

## **E. G. Barnhill and the Art of Tourism**

JUST AFTER THE turn of the twentieth century, when Henry Flagler's railroad pushed Florida's frontier below his St. Augustine home base and when Henry Plant's railroads and steamships expanded Florida from his Tampa headquarters, two photographers found their own individual ways to this burgeoning state. These men eventually would impact the settlement of Florida from the early to middle 1900s through the art they each embraced—photo coloring. The two would settle in and work from geographically different parts of the state. As time passed, one of them enjoyed a greater renown than the other, but both contributed to the history of Florida's settlement in those years of rapid growth.

William James Harris's contribution to the advertisement of Florida through the popular arts has been well established. Harris (1868–1940), from his St. Augustine shop, portrayed the uniqueness of the beauty found in natural Florida in his dreamy creations. It was in the treatment of the subject matter of this art, however, that the less famous photo colorist, Esmond Grenard Barnhill, established his own place in Florida history while working in his photography business in St. Petersburg.

Esmond was born in Saluda, South Carolina, on March 4, 1894, to Luther Hulen Barnhill and Bonna Estella "Stella" (nee Gilbreath) Barnhill. Thereafter the Barnhills took up residence in Tallulah Gorge, Georgia, a primary tourist destination because of a local waterfall that gave the town its nickname, "Niagara of the South." Here the seeds of Esmond's later business acumen were planted as he learned firsthand, at an early age, that tourism often was built upon an elusive dream, a search for the unique place, and, perhaps, a quest for peaceful surroundings.

Some time later Luther and Stella, together with their five children, Arthur, Maude, Esmond, Delma, and James, moved to Waycross, Georgia. Their family life was unpretentious, but filled with various activities





