

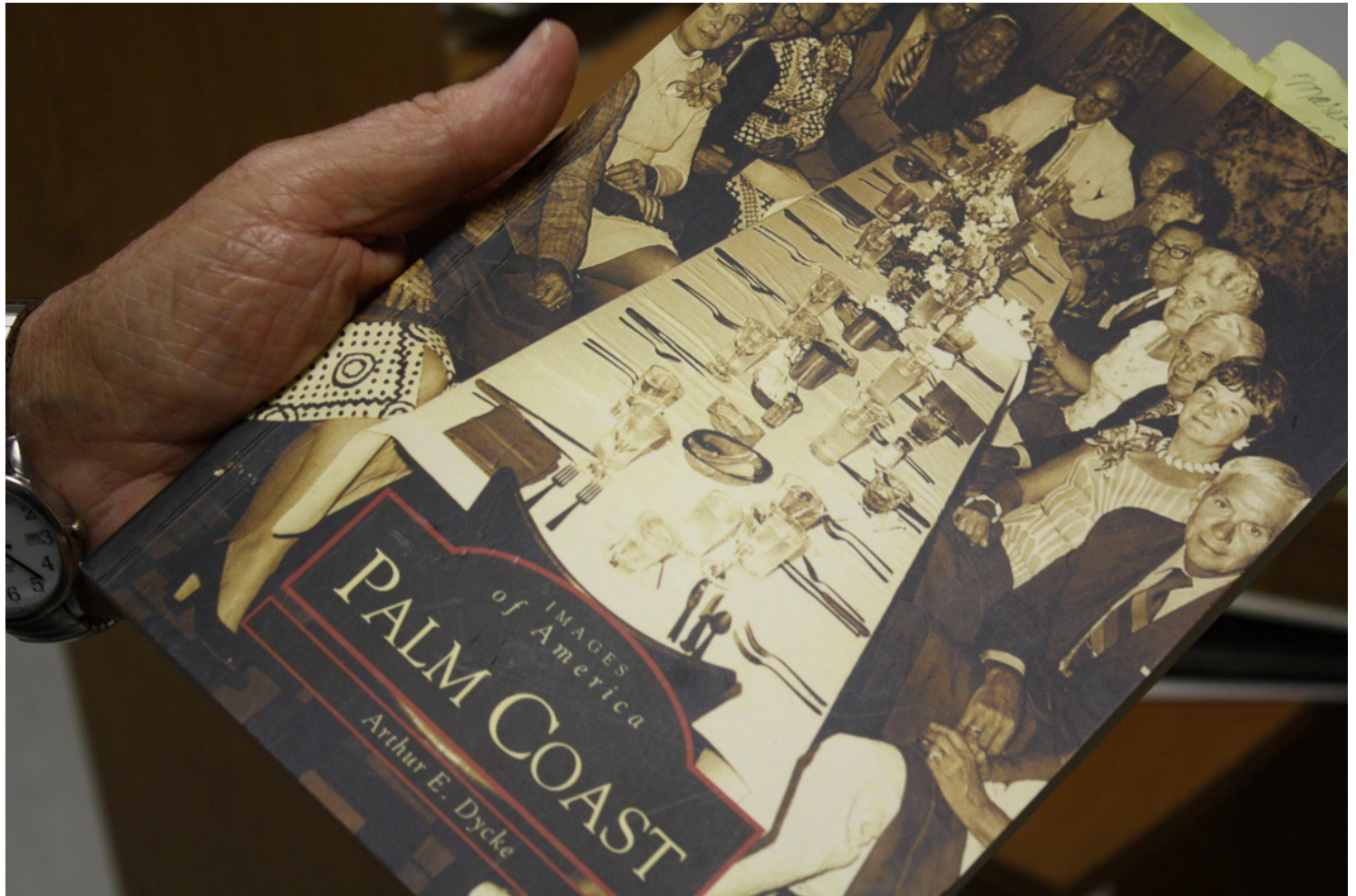


Ezra Salkin

[Follow](#)

Feb 22 · 10 min read

Palm Coast's Crazy Sections



"Palm Coast" by Arthur Dycke

From a birds eye glance, Palm Coast appears to be **pretty organized!** It's carefully plotted and arranged in alphabetical sections. What could be easier than that?

But a closer inspection suggests something's not quite right with that configuration and we may need the guy from the electronics store to come by to inspect the remote control...

Some of those letters aren't lining up the way they should... And if you look really closely, by actually driving through one of those winding sections, there's a good chance you'll get lost. Not to mention, a lot of street names are a little eccentric. No, it's not you.

So we figured it was time to ask, what is this *alphabet soup* that Palm Coast serves up to citizens and visitors alike? W section, P section—LL section? Zonal Geranium Trail? How do newcomers make heads or tails of these Twilight Zone-like alternative universes that fall under our city banner?



A map of Palm Coast

Recently, we spoke to a couple of local experts with special insight on why things are the way they are here. They were **Palm Coast historian and local author Art Dycke** and **Palm Coast City Councilman Robert Cuff**. Cuff was a land attorney for ITT, the

international telecommunications firm that bought up all Palm Coast's swampy land for residential development decades before it was Palm Coast. The build-up began circa 1970.



Art Dycke is currently working on this third book on Palm Coast. Here he holds his first two works inside the Palm Coast Historical Society.

We first caught up with **Art Dycke** at the Palm Coast Historical Society in Holland Park—Palm Coast's first—which has been closed for heavy renovation since January 2015.

Before we got to the question of sections, we wanted to learn a little about Dycke, who is currently working on his third book on the city.

When Jim Canfield, Palm Coast's first mayor, asked him to be the first city historian not long after Palm Coast was incorporated in 1999, he was not at all ready.

| “*But* I just got here!’ I said...”

Usually, when you imagine someone with the title of historian, you think of a person who's spent close to a lifetime in the place he or she seeks to immortalize.

It wasn't until 1993 that Dycke moved to Palm Coast, where he had reprised the job he had in Long Island, as a government and history professor at Daytona Beach Community College (Daytona State College today).

Before Palm Coast's incorporation, Dycke was asked to moderate a sort of 'meet the candidates' session that involved a whopping 26 first-time city council viables, which included Canfield. It didn't go well, he said.

“I was very inexperienced and allowed every candidate 10 minutes. When you allow a candidate to go 10 minutes, I found out they will go 20.” The event lasted three-and-a-half hours and many audience members got up and left before it was over. “I've never participated in anything like that since...” he said.

But Canfield noticed him and shortly thereafter “asked me to keep track over everything that was going on—making me the repository of all ITT materials.” Dycke has since been trying to find new and creative places to store those materials for the past 16 years, he said. It's a lot of stuff.



Art Dycke goes through some of the old records at the Palm Coast Historical Society

The experience, in a way, is like maneuvering through the myriad winding, odd-sounding streets within Palm Coast's sections, which brings us to equation one: Street names.

According to Dycke, the alphabet sections were all plotted at the same time and ready for construction by the early 70s.

But the man directly responsible for all the hubbub surrounding the names was an over-taxed “professional namer” named Eric Felter.

Felter had been naming streets since 1954 and by 1973 had more than 4,500 streets in 84 neighborhoods to his name, Dycke said.

It was sometime around 1969 that ITT mapped out and constructed 500 miles of infrastructure. But the plotting required a strict deadline, and, according to Dycke, Felter was given little more than two weeks to complete a year's worth of work.

In a 1974 ITT report, Felter relayed how the task could be performed as efficiently as possible. Streets within the same neighborhoods should begin with the same letter. Seemed reasonable enough.

“Hence, Geranium could not be a street in the Z-section, because Palm Coast was laid out in sections A, B—the way the alphabet was...There was a great deal of order in this method,” Dycke noted.

“Long streets received long names and short streets received short names. One way to prevent repetition was to put them in sections that used guide letters. In many cases, a second word was added to better group the streets into a neighborhood, such as Bunker Knoll or Bunker View.”

But sometimes there were “unintended consequences,” he said, building the suspense. People would get lost...One resident he remembers in particular wrote that she had gotten lost in the B-section. The reason: There were multiple streets starting with the first name of “Burning.” This sort of thing became too frequent, he added.

One of the more entertaining anecdotes Dycke learned during research for one of his books involved a botched robbery.

“The fellow said he was in the house. He heard it being burglarized and he called the police, who came right over.” But because of the labyrinthian section layout, the burglar hadn’t yet found his way out to the main road—he was lost and quickly apprehended, Dycke said.



Councilman and former ITT land attorney, Robert Cuff in European Village, Palm Coast.

Councilman Cuff is also privy to these kinds of stories. We met with him at a much less formal—or maybe just less scholastic—setting than that of the Palm Coast Historical Society: The Humidor Cigar Lounge in Palm Coast's European Village. Over a craft beer and a couple of Bangkok Shrimp appetizers from a neighboring restaurant, Cuff told us everything he knew on the subject of the alphabet sections.

Firstly: “I was told that all the names were created in a small conference room somewhere by Eric (Felter) and two or three other guys with legal pads, a dictionary and a bottle of scotch.”

After Cuff joined ITT in 1983 as an in-house attorney, his knowledge of Palm Coast street naming methodology didn't extend much beyond “urban myth,” he said. Such was the dizzying complexity of it all. Though there's sometimes truth to be found in such tales.

Sober or not, though, that's not to say Felter and company didn't come up with some good ones. “Two of my favorites—I almost considered moving to the Seminole Woods area just so I could live on Zeppelin Court. But at the time that was literally in the middle of nowhere,” though that could've been said about much of the rest of the area.

You know—a *zeppelin*. As in those bulbous German airships that rose to popularity during WWI. Makes sense for Palm Coast..

Eventually, he said, “I actually went looking for a lot and nearly bought one on Barrister Lane...I thought that's where I should live since I'm a lawyer.” Ultimately that didn't happen, however, and Cuff ultimately had to search for meaning on a more arbitrary street in an equally roundabout section. Such is life.

Yes, the sections... Like Dycke, Cuff also had heard stories of folks disappearing with their callow tour guides into the sections—only to return withered and gray, as if they'd just come back from a years' long treasure expedition.

Those incidents, of course, fall under the taxonomy of lore, as well. But there was an especially interesting tale involving an unusual call that came through on the switchboard. This one's true, though. And maybe a little on the grim side.

A high school tour guide was trying to help a woman find a "particular" lot with her son. "I don't remember where it was, but it turned out the woman, completely unbeknownst to the guide, was looking for a specific spot to spread the ashes of her husband...He had dreamed of retiring there."

This created two basic problems. First and foremost, "They had to check with the legal department to ensure what they were doing was legal, but the other basic issue was they just couldn't find it on a street with 70 other empty lots," Cuff said. "This was before GPS and there was just no way."

Eventually, Cuff recalled, the family—and the guide—settled for "close enough."

But bizarre hiccups like this aside, what's most puzzling about the sections, in Cuff's mind is this:

"Someone came up with enough names to fill a small section where all the streets with a double L (LL). I don't know how many English words there are, other than Llama and Lewellen... There's a C section, two B sections, why not an A section?"

Well the answer is, there was," he said.

In the late '60s and early '70s, when ITT was laying out Palm Coast, the Hammock Dunes beach-side area and all of the areas west of US1, around the F and C sections—Neoga Lakes, the old brick township, etc.—were plotted on quarter-acre lots. But because of an agreement with the state made in the mid-70s' to shrink the number of lots sold to out-of-state buyers, mostly those from up north, a lot of these sections were deplotted and turned back into vacant land. Most of

them are still that way today with the exception of Hammock Dunes, he said.

“And a lot of those letters that you think would be used like A and M, whatever, were in those sections; they were all laid out—I have a map the size of a small table that shows the old sections. That’s where the unused letters went,” Cuff said.

According to Cuff, Palm Coast was originally planned to extend from the Volusia County Line into St. Johns County. But because of an agreement between the state and the Federal Trade Commission, ITT agreed to shrink the marketed area, partly so they could afford to complete the infrastructure.

Cuff had answered our questions to the best of his ability, but like eager children, we decided to probe further for more experiential Palm Coast, ITT stories.

We ordered another round and talked some more. The man was on the inside for a quite a while. “I was the third from the last person to get laid off when they closed down...I wasn’t here for the very beginning, but I was here for the end.”

Cuff remembers when he first made the trip up to Palm Coast from Miami, after being discovered, fatalistically, by an ITT contracted headhunter. “I’m still not sure how they found me,” he said.

It turns out the headhunter knew how to find people better than he did the geography of the area for which he was searching. He didn’t realize the I95 interchange was open, such was the state of Palm Coast in the public consciousness at the time. So Cuff ended up taking the long, “scenic” route over State Road 100 and Old Kings Road.

“For the first four to eight miles, I drove down staring at all the pine trees on either side of me, looking to see where all the major real estate was,” Cuff said. He got to Palm Coast Parkway, the site of Palm Coast’s sole traffic light. It flashed red on Old Kings Road and yellow on Palm Coast Parkway. “I nearly turned around and drove back to Miami,” he recalled.

One might say that Cuff was just like one of those visitors he spoke of to have disappeared into “the soup.” Maybe it’s fair to say that he and

Art Dycke are Palm Coast soup nuts.

How do you feel about Palm Coast's crazy sections? Do you have a favorite? Please, chime in in the comments section below.

Epilogue

I know we just spent a lot of time explaining why Palm Coast's sections align or misalign the way they do. Kudos to readers who took the time to read this far. But now, after all that, we're going to throw a curve ball through that window of happy understanding..

If you happen to live on Mt. Vernon Lane, you might now be saying: "This article is bullshit." Or at least, "That doesn't match up with my street situation..."

That's because Mt. Vernon is in the W section. Those living on Village Circle, Montauk Lane and Cedar Point Drive (all of which are also found in the W section), and Angela Drive, R section, are saying likely the same thing. As you can see, those streets don't correspond to their respective section letters.

That's because they fall under the umbrella of dark matter *private subsections* and don't abide by the same rules as that of their parent sections. They were built by private developers on empty acreage some time after ITT ceded its building authority. Essentially, new pilgrims, rebels, came and bought the undeveloped parts of one of the original sections and planted their multi-house developments down. In doing so, they took the initiative to name the street whatever it was that felt good in the moment with no regard for past protocol.

In the case of Grand Haven, the area where it sits was originally planned as part of a G section, which would've sat among the originals, but it never materialized.