

Former Park Specialist Charlie DuToit spoke to a full house at the Tomoka State Park recreation hall on Saturday morning, October 14, 2017. While Charlie's job title stated



“specialist,” his duties led him in nearly every direction and across multiple scientific disciplines. When he started at the park in 1979 there were approximately 980 acres. With the addition of Bulow Creek, North Peninsula,

Mound Grove, etc., the Tomoka Basin Park System includes about 5,000 acres.

Following retirement Charlie found time to pursue one of his passions – researching the history of local natural Florida. His talk included history of the Knox family business, Mound Grove Fruit Company, and how the date palms (a non-native species) came to be planted on what is now called Highbridge Road. The history of Cobb's Corner was included.

Some of the other stories Charlie told include the Mann family coming to start a newspaper, the *Halifax Journal*. Mr. Mann later opened the Brick & Tile Co at Seabrooke on the property now known as North Peninsula State Park. A steam engine brought in to manufacture bricks was later sold to a business on Lake Ashby. Elliot Smoak who owned a milk & creamery in Daytona Beach purchased 4,000 acres in what is now park property to start a cattle and hog farm. The feral hogs which periodically wreak havoc on neighboring lawns are, no doubt, leftover animals from that long-ago endeavor. And a wife of a retired Ford Motor Company executive wanted to find her roots and discovered her grandmother's childhood home on an island in the Tomoka. Jones Cabin is still standing and can be visited by walking on a hot, dusty and snake-ridden trail, or by a boat tour with the Outpost Company located inside the park. Visit their [website](#) or [Facebook](#).