

Lehigh Cement Plant and Railroad Spur

During the Florida building boom, Lehigh Portland Cement Company built a cement plant at Flagler Beach. Construction of the plant cost \$20 million, and opened for production in 1952. The Lehigh Railroad spur was built to transport the finished product to market and to bring supplies to the plant.

One hundred and fifty railroad cars of cement left the plant each day at the height of production. The eastern end of the Lehigh Greenway Rail Trail begins in what was the switchyard for the cement plant, which was busy enough for the Florida East Coast Railroad to maintain a switch engine on the premises. A barge canal connects the plant to the Intracoastal Waterway and was used to supply fuel oil to the plant. North of the plant was the quarry where coquina rock was mined. Coquina was dug from as deep as fifty feet and sand separated from the rock was used to fill the excavations. The coquina was ground with gypsum and additives and made into a slurry. The slurry was then pumped into kilns and burned at 2700 degrees. The material formed was carried to finish mills and ground into cement, which was stored in silos. Some of the cement was bagged on site and some was shipped in bulk form. The plant operated twenty-four hours a day for several years. Due to labor disputes and economic uncertainty, the plant and its railroad officially closed in 1965. Though the project area was located on a railroad right-of-way, it was not officially owned or operated by the Florida East Coast Railway Company. When the plant closed, International Telephone & Telegraph Community Development Corporation (ITT CDC), the developer of Palm Coast, purchased the spur property.

In 1995, Palm Coast Holdings Inc. purchased the corridor. This corporation agreed to the sale of the property to the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT). On March 13, 2001, OGT became the land managing agency of the Lehigh Greenway Rail Trail.

