

Dear Abby



Pollsters rank low in reader's opinion

DEAR ABBY: In my opinion the Gallup Poll's list of the top 24 professions in order of their reputation for honesty, integrity and ethical standards reveals a high degree of non-professionalism.

Police, congressmen and salesmen would no doubt have ranked differently had the terms "police officers, members of Congress and sales representatives" been used, thus recognizing the important contributions women have made to these professions.

And why were nurses, secretaries, schoolteachers and other predominantly female professions omitted?

You can put "pollsters" down at the bottom of my list for integrity and ethical standards.

APPALLED IN PA.

DEAR APPALLED: Move over. A lot of readers were also appalled.

DEAR ABBY: Nuts to your suggestion that the cost of the wedding should be split 50-50 between the bride's family and the groom's.

I think the family that wants a big splashy wedding should foot the bill. If they both want it, they can split it, but if only one wants it, the one who wants it should pay for it.

PAID FOR THREE AND WANTED NONE

DEAR PAID: Your suggestion makes a lot of sense to me.

CONFIDENTIAL TO TEARS ON MY PILLOW IN CLEARWATER, FLA.: Regret is the cancer of life. Although it's too late for you to give your own mother pleasure, others can profit by your "sins of omission."

There are nursing homes filled with elderly people who would so enjoy a little regular attention. Drop in with a few flowers from your garden, magazines you would have thrown away, some homemade goodies, etc. One day a week take one or two or as many as you can for a little ride. Bring the children along on occasion. Old folks love children.

Do this, at first, in reparation, and in time it will become a labor of love. True, of course, we can only have one mother, but in the family of God we are all one: He loves us, he forgives us.

Cheer up by cheering others up. It is a beautiful prescription for sleep and peace.

Conversation Pieces

Acton — a vanished community

Back in the 1700s, England was so vitally interested in the land mass known as Florida it obtained this land from the Spanish. On Aug. 6, 1763, Lt. Augustin Prevost assumed British authority at Pensacola causing Florida to fall under the rule of the Union Jack.

By 1821, Spain had purchased Florida again and it was at that time Spain sold Florida to the United States. Florida then became a territory in 1822 and a state in 1845.

By 1861, settlers were rapidly moving into the frontier ridge area that had just been named Polk County. Growth continued and by the 1880's many changes were taking place in this pioneer land with the railroad working its way through Florida.

One of the greatest confidence and promotional men of the 1880s was Hamilton Disston. He acquired a deed in 1881 for four million acres of land at 25 cents per acre from the trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund, State of Florida. Disston acquired the property by signing a promissory note bearing 8 percent interest. According to record, not one penny of principal or interest was ever paid to the state of Florida. One of the parcels of land contained in this four million acres acquired by Disston on June 1, 1881, was Section 17, Township 25, Range 24 — otherwise later to be known as a British town called Acton!

Robert William Hanbury of Birmingham, England, purchased this parcel on April 17, 1883, from the London office of Disston's company known as Florida Land and Improvement Company. Hanbury gave his friend, Piers Eliot Warburton, an eighth interest and in exchange, Warburton would manage and develop the property.

Again, the British were interested in Florida, at least a small portion of Polk County. A plat plan was drawn up and recorded in 1884 with a town and streets being laid out for a British settlement . . . an area totally different from the usual western frontier style already in existence in Polk County. The name "Acton" was given to this settlement after Lord Acton, a British author back in England.

Acton was situated between Lake Parker and Lake Boney — named after Richard Boney who was an early settler and Indian fighter (now called Lake Boney). The two lakes were connected by a canal. At that time, Lake

Polk's past



By Martha F. Sawyer

Parker was full of fish weighing up to 10 pounds each. The lake was delightful for boating and fishing with orange groves lining its banks. Lake Parker, with a 24-mile circumference, was and still is one of the largest lakes in Polk County. Lake Boney was a smaller lake with a 6-mile water frontage.

There was a saw mill in Acton which was one of the best and largest in the area built on the shores of Lake Parker. At the time the original plat was drawn in 1884 by Alexander Strong of Maitland, the only two recorded residents of Acton were Piers Warburton and James Bierston. Some of the first English settlers to follow were County Bernstorff, Cecil H. Alleyne, Montague Villiers and C.E. Garrat. Some of the original street names were Disston, Hanbury, Napier, Nelson, Beasley, Marlborough and Cumbee — all avenues.

There was a Town Square and an Episcopal Church known as "All Saints." A hotel known as "Acton House" was located on the southwest corner of Fifth Street and Hanbury Avenue placing it to the south of the South Florida Railroad running through town and to the east of the Town Square. Meals were served in the comfortable Acton House "English style."

There was also an "Acton Club" located on Lake Parker containing a boat house with club rooms overhead and a reading room which was free to people visiting in Acton when recommended by members. It was at all times completely stocked with English newspapers. There was also a library in the club. Boating was of primary importance but there was lawn tennis as well and a debating society. There was a cricket club with 25 members. Polk County's English settlement enjoyed Polo and an ever-popular English sport — fox hunting!

There were a few stores in town and the population grew to about 200. The residents all dressed in completely English styles. There was a railroad station, a post office as well as a cemetery and park. It is be-

lieved no one was ever buried in the cemetery due to the town's short existence.

Immediately to the west of Acton was property that Abraham Godwin Munn had purchased also in 1881. A town called Lakeland began on this property in 1884 the same year as Acton. In the beginning, Acton was larger and faster growing than Lakeland. In fact, it already had the railroad and a station. Due to a quirk of fate — the shifting of the sands of time — who knows? — at any rate, the railroad station at Acton burned to the ground leaving the town without adequate railroad facilities. A town could not flourish without the railroad! At this point, the wealthy Munn offered the South Florida Railroad cash to build a beautiful railroad station and paid for laying tracks, bringing the railroad through Lakeland. Land on which Acton was situated between Lake Parker and Boney was said to be low providing inadequate drainage, yet another disadvantage to the flourishing community. Progress was shifted from the English town of Acton to Lakeland. Acton soon became a ghost town. The post office was the last business to discontinue in 1889. Other buildings were disassembled with lumber being hauled by wagon to the up-and-coming town of Lakeland until by 1894 all that stood in the vanished town of Acton was a single vacant building.

All Saints Episcopal Church. In 1895 it was moved to Lakeland on the shores of Lake Mirror at Massachusetts Avenue and Lemon Street where it remained until the present church was built in 1923. Certain portions of that original church are housed in the present All Saints Episcopal Church. Acton had totally vanished!

Many of the residents returned to England with a few settlements in other areas of Polk County. Acton existed in the area east of Lakeland now known as Shore Acres. The only visible evidence of this vanished town's existence is a Florida State Marker dedicated to "Acton Community." The marker is located in the north end of Elk's Park opposite Lake Parker.

The Polk County community which was settled and promoted by Englishmen brushed briefly with the present to leave its mark in history now only to be recalled from the past.

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Art
Buchwald



OLD POLK ALBUM

ER AND STAR-TELEGRAM

WILDCAT KILLED BY LAKELANDERS IN HIGHLANDS SECTION