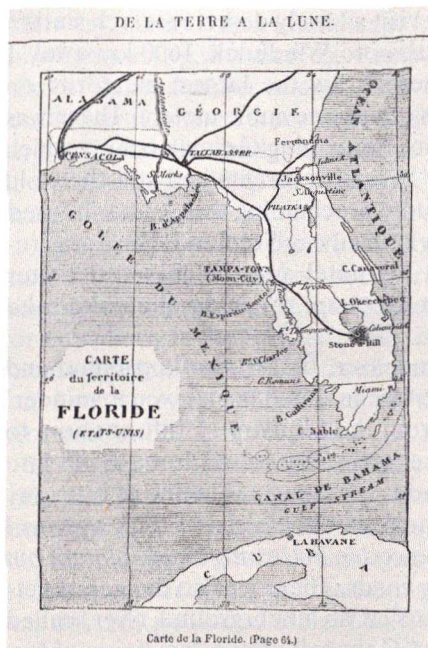
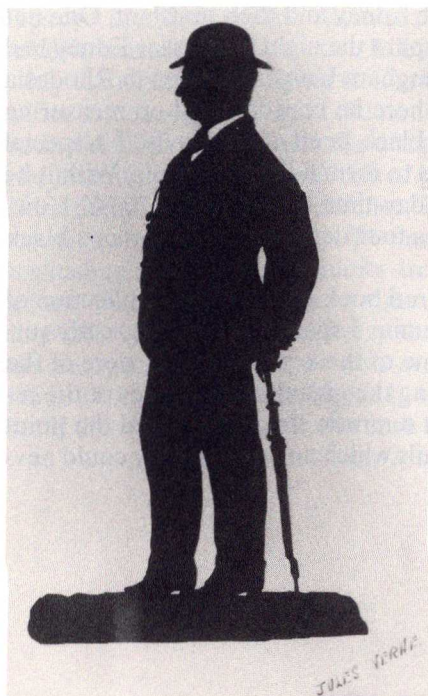


## DE LA TERRE A LA LUNE.



## Title 176

The original map of **Florida** as published on page 64 in Jules Verne's *De la Terre à la Lune* in 1865 which clearly shows Cape Canaveral, Lake Okeechobee and *La Columbiad* at Stone's Hill, the launch site of the Moon rocket. I had to use this map to find the imaginary Stone's Hill, but did not succeed. *Photographed from the Author's copy of the book.*



## Title 184

Among the many writers of the fictitious flights to the Moon, **Jules Verne** has remained the most famous, being partly right and partly wrong in his forecasts. Born in Nantes 1828, he died in Amiens 1905, rich and famous in his lifetime. I had collected an almost complete set of his books in the *Edition polychrome*, which through the generous gift of J. Philip Gibbs Jr. went to the Bryn Mawr College Library. *Author's collection by an unknown silhouetist.*

After only a few weeks in London, I left again at the end of February 1969 for Cape Kennedy to report on the Apollo 9 dress rehearsal flight to the Moon. As usual there were the inevitable delays, this time due to a virus infection of the astronauts. I decided to explore a mystery which had intrigued me for many years.

As every school boy knows, in 1865 Jules Verne described in his famous book *From the Earth to the Moon* how three intrepid members of the Baltimore Gun Club flew to, and around the Moon, returned safely, and were picked up from the Ocean. He was correct in choosing Florida for the launch site, but very wrong to use a giant canon as the three astronauts would have been squashed to death between the exploding gases and the inertia of the air inside the canon. But where was Stone's Hill. (sic) in Florida, the launch site where the canon had been cast and buried deep down in the earth? I was determined to find it, I had a car and spare time.

Verne gave its latitude as 27° 7' north and 5° 7' west of the Washington meridian, as well as 79° 53' west of the meridian of Paris. But these two coordinates do not agree when translated to the Greenwich meridian, and thus I had to rely on Verne's original French book-map which clearly shows 'Stone's Hill', south of the great inland Lake Okeechobee which can be seen on all maps, ancient and modern. A short drive of about 200 km from the Cape brought me to its shores, to a small community, called Lake Harbour.

The southern half of Florida is as flat as Holland with unlimited vision to the horizon. I drove along kilometers of sugarcane fields, of grass lands with uncountable herds of cattle, but there was neither a hill nor a single stone, let alone a Stone's Hill to be seen anywhere. Lake Harbour is a sleepy farming village with a few old houses, a general store with its post office, all under a cloudless blue sky, the very antithesis of the present bustling spaceport for the Apollo launch.

I went into the store and asked the Post Mistress, 68 year old Miss Pope, if she had ever heard of a locality called Stone's Hill in the neighbourhood. "No Sir" she replied "and I have lived here since I was 6 years old." She had just heard of an old book about the Moon, but never read it.

So I left Lake Harbour sadly, but admiring Verne's imagination to invent a Stone's Hill in his Paris studio, trying to picture for himself more than 150 years ago the still unexplored centre of Florida. This lack of exact knowledge can also explain why his map on page 64 of the original first edition, of which I still have a copy in my collection, is so inaccurate. I never wrote this tale for my newspaper, it would have had no chance of publication