The aroma of fresh-baked bread, real bread, not the industrialized white bread stuff, wafted in the customer area and out the door. Cinnamon buns, pastries
such as the “lady locks” filled with real cream, cakes, especially the orange chiffon cakes, cookies for school kids, breakfasts, lunches of sliced ham, potato salad, baked beans, and more. Dinners, especially seafood dinners, drew customers into Arnot’s. The mouthwatering rolls were a trademark treat. Arnot’s Bakery and Restaurant in downtown Jacksonville, Florida was a beaches’ institution that still lives in the collective memory of those blessed by having shopped there, thanks to John B. Arnot, its founder.

Arnot’s journey from near Lexington, Michigan to Jacksonville Beach via Port Huron, Michigan and Jacksonville, Florida was a matter of chance, but makes sense in retrospect. Lexington is 18 miles north of Port Huron. John B. Arnot was born near there in Sanilac County, Michigan on June 11, 1873. He was the son of Alexander Arnot and Agnes (née Heal). Agnes had been born east of Toronto. He went into business with his father at age twenty-one but it failed. He felt beholden to his father thereafter. At some point before he was twenty-six, he moved to Port Huron, a town of 5,973 persons, and married a Port Huron native, twenty-six-year old Anna Endlich, daughter of Philip and Martha Pfeiffer Endlich, both from Germany, on November 23, 1898. Papa Endlich was a baker. John B. Arnot was listed as a salesman on his 1898 marriage license and a traveling salesman in 1900 U.S. Census. He was a commission merchant who traveled to farms to buy butter and cheese which were then taken back to Port Huron to be packaged and sold.

After Lenore was born on April 4, 1900 and Alexander in May 14, 1902. John bought a duplex, a “double house,” and moved his family into one side and his parents and sister, Irene, into the other. She lived with her brother and his wife much of her life and never married.

John Endlich and his younger brother Philip were partners in Endlich & Brother, a baking firm that owned City Bakery in 1870. It was not long before Arnot became a baker. By 1910, the firm was the Endlich-Arnot Bakery Company. John Arnot soon launched his own bakery, “J. B. Arnot Bakery & Confections/ Specialties: Wedding Cakes, Almond Macaroons.” Arnot was an innovator in baked goods. Ice cream cones were introduced in St. Louis, Missouri in 1904. Arnot’s niece, Helen Endlich, wrote of her uncle baking the first ice cream cones in Port Huron in a building behind his home on Water Street, presumably not long after their appearance in Missouri. The baking business was very competitive in those days when baking was still an art before mass-produced blandness. Arnot offered something their competitors couldn’t.
Why did he leave Port Huron for Jacksonville, Florida? The family story is that “one year Port Huron had a cold summer and cones didn’t sell, so in 1912 John got on the train and rode until he got to a place where he thought he could sell cones all year, which was Jacksonville.” Anna and their children stayed behind while he started a small bakery. He would not move the family until he could support it.

While over a thousand miles apart, Port Huron and Jacksonville shared similarities in 1912. Both had a timber industry. Both relied upon rivers and large bodies of water, Lake Huron and the Atlantic Ocean. Both were important ports. Shipbuilding was a key industry. Port Huron burned on October 8, 1873 and Jacksonville on May 3, 1901.

Jacksonville was very different, however. It was a much larger booming city with a resort, Pablo Beach, sixteen miles east (Pablo Beach renamed itself Jacksonville Beach in 1925). Most important, it was warm in the winter and hot the rest of the year by Michigan standards. Once introduced, the demand for ice cream cones was limitless! Business was good enough for the family to quit visiting periodically and move to Jacksonville by 1914 or 1915. The 1916 Jacksonville City Directory lists Arnot & Edgar, bakers, at 647 Myrtle Avenue, and John B. and Anna E. Arnot in the ice cream cone business at 502 Broad Street and residing at 1208 Market Street. The Edgar of the bakery partnership was Alfred A. Edgar who was married to Ellen Arnot, John’s older sister. The Edgars
had moved on the next year and John ran the bakery and its delivery service with Anna and his teenage children by 1920.

Arnot’s Bakery was a family business, a mom-and-pop operation by present-day terminology, and the family prospered. Lenore graduated from Duval County High School in 1919. She learned the administrative and financial aspects of the business as well as its baking. She would eventually manage and then own the business. John was Treasurer of the Florida Bakers’ Association in 1922, a sign of the respect he enjoyed. His father, Alexander, helped until his death in 1922. In 1925, Arnot’s Bakery was at 401 East 3rd Street, Jacksonville, (3rd and Walnut Streets), with the family, including Alex’s wife Laura, living together at 27 East 4th Street. The Jacksonville bakery employed numerous people, including salesmen. It delivered bread and other baked goods with delivery trucks and horse-drawn wagons.

On March 2, 1927, Lenore married Joseph J. Larkin, a Bostonian, born August 17, 1903, who had come to work at the Bakery as a salesman.
Prosperity allowed the Arnots to own a large enough home in 1930 to house the parents, his mother, his sister Irene, Lenore and Joe, and two lodgers, William and Charlotte Snowden. School teachers from cities such as Atlanta would board there. Some became close friends of the family. “Corinne Scott became a principal at an elementary school in the Springfield section of Jacksonville which was named after her when she retired” to quote Claire Anderson Lavery, Lenore’s third child. Kathleen Dolvin was another.

The early 1930s were not so kind to the Arnot family. The bread industry changed dramatically when the bread slicing machine was introduced in Missouri in July, 1928. It quickly spread throughout the United States, reaching Jacksonville in 1929. Bread was sliced, wrapped, and baked differently to
increase shelf life. Most of this “manufactured” bread was not as healthy nor as tasty as bakers’ bread, so Arnot’s Bakery of Jacksonville, Florida resisted for two years. Arnot’s lost customers. The family sliced prices but not bread and began using enriched dough but to no avail. Arnot gave up, and in 1931 he installed a slicer and saw a 600% increase in sales. In the midst of this crisis, exacerbated by the onset of the Great Depression, he began to sell bakery products in Jacksonville Beach, operating out of the Zapf Building on the north side of Pablo Avenue, and in St. Augustine, at least on weekends.

John Arnot was trying to counter his financial difficulties in Jacksonville by expanding his market. Jacksonville Beach increased from 409 persons in 1930 to 3,566 persons in 1940, growth fueled by cheap land and the federal government pumping money into the beach communities to rebuild the boardwalk after the 1933 fire, the construction of Fletcher Junior-Senior High School in 1937 and Atlantic Beach Elementary School in 1939, bulkheads, and roads. Tragedy struck in early 1932 near St. Augustine. John and his son-in-law Joe were making bakery deliveries when they collided with a Greyhound bus on Florida A1A in the fog near St. Augustine on February 6, 1932. Joe died, leaving behind Lenore and an eight-day-old child, Phyllis; John was hospitalized for about a year. The widow Larkin managed the business while her father recuperated. The Jacksonville bakery was not doing very well so they soon closed it and moved the baking to the small store at Jacksonville Beach. The family house in Jacksonville was sold in 1934, and the family moved into a house at 185 4th Avenue South, now the Fig Tree Inn.
185 4th Avenue South

Courtesy of Walter Bennett
Arnot’s Bakery became Arnot Bakery & Restaurant when John Arnot bought the southwest corner of Pablo Avenue and 1st Street South and built a building in 1937.

Arnot Building, ca. 1937

Because the bakery had done such a good business selling lunches—sliced ham, potato salad, and baked beans—as take-out orders (lifeguards, whose station was across 1st Street, would sit on the curb to eat), the new building included restaurant seating as well as bread shelves and pastry cases. Customers could come from the boardwalk with its games and rides and get food.

The Arnot Building was the first office building at the beach. Arnot was shrewd enough to have a second floor with twenty-five offices available to rent. Lawyers, accountants, bookkeepers, a dentist, the Jacksonville Beach Sea Birds baseball team, real estate agents, and similar people rented from the family. The ground floor included space for stores, first occupied by a small A&P grocery store and the Van H. Priest “5¢ to a $1 store”. Van H. Priest owned a similar store in his home town of Madison, Florida, and saw the potential in Jacksonville Beach. He opened a store in the Arnot Building. Within a few years, he
expanded it into the space occupied by the A & P. He lived in Ponte Vedra Beach.
Pablo Avenue, 1943. Arnot Building on the left. Zapf Building with turret on right
Courtesy of Beaches Museum
The extended family prospered. Lenore married Jacob P. “Jake” Anderson in 1936 and bore him two daughters, Virginia in 1938 and Claire in 1940. Jake owned and operated a barber shop on 1st Street North. The Arnot household in 1940 was crowded. Living there with John and Anna were his 91-year-old mother Agnes, his 53-year-old sister Irene, his 38-year-old son Alex, his 8-year-old granddaughter Phyllis Larkin, his daughter Lenore Larkin Anderson, pregnant with Claire, her husband Jake Anderson, and their 2-year-old daughter Virginia, plus four lodgers— the bakery worker Robert Sanders, 45 years old, and his son Robert, 17 years old; Joedie Humphrey, a 32-year-old woman; and Julius Ozorozy, a 60 year-old man born in Germany. In January, 1942, Anderson moved his new family—Lenore, her daughter Phyllis Larkin, and their daughters Virginia and Claire—to a new house at 27 South 32nd Avenue. They were so close to the ocean that they could see ships being sunk during World War II.
World War II was good for the bakery and restaurant. Soldiers and sailors would come to the beach for relaxation, spending money. The Mayport navy base, built in 1942, had not only sailors stationed there but also their dependents and the civilians employed by the Navy. The beaches population expanded. In the decade 1940-1950, Jacksonville Beach went from 3,566 to 6,430, Neptune Beach from 1,363 to 1767, and Atlantic Beach from 468 to 1004. Mayport, Ponte Vedra Beach, Palm Valley, and the area just west of the Intracoastal Waterway were also sources of customers.
John B. Arnot was a good citizen as well as a successful business man. He was secretary of the Beaches Chamber of Commerce from 1940-47, a Jacksonville Beach City Councilman from 1943-47, and a steward at the Beach Methodist Church for many years. In fact, he gave the church a free room in which to meet when the congregation was formed and its own building was being constructed. He died on May 4, 1949.
With the death of his father-in-law, Jake Anderson sold the barber shop, joined the bakery, and learned to bake and decorate cakes. Lenore managed the bakery and the property; Jake baked.

Time to stop, eat a pastry, and drink a cup of coffee while I remind readers where Arnot’s was. The City of Jacksonville Beach has redeveloped the area more than once, so it can be a bit confusing. The first photo below was taken in 1949 before the roller coaster was razed that year. The wide road going toward the beach at a slant is newly-opened Beach Boulevard. The wide road on the right, that is, to the north, is Pablo Avenue. The Arnot Building sits on the southwest corner with 1st Street South (Pablo Avenue is the demarcation line between north and south Jacksonville Beach). The second photo was taken in 1953 which we know from the model year of the cars. The band shell had been built across from Arnot’s. The Coaster Block amusement park is empty of rides and games, indicating it was winter or, at least, before the tourist season.
Arnott’s was known for the quality of its bread, pastries, and meals, but it depended upon the competence and friendliness of its staff. The three daughters—Phyllis, Virginia, and Claire—worked there at times, of course. Pauline Mathis, pictured in the ad below, was one of the mainstays; her daughter Georgia Ruth worked there in the summer. The store employed many people—bakers, counter personnel, wait staff, and cooks. Marian Frisbee was head waitress. The following two advertisements are from the 1956 and 1958 Senator, the Fletcher High School yearbook.
Phillip Markham, Virginia Anderson, Pauline Mathis

Claire Anderson, Jim Joyner, and Claire's cousin Sandra Anderson
The Arnot Building and land were sold to the city after September, 1964 when Hurricane Dora hit and damaged much in downtown Jacksonville Beach. The building and the expensive ovens were badly damaged by the storm. They could have been repaired, but it was clear that the city soon would take them through condemnation because it was redeveloping downtown. Lenore decided to sell sooner rather than later. She was 64. Jake had died the previous year. Her daughters had finished Fletcher High School and then college. Phyllis had moved to New York and worked in the publishing industry. Virginia and Claire had married men whose jobs kept them elsewhere. She died in 1989 after a happy retirement.⁷

Arnot’s Bakery & Restaurant and the Arnot Building live in the memory of those who patronized it for it was a beaches icon. Ed Ray Smith, a 1968 Fletcher graduate, wrote about the bakery in Blue Star Highway, A Tale of Redemption from North Florida, a semi-autobiographical novel set in Jacksonville Beach in the 1960s. Although he never uses the name Arnot, anyone who knew the area would recognize it. His main character, a fourteen-year-old boy, describes the damage done to the bakery by Hurricane Dora (“Doreen” in the novel) and laments that the property was sold to the city.⁸ When the Fletcher High School Class of 1959 held its 50th reunion in 2009, the organizers decided to thrill their classmates with symbols of the beach we knew when we were young. Below are
three pictures of Arnot’s done by architect Tom Reidenbach. These have since been used to decorate other events.

And it all started with marriage to a baker’s daughter and baking ice cream cones.
AFTERWORD

Historians must have artifacts from the past—documents, photographs, graphs, census data, and the like—in order to discover and write about the past. I was able to find much information by using familysearch.org which produced census data, marriage licenses, and death certificates. Further information was gathered via search engines, especially Google Books. From my previous research on the history of the Jacksonville Beaches, I have files into which I could dip. Below is a list of my writings on beaches history, most of it available for free in the Web. Phyllis Larkin and Claire Anderson were willing to answer questions. Ms. Larkin provided me with an outline of family history; I am indebted to her kindness. Dan Anderson, nephew of Jake Anderson, gave me some images. Dan is a novelist; his Web site is http://www.danandersonmysteryauthor.com/. Paul Marino, Fletcher Class of 1958, supplied a photograph and dated it using his expertise on U.S.-made cars to date it. As always, Taryn Rodriguez-Boette, archivist of the Beaches Museum and History Park in
Jacksonville Beach graciously supplied me with photos and documents. Because of the Museum, the history of the beaches is being written.

In September, 2016, Arun Konanur wrote me after reading this article; his grandparents, Harold and Doris Hayes, worked at the bakery in 1927–1930. His grandmother’s brothers Douglas, Frank and Donald Shaw worked at Arnot’s as well. Through him, I was able to publish the article by H. H. Hayes, “Wave Our Hats and Holler ‘HOORAY’!” on the Historical Text Archive. Hayes writes about working at Arnot’s. Konanur sent me the 1928 photo of the Arnot Company picnic.

Mabry’s Writings on the Jacksonville [Florida] Beaches:

**BOOKS**


**ARTICLES**


15 "Arnot's Bakery & Restaurant" (2013).
17 "Ode to Coach Wimpy Sutton" (2013).
18 "Casa Marina Hotel, 1924-2014" (2014).
19 "Gene Zapf (1894-1948), Jacksonville Beach Entrepreneur" (2014).
20 "Bennett Beach Drug Stores" (2014).
23 "Ruby of Ruby Beach, Florida," (September, 2015).
24 "Casa Marina has weathered test of time," The Beaches Leader, August 6, 2015, excerpts from "Casa Marina Hotel, 1924.-2014" (2014).
27 From the Beginning—Atlantic Beach, EU Jacksonville (July, 2015).
28 "Princess to Pauper: The Legend of Elizabeth P. Stark" (January, 2015)
30 "Ocean Piers, An Illustrated Chronology" (December, 2015)
31 "The Two Martin G. Williams, 1887-2010" (April, 2016)
32 Ed Smith, Humorous Storyteller (April 21, 2016)


5 Phyllis Larkin, correspondence with the author, July, 2013.
