

A1A St. Johns County Oral Histories

St. Augustine, Florida



Above left: A section of A1A at Vilano Beach. Above right: Historian Charlie Philips conducts an interview.

CLIENT

St. Johns County Planning Department

ELEMENT

Oral history

In 2002, Scenic and Historic A1A was designated a Florida Scenic Highway and a National Scenic Byway. In 2008, the Scenic and Historic A1A committee and the St. Johns County Planning Division obtained a grant from the National Scenic Byways Program, to collect oral histories from long-term residents of the A1A corridor in St. Johns County. The grant was implemented by the nonprofit group Friends of A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway, Inc. (Friends of A1A). St. Johns County administered the grant and selected Brockington and Associates to conduct the interviews.

Friends of A1A compiled most of the questions and contacted prospective interviewees to introduce the oral historian. The subjects selected for discussion included memories of daily life, foodways, occupations, politics, civil rights, recreation, land development, and observations of the natural world. Most of the interviewees had lived in the area since childhood; several could remember events back to the 1920s.

Since most of the interviewees were in their seventies and eighties, the interviews were carried out at their homes. The historian recorded 23 people during the project. Each participant received a compact disc of his or her interview with an edited transcription of the conversation. Finally, a written overview of the project along with the interview recordings and copies of the edited transcripts were given to the St. Augustine Historical Society.

The interviews added a rich personal story of life along A1A from residents who have observed the byway change over time. The project also recorded for posterity stories otherwise lost with the passing of that generation. Finally, the interview project allows residents and visitors alike to evaluate the changes to the corridor and consider the impact of their activities on the land.