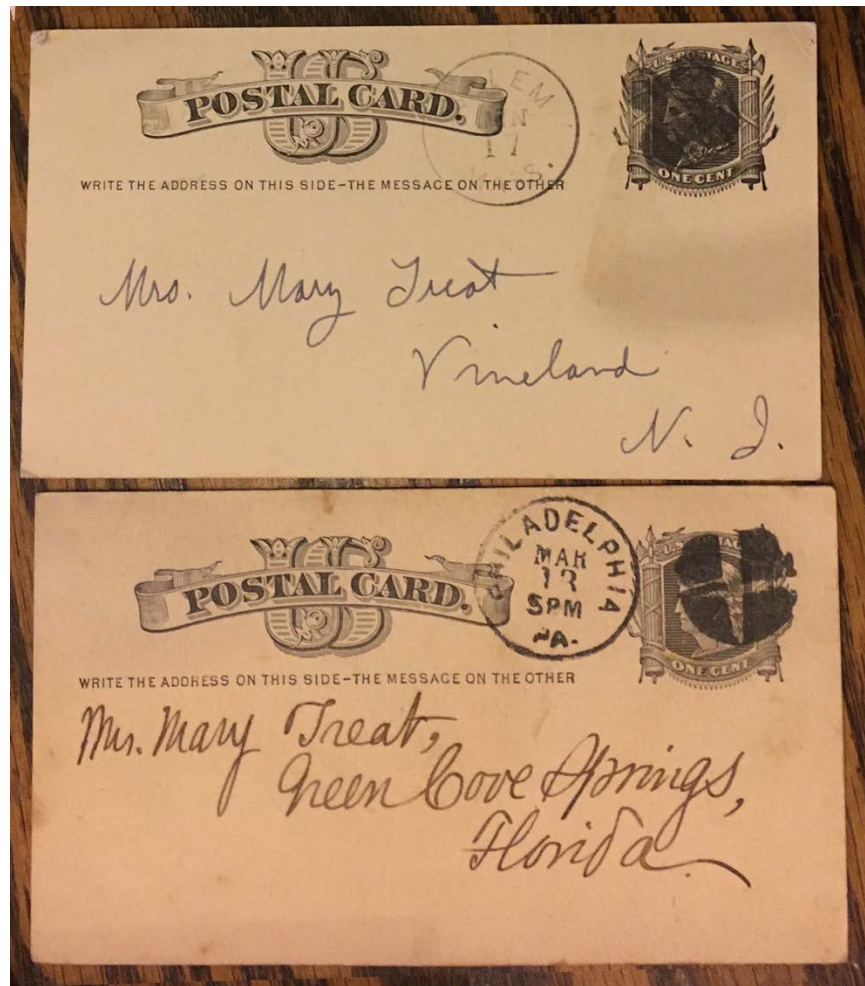


Photo: Michael Ein. Postcards: Courtesy Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society.

A happy coincidence of our trip south is that my husband's sister and her husband live in Green Cove Springs. We were able to explore together some of the areas where Treat conducted groundbreaking work on carnivorous plants and made discoveries of plants and insects that were named in her

honor. You see, Mary Treat was not so much a snowbird as she was a woman dedicated to her science and nature study.

Our relatives—and I'd venture to say most all residents of the modern-day town of Green Cove Springs—have not heard of Mary Treat and the time she spent there. My sister-in-law thanked me for enlightening her, and my brother-in-law, a history buff who has researched the town's 19th century hotels and tourism, was delighted with the new information and the tour that I gave *them*, in trying to locate areas on the map (shown here) that Mary herself drew.

Thankfully, the dearth of knowledge about Mary Treat's presence in the area may change, since I was able to meet with Vishi Garig, Clay County Archives supervisor. We had e-mailed each other over the last couple of years while I was researching Treat's time and research along the St. Johns River in Clay County. I believe I've set her, as well as my brother-in-law, on a mission to locate exactly where Treat stayed

while in Green Cove Springs and to learn more about her winters there.

I left a copy of my Mary Treat biography book with Garig and asked her to write a review on Amazon: "Mary Treat's life is a scientific journey. As the Clay County, Florida Archivist I especially enjoyed the Florida chapter," Garig wrote. "Mary would come to our county seat, Green Cove Springs, FL, in the winter. The locations, flora and fauna she speaks about are still here. I can walk out of my office and be at the St. Johns River in 15 minutes, and I can drive to Governor's Creek in 10. I wish I could find out which cottage she stayed in as many of our historic homes still stand in downtown. For anyone with an interest in Florida history, botany or entomology, I highly recommend this book."

Garig also plans to spread the word about Mary Treat in historical education lectures that she gives at schools and other venues in Clay County.

With this being the 100th year since the death of Mary Treat, I am working with Patricia Martinelli, curator of

Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society, as well as others, to bring more attention to Mary Treat. Stay tuned for upcoming events, as we will be listing them in the paper as well as on the website: marytreat.com



An area along the Governor's Creek branch of the St. Johns River. It is typical of where Mary Treat *explored over several winters in the 1870s and where she discovered a yellow water lily and an amaryllis that was named subsequently for her.*
Photo by Author

A Book With a Local Story

*Find it at Amazon and other major booksellers. For information on upcoming presentations and book signings, visit **marytreat.com***

*Amazon: **amzn.to/3J8PZ0B***

