

## **This Month in Clay County History: the Florida Military Academy**

*By Archives Specialist Vishy, a service of Clay County Clerk of Court Tara S. Green*

Colonel George W. Hulvey set his sights on opening a military school in Florida. At first, he chose Murray Hill in Jacksonville, but after a few years he moved his school to Green Cove Springs. He set up in what had been the St. Elmo Hotel, located between Magnolia and St. Johns Avenue. Once a boy had passed the second grade and was of good moral character he could apply to attend the school.

Who was Col. Hulvey? Well, for one, he wasn't a real colonel. It was only an honorary title. Hulvey was from Virginia and attended military school himself as a young man. He was a highly educated man with several degrees (B.A. Sweetwater College, Univ. of Virginia, Univ. of Chicago). He was a professional educator. His older brother was similar in background. Both he and his brother owned and taught at various military academies. Col. Hulvey seemed to be less successful as his big brother and perhaps there was some sibling rivalry at work.

Hulvey was born 1875 Middle River, Augusta Virginia. His first wife was named Lilly Clark, but she died. By the late 1890's he was a professor of government at Rockingham Military Institute (a school run by his brother). Also, Hulvey was a teacher at the Tennessee Military Academy in Sweetwater, Tennessee, a school owned by his brother. He moved around a bit before making it to Florida. In 1900, Hulvey was living in Lewiston, Illinois and working as a school teacher. He moved to Florida and in 1905 he is taught at Deland High School, Florida. In about 1906, he opened his next educational endeavor, the Florida Military Academy in Jacksonville, Florida. He settled in quickly and on June 11, 1907 he married Alice Ivey. Alice was a member of the Ivey Family, a family well involved in local business and politics.

In 1916 the school moved into the former Magnolia Hotel at Magnolia, just up the road from the St. Elmo Hotel. The school occupied the four large cottages and the hotel building. There were modern conveniences in all the buildings. One of the buildings was where all the classes were taught. Faculty and Superintendent Col. Hulvey all lived at the school. A big feature touted in advertising was the huge spring fed swimming pool. It was 20x63 feet and went from 3 ½ ft. deep to 7 ½ ft. deep.

*"We want the boys to feel that this is their home and everything can be done for comfort, convenience and advancement when will be done whenever possible."*

*"The teachers, superintendent and matron live with the cadets are with them at meals and social gatherings. The best influences possible are thrown around the boys always so that they may have all of the advantages of a well-regulated family".*

Religious exercises were mandatory on Sundays.

Tragedy struck the school on November 11, 1923. A fire that started in the boiler room burned the school down. The loss was estimated at \$100,000. As the fire raged, Col. Hulvey lined up all the children to make sure that they were accounted for. No one was hurt. The fire raged for hours and it was said that the smoke and flames could be seen in Jacksonville.

After the fire the students and faculty lived in the rest of the cottages that were scattered about the property. These were large, several thousand square foot homes that had first been built and used by northern tourists during the hotel's heyday. There were seven of these on the 290 acre property.

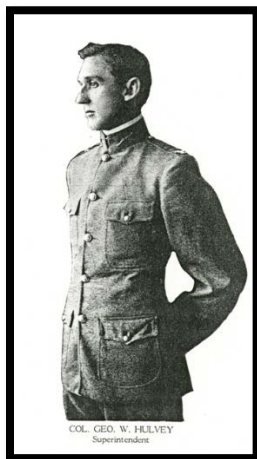
Cadet Eugene L. Permenter, Class of 1928, began attending the school when he was about 12 years old. His older brother Mitchell was already in attendance. Per an oral history interview with Permenter taken in 2000, school days started with a bugle call, breakfast and the calisthenics. Eugene's 1924 report card showed he was an almost straight A student taking grammar, math, geography, reading and history. His department, military work and general attitude were all A's. When not practicing with Springfield rifles and drilling the boys would find ways to entertain themselves. Snake hunting was a favorite past time as was boating up and down the St. Johns River. Sports of all kinds were practiced.

Permenter had classmates from well-heeled families, Cuban nationals sent to learn English and some boys were the sons of entrepreneurs and inventors. Eugene remembered one boy whose name was Nelson. His father had invented the Eskimo Pie in 1920. (Christian Kent Nelson). Another boy's dad was the chief engineer on the carving of Stone Mountain in Georgia. Shimuel Permenter, Eugene's father, was involved in real estate, livestock and an even a Buick dealership. Mabel, his mother was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

Eugene remembered the fire well that burned down the main buildings. He himself was ordered to look for fire extinguishers. A bucket brigade was started all to no avail. Cadets were ordered to try and save everything they could. Uniforms, guns, ammo boxes soon lay on the grass. The fire that started in the boiler room consumed the wooden building very quickly. Permenter said that the younger boys were brought over to the Qui Si Sana Hotel in Green Cove Springs that night. Older cadets stood guard at the smoldering school. After a few days or so cadets moved into the huge cottages on site.

Permenter received his share of demerits in his time at the school and had to walk them off in the bull ring, a circular area set aside just for that punishment. He had his 9 lb Springfield rifle and uniform, shoes shined and walked off his demerits in 50 minute intervals followed by 5 minutes rest.

In 1928, the school removed itself from Clay County back to Jacksonville and Murray Hill. In 1932, the school was bought out and became the Bolles School. Florida Military Academy (FMA) moved to St. Petersburg, Florida. There, the school became known as Admiral Farragut Academy in 1945. Famous alumni Charles Duke, Jr., Class of 1953, walked on the moon as the Lunar Module Pilot of Apollo 16. The school is still in existence. Sometime after the fire, Hulvey retired from school administration and engaged in real estate ventures. He and Alice never had children. On June 21, 1961, Col. Hulvey passed away in Green Cove Springs.



COL. GEO. W. HULVEY  
Superintendent





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The Magnolia campus of FMA



Cadet Eugene Permenter 1910-2001