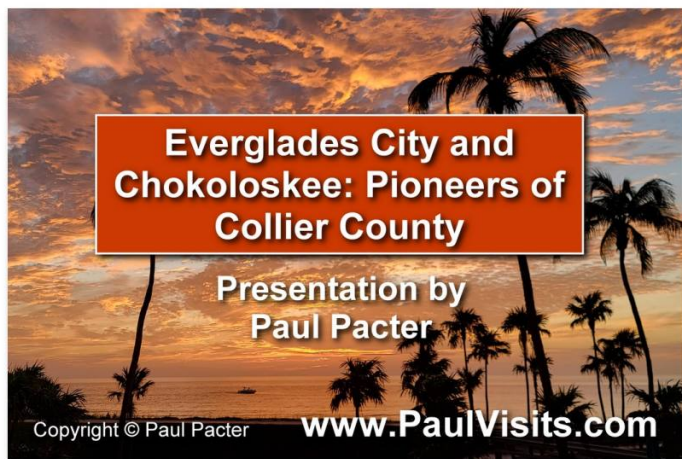




Outline of My Presentation

- History of Florida in General
- History of Everglades City
 - Prior to Barron Collier
 - After Barron Collier
- History of Chokoloskee
 - Story of Edgar Watson
- Building the Tamiami Trail
- Everglades National Park
- Drug Smuggling and Everglades City
- Things to see and do in Everglades City
- Things to see and do in Chokoloskee



Today both are small, isolated towns of about 400 people. Populations:

Everglades City

1930	172
1940	518
1950	625
1960	552
1970	462
1980	524
1990	321
2000	479
2010	400
2020	352

Chokoloskee

2000	404
2010	359
2020	346

Collier County total population 2020: 375,752

Until 1962 Everglades City was the Collier County Seat.

1513 Florida's written history begins with arrival of explorer Juan Ponce de León of Spain in 1513.

Of course, there were native people in Florida 2000 years before Ponce: Glades Indians (later merged with Calusa). And pre-historic people before that.



Ponce de León made two trips to Florida: 1513 and 1521.

- Most likely, he got as far up the west coast of Florida as Charlotte Harbor or Fort Myers. **But never stopped at Everglades City or Chokoloskee area.**
- Both trips involved fierce battles with Calusa. Retreats – no settlements.
- Ponce was killed on the 1521 trip.

Finally, in 1565 Spanish settled St Augustine (East coast).

55 years before Plymouth Rock!

1770s: Creek Indians from Georgia and Alabama arrived (later called Seminoles). Most Calusa had been killed, fled, or died by late 1500s.

1821: Florida became a US Territory. At that time, Everglades City and Chokoloskee were probably uninhabited.

1823: Monroe County formed as part of Florida Territory. One third of the entire Florida panhandle.



1817-1818, 1835-1842, and 1855-1858: Three Seminole Wars against US Army to relocate Seminoles to Western reservations. Some agreed (reluctantly) to move to Oklahoma. Others fled to the Everglades.

1845: Florida became a US State.

1850: US Government gave the "swamp land" that is now Lee, Collier, and Monroe Counties to the State. But SW Florida remained virtually uninhabited until after the Civil War when farmers and squatters arrived.

Settlement of Everglades City. This is a map of today. But we can use it to look at early settlements. Settlements were along the Barron River (called Potato Creek until 1870s, then Allen River until 1923.)



1868: An army deserter (John Weeks) was hiding in what is now EC. Began some farming.

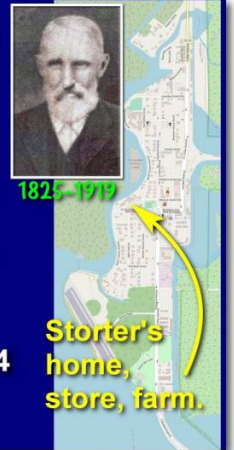
1870: First real settler William Smith Allen. Allen remained until 1889. Farmed along river front.

1870-1881: A few settlers arrived. Built rough homes. Fishing and farming.



1881: First visionary settler George Storter Sr arrived. Invested in property and developed agriculture.

By 1890: Storter bought out Allen and Weeks and other settlers. Planted vegetables and sugar cane (and made syrup). Started trading post and inn. Church. Railroad 14 miles north to Deep Lake.



Storter's home, store, farm.

George W Storter's Home Allen River, Everglade, 1910s

Residence Business



Rear of George W Storter Residence, Everglade, 1915



Storter Trading Post Everglade, 1915

G. W. STORTER
GEN. MERCHANDISE



Visitors arriving at George Storter's home 1915.



Seminole arriving at George Storter's store 1915.



Sunday School in Everglade 1906



Courtesy of Mrs. Bertie Storter Ison, Bonita Springs.
Sunday School at Everglade about 1906.

them killed him and hid out for years. The first act of the new

Other events in Everglade before Barron Collier arrived in 1922:

- 1893:** Everglade Post Office.
- 1910:** Major hurricane. School and many homes washed away.
- 1913:** Small railroad built 14 miles from Deep Lake to Everglade so farmers in Deep Lake area could get their grapefruits etc to a boat to sell in Fort Myers & Key West.
- 1922:** Ice plant in Everglade to preserve fish for shipping.



Until Collier's arrival, Everglade was very isolated:

The only way in/out was by boat.

Local products shipped out:

- Avocados, tomatoes, bananas, citrus, pumpkins, cane, eggplant.
- Mullet, clams, oysters, turtles.
- Hides, fur, egret plumes.

Supplies/mail came from Key West.

Hospital was in Key West.

Law enforcement was through Key West – and was very minimal.

Storter owned most of this



Isolated! No mention of Everglade, Chokoloskee, or Naples on these Florida maps:



1909

1893



Barron Gift Collier

- Born Memphis 1873. Died 1939.
- Made \$1 million in street lighting by age 26. Then printing and streetcar advertising.
- Visited SW Florida 1906. Loved it.
- By 1916 had bought 1 million acres of land.
 - He became the largest landowner and developer in Florida.
 - He also owned a chain of hotels, bus lines, banks, newspapers, telephone company, steamship line.



Collier's 1 million acres cost him between 12 cents and 30 cents an acre.

In 1922, Barron Collier bought out George Storter and virtually the whole Everglades village.

- Renamed the Allen River the Barron River.
 - Added an s to the town's name (Everglades).
- At that time only one dozen resident families. Plus a few fishing and hunting cabins owned by non-residents.



Everglades area prospered under Collier's leadership in the 1920s.

- Planned community including shops, hotels, school, bank, churches, public utilities, courthouse, hospital, newspaper.
- Created Collier County separate from Lee.
- He brought a passenger and freight railroad into Everglades.
- He built the Tamiami Trail.
- He built County and State Road 29 north Everglades to Immokalee.

Everglades, Florida – April 26, 1928



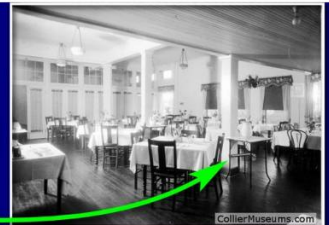
All of the development in Everglades we see here (plus more) was in the six years after Collier bought the town in 1922!

**Manhattan Market
Everglades (City)
1927**

Grew to be Manhattan
Mercantile (bottom
floor in photo) by
1940. Top two floors
were Everglades Inn
(hotel).



**Everglades Inn
Dining Room**
*Notice the Flit Gun
for Mosquito
Spraying*



**Manhattan Mercantile
and Everglades Inn
1948.**
Burned down 1987.



**Rod & Gun Club
Everglades**

1920s →

1924 1933 ↙ ↘



Everglades Model Steam Laundry – 1928
Became Women's Club – 1965
**Today Museum of
the Everglades**

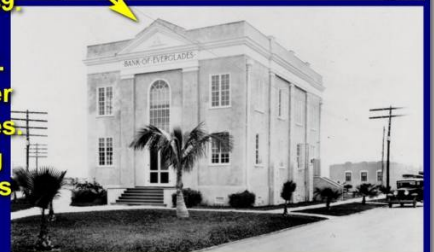


Everglades School – 1923
**Bell is displayed today at Museum
of the Everglades**



Bank of Everglades

- Founded 1923.
- First home.
- New building 1927.
- Only bank in Collier County until 1949.
- Moved to Immokalee 1962.
- National Register of Historic Places.
- Now fundraising for restoration as visitor center.



**Everglades Post Office
1925. Notice the tram.**

**Everglades tram ran
1925 -1929. Battery powered.**
*West Broadway
to Dupont Area*



**1929 Juliet Carnes
Collier Hospital
opened in
Everglades City.**

- 5 beds.
- Named after Mrs Barron Collier.
- Next to Rod & Gun Club.
- Closed 1963.



Everglades, Fla. Nov. 1st, 1930.

(For Mrs. Emerson Davis)

Naples, Florida.

In Account With **JULIET C. COLLIER HOSPITAL.**

Sept. 22	To visit at Naples (Regular charge \$25.00)	10 00	
" 22-30	Laboratory Examinations	6 00	
" 22-30	8 days hospitalization at \$4.00	32 00	
Oct. 1-31	31 days hospitalization at \$4.00	124 00	
		\$172 00	
	Less 50% Special Discount		86 00
Sept 22-30	Drugs, Dressings, Suppositories, Vaccines		6 70
" 22-30	X-Rays (2)		5 00
" 22-30	Physician's Services, 8 days at \$2.00		16 00
" 22-30	16 meals from Everglades Inn @ 50¢		8 00
" 22-30	Milk, Fruit and Fruit Juices from market		2 32
" 22-30	5 nights service special night nurses		10 00
Oct. 1-31	31 days physician's services @ \$2.00		62 00
" 1-31	31 days special night nurses		62 00
	95 meals @ 50¢		47 50
	Drugs and dressings		14 25
	Milk from market		1 24
			\$250.62
Sept 30	Credit by cash (Mr. Davis)		250 00
	Balance due		\$500.62

All bills are due immediately when presented.

June 2020 Juliet Collier Hospital (now residence) for sale



Glades Realty, Inc.
EVERGLADES CITY LISTINGS
Single Family Homes Condominiums

Known as the Western Gateway to the Everglades National Park, Everglades City is recognized first for its stone crabbing industry and for the great sport fishing of the 10,000 islands which attracts thousands of tourists each year.



Virtual Tour
Incredible Rare Opportunity in Everglades City! This waterfront home was the old Juliet Collier five room hospital in Everglades City until 1933 when it was converted into a private residence. Located next door to the Historic Rod & Gun Club, this home is zoned City Historic Preservation which allows various uses from Single Family or a Bed & Breakfast to Village Commercial uses. One of the very few properties that own their waterfront on the river. This home still has original wood floors, bead board walls, ceilings and original doors throughout. The potential is there! A real must see in person property, pictures can not do it justice. With some TLC you could have a spectacular home or business. Asking ... \$549,000.

2022 Photo: For Sale.
2024 Update: Looks a bit more poorly, but For Sale signs are gone.



This house was also in the 1929 Hospital photo.

**Now:
Beautifully
restored.**



Amid all the development in Everglades, there were major hurricanes in 1926 and 1928:



Deep Lake

In 1913, owners of a grapefruit grove near Deep Lake built the Deep Lake Railroad to transport grapefruit to Everglade for shipping.

In 1921, Collier purchased the railroad and the groves. He also used the railroad to transport pine and cypress logs to his sawmill in Everglades for shipping.



Collier's citrus plant in Deep Lake with warehouse and workers' quarters, 1929.



Atlantic Coast Line wanted to extend their trains from Immokalee to Everglades. They bought Deep Lake RR from Collier.

Line completed to Everglades and a depot in 1928. Farthest south ACL would ever reach.



We'll discuss 3 more recent events in the history of Everglades City shortly:

- Building the Tamiami Trail
- Everglades National Park
- Drug Smuggling

Before that, let's look at the settlement and history of Chokoloskee Island. →



Settlement of Chokoloskee Island

Chokoloskee means Old House in Indian language. But nobody knows the legend of the name.



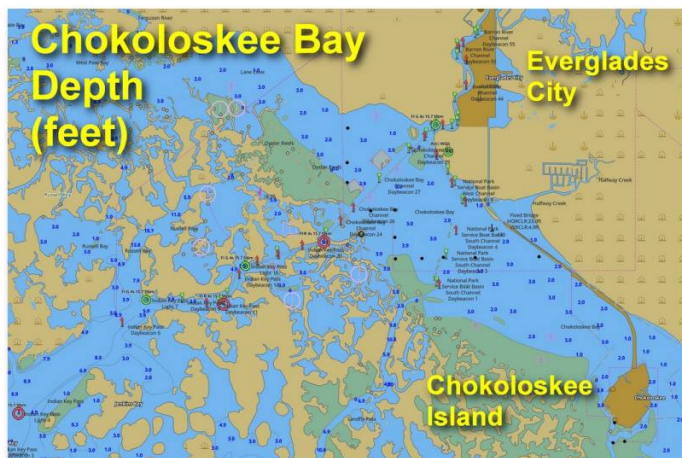
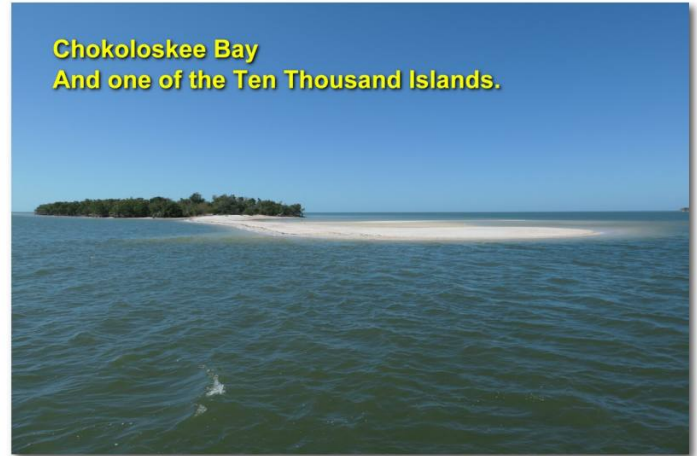
Chokoloskee refers to Island and Bay.

- Chokoloskee Bay is 10 miles x 2 miles and very shallow. Many sand bars. About 5 feet at deepest point.

Island is only 150 acres but was very important because of its height.

- 20 feet high is like a mountain to protect from flooding. Mountain was built by Calusa Indians tossing clam and oyster shells.

Chokoloskee Bay
And one of the Ten Thousand Islands.



Besides its height, Chokoloskee also had another big advantage: 3 artesian wells as sources of water, a rarity in the area.

Between 1874 and 1886, several families lived on the island for a while, but none stayed as permanent settlers.

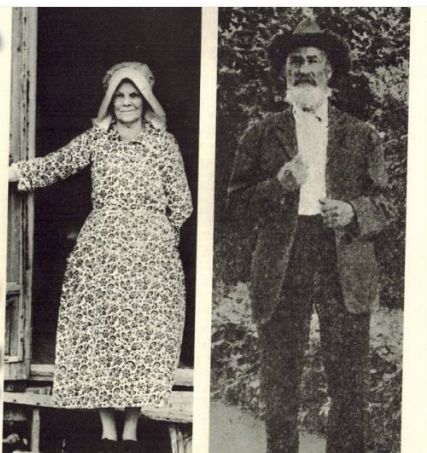
In 1886, Charles G (CG) McKinney arrived and became Chokoloskee's first permanent settler.

First settlers on Chokoloskee.

Mrs C G (Susan) McKinney.

C G McKinney.

In 1886 age 39 he abandoned a wife and 5 kids and moved to Chokoloskee with the nanny.



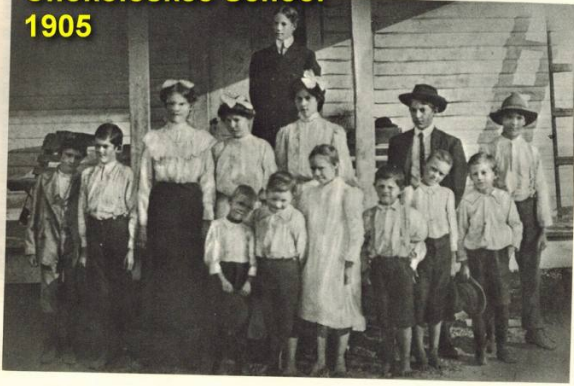
The McKinneys farmed (fruits and vegetables), fished, hunted, and raised a family.

McKinney also ran a small store and post office (which he established in 1891).

C G delivered babies (he was a State-registered midwife), pulled teeth, and provided self-taught medical treatments.

He organized a school (1898) and a church (served by an occasional minister who came by the mail boat).

Chokoloskee School 1905



In the early 1920s McKinney wrote:

"Our schoolteacher, we understand, is going to give up her school today; it is too much for her nerves... She had a trying time here, but we can give her praise for her endurance. Maybe we don't need any school – we all know enough anyway. They seem to learn to chew tobacco, curse, and drink booze at an early age and think their education is complete."

In 1896 Ted Smallwood settled on Chokoloskee. Started as a farmer.

He said there were 5 families there at the time.

In 1897 Ted married Mamie.

Today the two main roads on Chokoloskee are Mamie Street and Smallwood Drive.



Ted and Mamie Smallwood - Chokoloskee



Family 1917



With Charlie Tigertail 1928

By 1899 most of Chokoloskee was owned by Adolphus Santini.

In 1899, Ted Smallwood bought the island from Santini, who moved away.

1906 Smallwood started a small trading post in his home.

1906-1941 he was postmaster. Mail came by boat from Key West. Later from Fort Myers.

By 1912 ten families living on Chok.

Old Chokoloskee Photos



Chokoloskee School 1918



Seminole chickee hut 1916



At Smallwood's Store 1930



Seminole Village 1915

1917 Smallwood built the store that now exists.

Originally at ground level.
Raised on stilts in 1925.



1918 Smallwood dredged the bay to enable larger boats to dock at his store. Business boomed.

1920s school and church started.

1954-56 a 2½ mile causeway was built. Large bridge at Halfway Creek.

1974 Smallwood Store was placed on National Register of Historic Places.

1982 store closed.

But it reopened a few years later as a museum. Which is what it is today.



1940



Today

A bit more history of Chokoloskee:

The Story of Edgar J Watson

Was he Florida's most prolific serial killer?

America's #1 mass murderer?

A diabolical madman who left a trail of murder wherever he went?

A farmer who killed his workers rather than pay them?

Why did 33 of his neighbors riddle Watson with bullets on October 24, 1910?

Edgar J Watson

Born: Nov 11, 1855

– South Carolina.

Died: Oct 24, 1910

– Chokoloskee, FL.

– Aged 54.

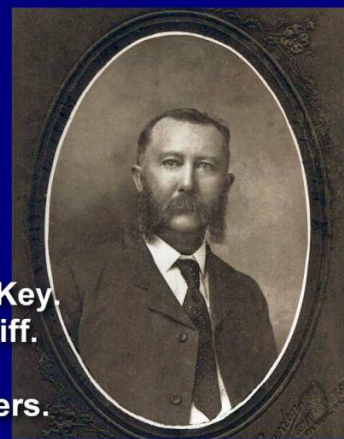
Buried:

– Initially on Rabbit Key.

– Exhumed by Sheriff.

– 33 bullets found.

– Reburied Fort Myers.



11 Nov 1855: Born in rural South Carolina.

Father was a violent redneck drunk.

Member of a Klan-like group. Got into many knife fights. Fathered an illegitimate mixed-race son (Edgar's half-brother).

1858: Sister Mary born. Died 1912.

1860s: Mother, Edgar, and Mary left the father and migrated to Fort White, Columbia County, northern Florida, to live with relatives.

Early 1870s: Edgar got into drunken fight in Fort White. Killed the man.

1870s: Fled to "Indian Territory" (first Arkansas, then Oklahoma) to farm.

1878: Married first wife Ann Mary "Charlie" Watson, age 16. She died 1879.

1882: Married second wife Jane S. "Mandy" Dyall Watson. She died 1901.

1882: Son Robert born.

1885: Daughter Carrie born.

1887: Son Edgar born.

1889: Son Lucius born.

1889: Arrest warrant in Arkansas for murder of Belle Starr, notorious female outlaw. Tried and acquitted.

1891: Returned to Florida. Bought 40 acres of land on Chatham Bend Key, one of the 10,000 Islands, Everglades. Near Chokoloskee. *Map next slide.*

Everglades City

Chokoloskee

Chatham Bend
Watson's Home

About 14 miles
by boat from
Chokoloskee

1891: Killed a man (Quinn Bass) in Arcadia over a land dispute. Claimed self-defense.

1890s: In Key West, Watson got into an argument with Adolphus Santini and slit his throat. Paid \$900 to drop charges.

1893: Settled on Chatham Bend. Built a house. Became a vegetable farmer (bananas, papayas, beans) and sugar cane grower. Sold in Ft Myers and Key West.

**Edgar Watson's home on Chatham Bend Key (Island) Oct 20, 1910.
Burned in the 1940s.**

*Photo
4 days
before
the "fatal
event".*

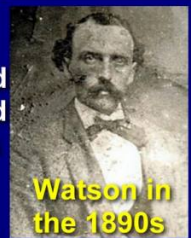


1890s: Watson's workers were poor whites, blacks, and Seminoles. Harsh redneck white supervisors (fugitives) mistreated workers and strong-armed others into selling their property.

One account: He would occasionally travel to Marco Island, Fort Myers and even Tampa searching for vagabonds, migrants and wayfarer types that he would bring back to his plantation near the Chatham River in order to give them work. Locals believed his success was due to his 'cheap' labor as he never intended on paying them their wages in the first place. One thing is clear: none of these people ever seemed to leave Chatham Bend alive.

<http://peacevalley.blogspot.com/2011/04/edgar-j-watson-island-graveyard-of.html>

1890s: Watson bought land in Lost Man's River. A man named Tucker squatted on the land and would not leave. Tucker and his nephew were found murdered. Watson suspected.



1890s: Suspected of involvement in the deaths of two men in Fort White, FL.

1901: Second wife Mandy died age 38.

1905: Married third wife Edna Katie Bethea Burkett. Edgar was 50. Edna was 17.

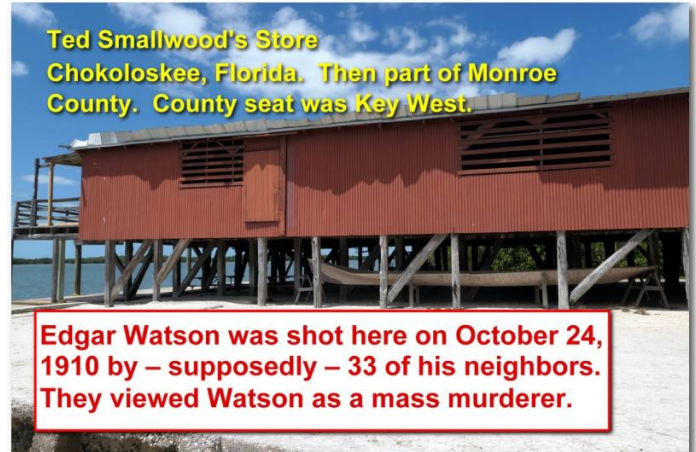
1907: Daughter Ruby born.

1909: Son Hampton born.

1910: Daughter Anna born.

1890s-1910: Either he or people living on his property were rumored to have killed 57 people at Chatham. Many were African-American or Native-American field workers killed when they came to collect their pay. Some were white settlers with whom he had disputes. Chokoloskee townspeople feared and hated Watson.

Ted Smallwood's Store
Chokoloskee, Florida. Then part of Monroe County. County seat was Key West.



Edgar Watson was shot here on October 24, 1910 by – supposedly – 33 of his neighbors. They viewed Watson as a mass murderer.

What Happened on October 24, 1910?

Theory #1 – Most widely supported:

Neighbors hated and killed him: Armed Chokoloskee men met Watson at the store dock and killed him. They believed he was shooting his farm workers on payday and feeding them to the gators. He blamed the shootings on his foreman, Leslie Cox. (a convicted murderer and fugitive). But the townspeople did not buy that story. They did not want Watson in their community.

Theory #2

Watson was a womanizer. Many illegitimate children, white and black. A relative of one of the women shot Watson. 33 townspeople witnessed the shooting. They shot up the corpse to cover up for the actual shooter.

Either way, some of the 33 dragged Watson's body by boat to Rabbit Key (island) and buried him.

Oct 25, 1910: Sheriff finally came from Ft Myers, dug up body. 33 bullet holes.

Oct 27, 1910: Brief inquest. Nothing came of it. Townspeople alleged self-defense. Body reburied in Ft Myers.

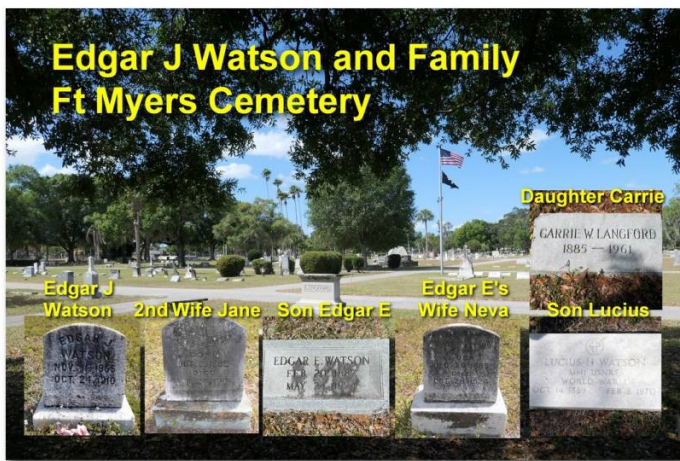
Shortly thereafter: Third wife Edna went back to Fort White with their 3 children.

1940s: Watson's home destroyed. Cement cistern, sugarcane syrup cauldron, and some farm machinery remain. Part of Everglades National Park.

Grave of Edgar J Watson - Ft Myers

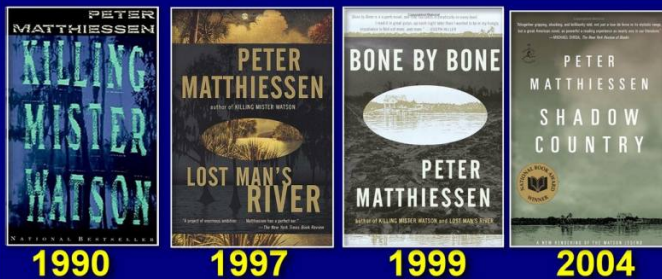


Edgar J Watson and Family Ft Myers Cemetery



Many books have been written about the killing of Edgar Watson in Chokoloskee. Many newspaper stories. University papers and dissertations. Until a few years ago Chokoloskee re-enacted the killing each year. The 1958 Burl Ives movie *Wind Across the Everglades* is based on the story. The most famous books are by National Book Award winner Peter Matthiessen:

Peter Matthiessen's 4 books about the killing of Edgar J Watson, October 24, 1910, Chokoloskee.



We will never know for sure what happened at Ted Smallwood's store on Oct 24, 1910. Or why.

The participants have been dead for years. None left first-hand accounts.

The many who have studied and written about Watson don't agree on who he was or whether he got what he deserved.

Why did so many men jointly shoot him in such a public fashion?

The mystery is very much alive.

Now that we've covered the settlement of Everglades City and Chokoloskee, let's turn to, three interesting and related stories:

1. Construction of the Tamiami Trail.
2. Development of Everglades National Park.
3. Drug smuggling in Everglades City.

Building the Tamiami Trail – 1923-1928

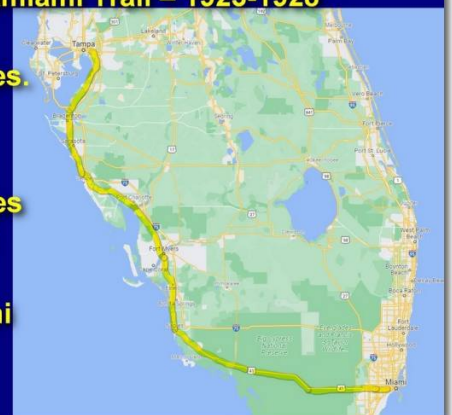
Tampa to MIAMI 275 miles.

AKA US-41



Tampa to Naples is North-South 163 miles.

Naples to Miami East-West 112 miles.



Tamiami Trail

- Initially proposed and agreed to by the various counties on the route in 1915. **Aim: economic development.**
- Much of the road from Tampa to Fort Myers was already in place, but needed improvement.
- Ft Myers to Miami would be new.

- Dade County started work on their end immediately. Made good progress.
- Lee County (which included what's now Collier) did some work on road from Ft Myers to Naples. **But ran out of money. State had no funds to help.**

Early road from Fort Myers to Naples still required an all-day trip!



1923: Land developer Barron Collier offered to fund completion of the Tamiami Trail Naples to Dade line. In return, the State legislature would establish a new county and name it after him.

- State agreed.
- Population of Collier County in 1925: just 1,258.



Construction started 1923. Completed 1928. Opened April 26, 1928.

Basic process: Use dynamite to create an east-west canal. Use the resulting dirt to build the roadbed in the swamp above flood level. Called a "borrow canal" because the soil was borrowed to build the road.



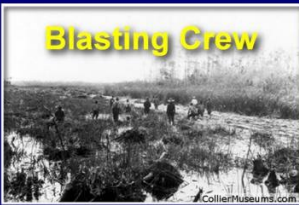
2.6 million sticks of dynamite were used.

Brought in by log tram or by oxen. →

This machine bored the dynamite holes. →



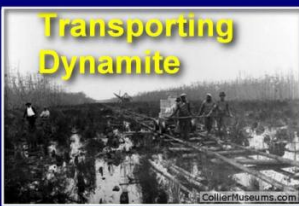
Blasting Crew



2.6 million sticks of 60% nitroglycerin dynamite



Transporting Dynamite



After dynamiting, digging was done by a:

Walking Dredge →

or a:

Floating Dredge. →

Dredges were built in Bay City, Michigan



Mobile worker bunks, kitchens, toilets moved in the canal as the road progressed. Workers paid \$60/month. Worked all day standing in swamps, bitten by mosquitos.



Mobile Bunks

Bay City Walking Dredge - 1924
Dredge One Mile Per Month

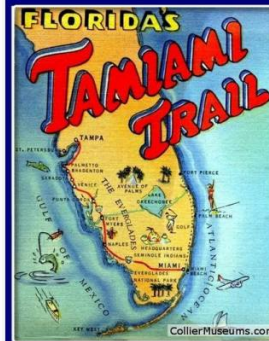


See it at Collier-Seminole State Park.

Collier built 6 stations along the Trail. Each staffed by a husband and wife. He got a motorcycle and patrolled the road. She ran the gas station and store. All 6 stations are now gone. Last one, Monroe Station in Ochopee (above) burned in 2016. Vandalism.



Tamiami Trail Opened Apr 25, 1928



Festivities in Everglades

N-S was US41
E-W was US94



Tamiami Trail Finally Opens - 1928



Concluding comments:

- Collier County has grown dramatically since the Trail opened.
- A negative impact has been to block flow of water from Lake Okeechobee to Gulf of Mexico. Being fixed.
- 1993 I-75 Alligator Alley opened, taking much traffic from Tamiami Trail.

Collier Population

2020	375,752
2010	321,520
2000	251,377
1990	152,099
1980	85,971
1970	38,040
1960	15,753
1950	6,488
1940	5,102
1930	2,883
1925	1,258

Memorial to Barron Collier in Collier-Seminole State Park

"To the Memory of the Founder and Father of Collier County, Florida and the Faithful Friend of All Mankind."
January 1, 1941.



- 50's and 60's:** Most development in Collier was happening in Naples. Fishing, hunting, farming all declined.
- 1957:** Railroad ended.
- 1959:** County referendum voted to move county seat to East Naples. Done 1962.
- 1960:** Donna devastated Everglades.
- 1962:** Bank of Everglades moved to Immokalee. **Now part of Synovus.**
- 1965:** Name changed to Everglades City.

Everglades National Park

- 1 Everglades City Visitor Center
- 2 Reed Welcome Center US41 *
- 3 Oasis Visitor Center *
- 4 Shark Valley Visitor Center
- 5 Coe Visitor Center, Homestead
- 6 Flamingo Visitor Center



Our focus today is on Everglades City and Chokoloskee. So I won't have much detail on the whole of Everglades National Park.

But we will talk about two things:

1. Impact of the creation of the Park on Everglades City and Chokoloskee.
2. Everglades National Park Visitor Center in Everglades City, and related activities.

Everglades National Park

- Legislation passed 1934.
- 1.5 million acres of land acquired 1934-1947.
- Dade, Monroe, Collier Counties.
- Largest subtropical wilderness in US.
- Elevation 0 to 8 feet.



Everglades National Park opened in 1947.

- Dedication ceremony in Everglades City.
- Attended by President Harry Truman.

UNESCO World Heritage Site 1979



1947

Everglades National Park Dedication Dec 6, 1947 Everglades City



Most national parks preserve stunning geographic scenery. Everglades National Park was the first created to protect a fragile wetland ecosystem.

- 36 threatened or protected species inhabit the park, including Florida panther, crocodile, and manatee.
- Also 350 species of birds, 300 species of fresh and saltwater fish, 40 species of mammals, 50 reptiles.

However: For families in Everglades City, Chokoloskee, Flamingo, and Homestead, the Park was nothing less than a disastrous takeover of their land and waters by the government.

- Fishing, clamming, oystering etc were greatly restricted in Florida Bay and Chokoloskee Bay.
- Hunting regulations limited what hunters could go after, where, when.

- Cape Sable was closed to farming.
- Drainage canals changed vegetation, which drove away wildlife sought by hunters and fishermen.
- Canals reduced fresh-water floods that farmers wanted for their lands. Led to salt water ruin of farmland.
- Some logging was permitted, but that denuded the land.
- Now airboats have been prohibited.

Restrictions imposed by the Park and other factors such as overfishing, overhunting, overlogging, etc led to a dramatic loss of income for the people of Everglades and Chokoloskee.

Where did they find new income?

Marijuana smuggling.
1970s and early 80s.



The locals took advantage of:

1. Closeness to sources of supply (Caribbean and Latin America).
2. Unique knowledge of how to navigate the vast labyrinth of mangroves in the 10,000 Islands.
3. Minimal local law enforcement due to (a) isolation and (b) family relationships between smugglers and local sheriffs.

The tiny village of Everglades City became the marijuana capital of the USA.

In 1979, the US Customs Service reported that 87% of all marijuana seizures in the US were made in the South Florida area.

The US DEA decided they had to put a stop to the smuggling.

Federal agents executed two large, highly publicized raids in 1983 and 1984. Number of police exceeded the number of registered voters in Everglades. **Arrested nearly 80% of the adult male population of Everglades City. Seized half the local fishing fleet plus two airplanes.**



Washington Post

Everglades City has been called one of the most corrupt towns in America.... Headquarters of mom-and-pop smuggling operations that ferried more than 75 tons of marijuana a week from the mountains of Colombia into the 2,000 square miles of salt-water labyrinth known as the Ten Thousand Islands.

To this day, few in the town consider the smugglers lawbreakers.

Excerpts from 3 news reports:

City Clerk: "The people they're taking out of here are nice people."

Real Estate Agent: "People were just trying to make a living."

Drug Enforcement Officer: "They're impoverished. I don't hold it against them. The government took away their living."

May I recommend a movie called Square Grouper. Second half of the movie deals with marijuana smuggling in Everglades City.



Square Grouper

Nickname given to bales of marijuana thrown overboard or out of airplanes by smugglers in South Florida in the 1970s and 1980s.

Why was South Florida the drug smuggling capital of US?

- 5,000 miles of coast and coastal waterways.
- Proximity to the Caribbean and Latin America.
- Replace lost commercial fishing income.

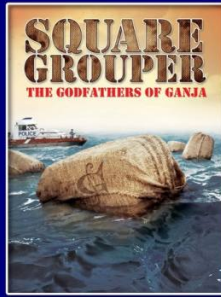


"Square Grouper - The Godfathers of Ganja"

2011 Documentary about 3 groups of drug smugglers:

- Miami: Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church of Jamaica.
- Miami: Black Tuna Gang.
- Everglades City: Two large DEA raids in 1983 and 1984 led to the arrest of nearly 80% of the adult male population of Everglades City. **80%**

Try to see this movie. Was on Netflix.



We now have a good background to focus on things we can see and do in Everglades City and Chokoloskee today. Let's begin.



Things to See and Do in Everglades City

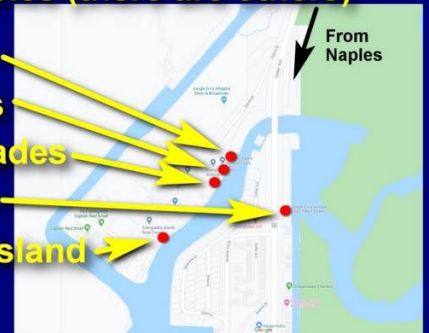
- 1 Dupont Area Fishing, Airboats, etc
- 2 Barron River
- 3 First Baptist Church
- 4 Everglades City School
- 5 Rod and Gun Club
- 6 Museum of the Everglades
- 7 Bank of the Everglades Building
- 8 Fire Station
- 9 City Hall (Was Collier County Courthouse)
- 10 Everglades Community Church
- 11 Depot
- 12 Everglades City Airpark
- 13 Everglades National Park Visitor Center
- 14 Everglades City Ernest Hamilton Tower



Airboat Tours from Everglades City

Some Examples (there are others)

- Capt. Jack's
- Capt. Doug's
- Orig. Everglades
- Jungle Erv's
- Everglades Island



Airboat Tours.

There are several out of Everglades City.

- Basic tour one hour.
- Approx: Adult \$40. Kids 4-12 \$25.
- Show Up or (for some) book on-line.
- Boats hold around 6 people + captain.
- Ear protection is provided.
- Do not feed the alligators.
- Do not put your hands in the water.

Some airboat tours out of Everglades City go through grasslands.

Other airboat tours go through mangrove swamps.

Both are beautiful.

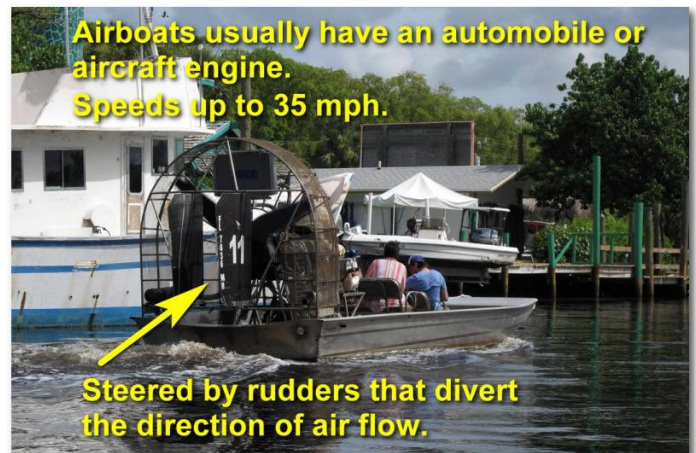
You can see wildlife (birds, alligators, etc.) on both.

Many Airboat Tour Operators in Everglades City

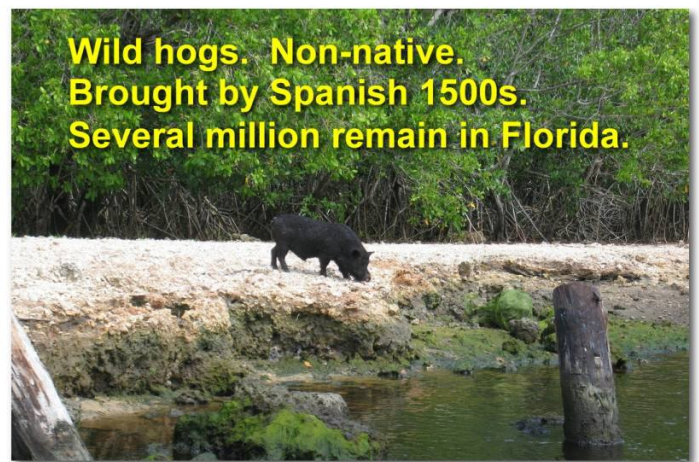
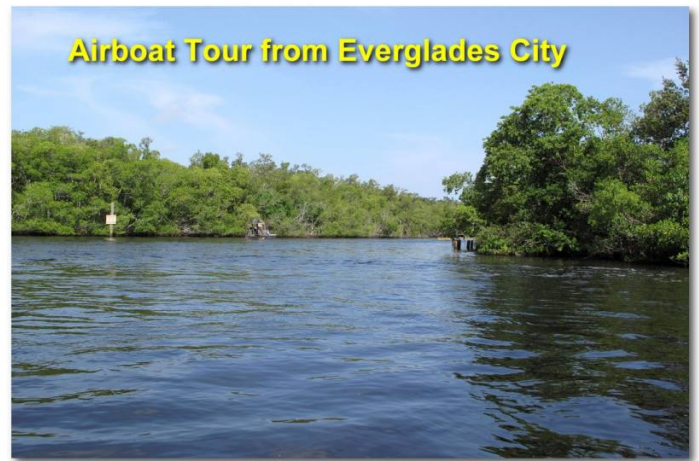
Original Everglades
Captain Doug's
Captain Jack's
Many others.



Airboats usually have an automobile or aircraft engine.
Speeds up to 35 mph.



Steered by rudders that divert the direction of air flow.



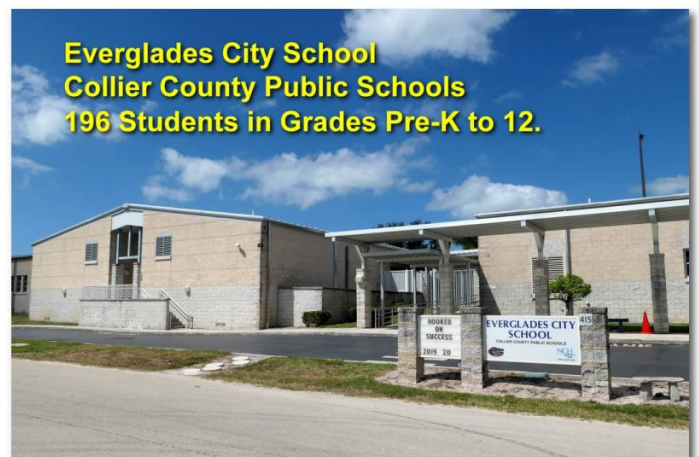
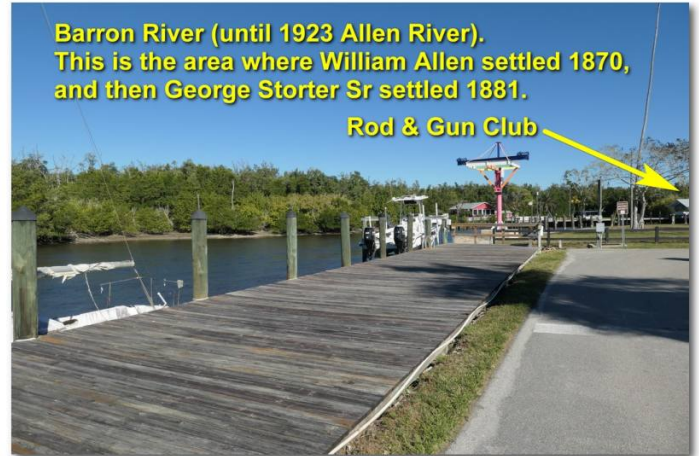
There Are Also Airboat Tour Operators Based Along the Tamiami Trail (US-41). These will likely be more grasslands, and less mangrove swamp, tours.

Some examples (map next slide):

- Corey Billie's (closest to Naples).
- Capt Mitch's.
- Jungle Erv's.
- Wooten's.



Examples of Airboat Tours on Tamiami Trail (US-41)



Rod & Gun Club
200 W Broadway, Everglades City.
On Barron River.

1870 first settler William Allan built his house on this site.
 George Storter Sr settled 1881. In 1889 he bought out Allen.

At some point Storter started offering meals and taking overnight guests.
 His son George Jr continued ownership.

1922 Barron G. Collier bought the property and renamed it Rod & Gun Club.

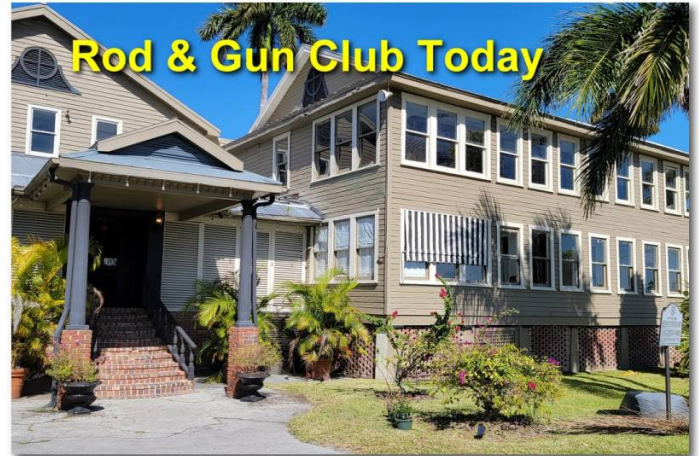
- He operated it as a private club.
- He hosted international dignitaries and several United States presidents.

In 1972, the Bowen family, from Michigan, bought the Club and is still operating it today.

Rod & Gun Club Today



Rod & Gun Club Today



Celebrity Guests at Rod & Gun Club:

Presidents: Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, Herbert Hoover, Richard Nixon.

1942: John Wayne, Ernest Hemingway.

While on location filming:

- 1945, "Winds Across the Everglades": **Burl Ives, Gypsy Rose Lee.**
- 1983, "Cannonball Run": **Kate Jackson, Burt Reynolds, Sally Field.**
- 1994, "Just Cause": **Sean Connery.**
- 1997, Walt Disney's "Gone Fishing": **Danny Glover, Joe Pesci.**

David Carradine	Roy Clark	Mel Tillis
Eddie Arnold	Jack Nicklaus	Peter Jennings
Phil Donahue	Marlo Thomas	

Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower at the Rod & Gun Club – 1951

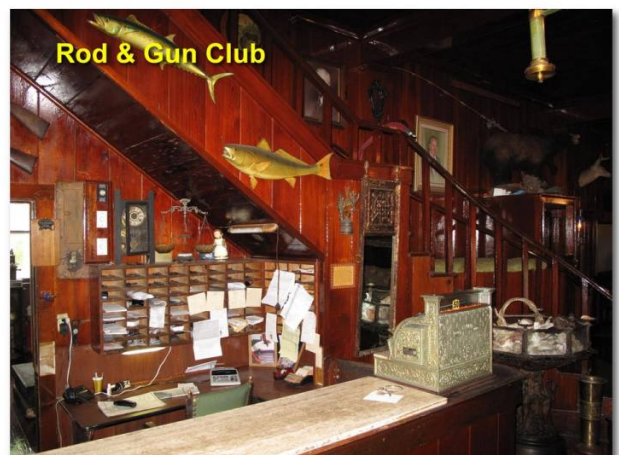


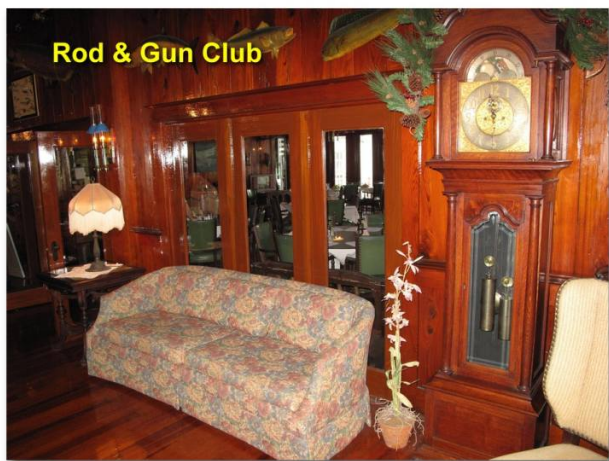
With long-time Rod & Gun Club manager Claus 'Snooky' Senghaas →

Rod & Gun Club
17 hotel rooms plus several cottages.
169-seat restaurant on the Barron River.
Restaurant menu includes:

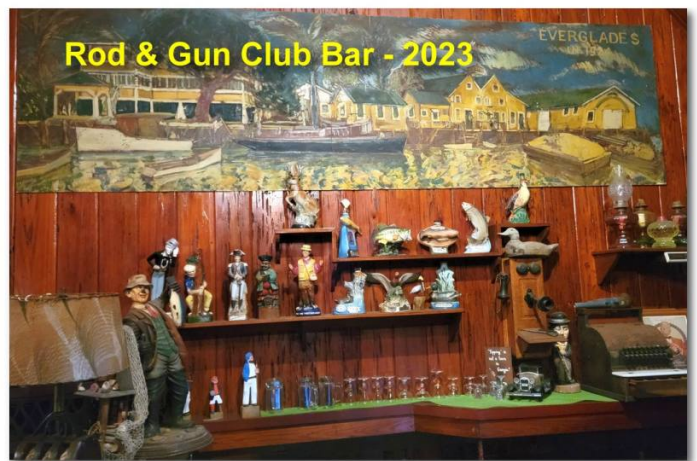
- You Catch 'Em, We Cook 'Em.
- Native Fish - Fried, broiled, or blackened.
- Fried Soft Shell Blue Crab.
- Florida Gator Meat - Bite Size Pieces.
- Frog Legs.
- Stone Crabs - In season.
- Jumbo Shrimp.
- Fried Oysters.

Rod & Gun Club





Rod & Gun Club



Rod & Gun Club Bar - 2023



Rod & Gun Club - Everglades City



Rod & Gun Club 2023 - Alligator Bites

Museum of the Everglades

Websites: www.colliermuseums.com
<https://evergladesmuseum.org/>

One of five Collier County Museums.

Where: 105 West Broadway, Everglades City.

Get There: South on US-41, right on US-29. 35 miles from central Naples.

Admission: Free.

When: Tues-Sat 9am to 4pm.

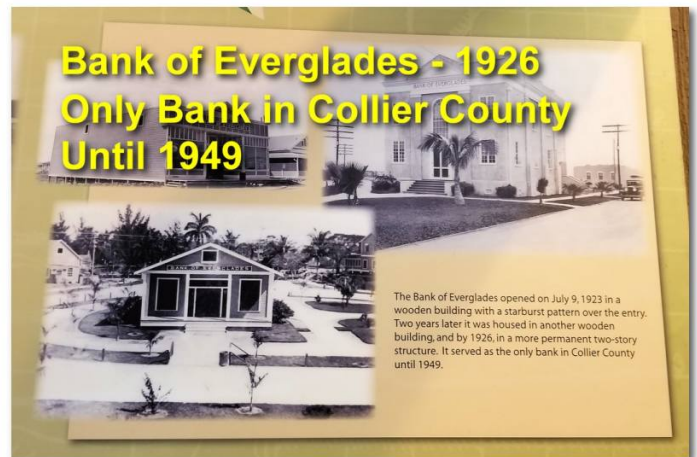
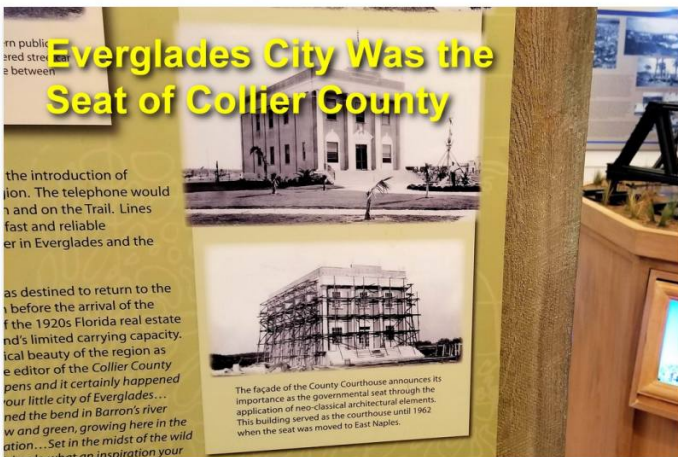
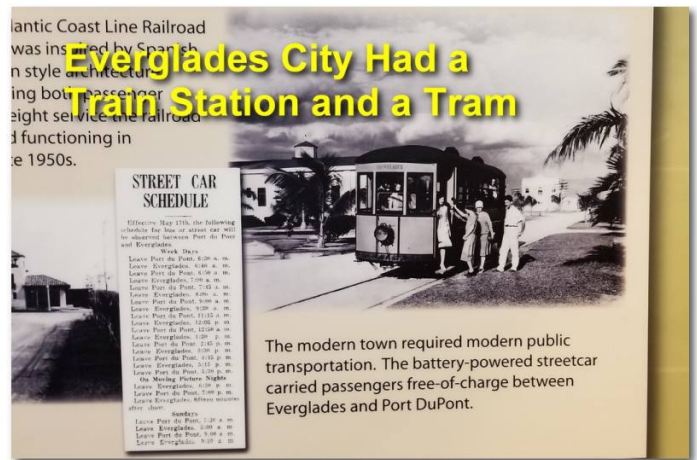
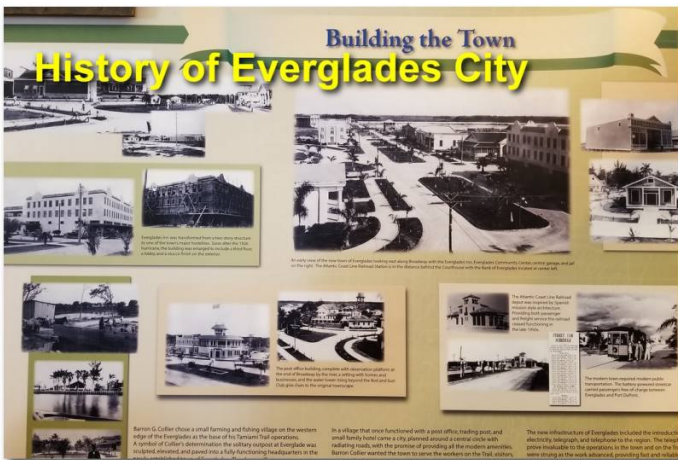
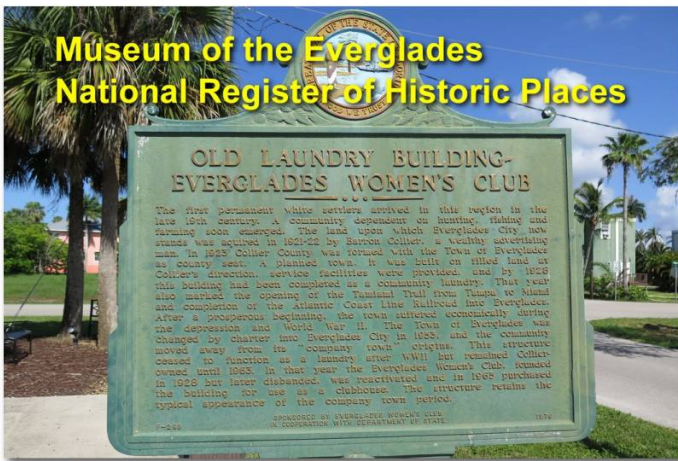
What: History of Everglades City including:

- People of the Everglades: Calusa and Seminoles.
- Founding and History of Everglades City.
- Building the Tamiami Trail.
- Illegal Trades: Moonshine.
- Opening Everglades National Park.
- Fishing.
- The Python Problem.
- Several excellent videos.



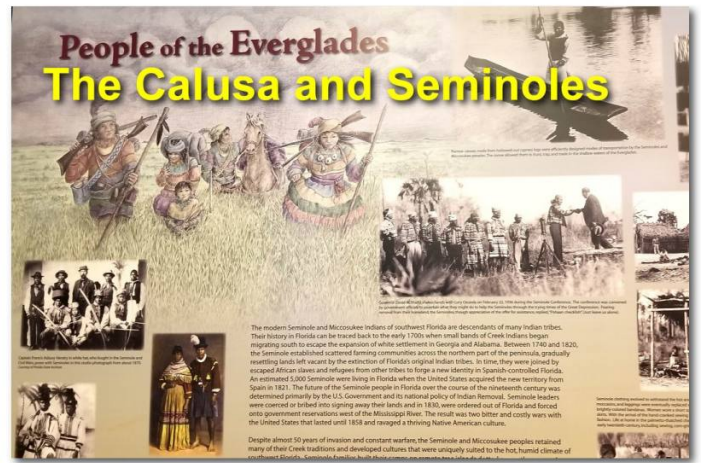
Museum of the Everglades
Old Laundry Building - 1928

One of five Collier County Museums

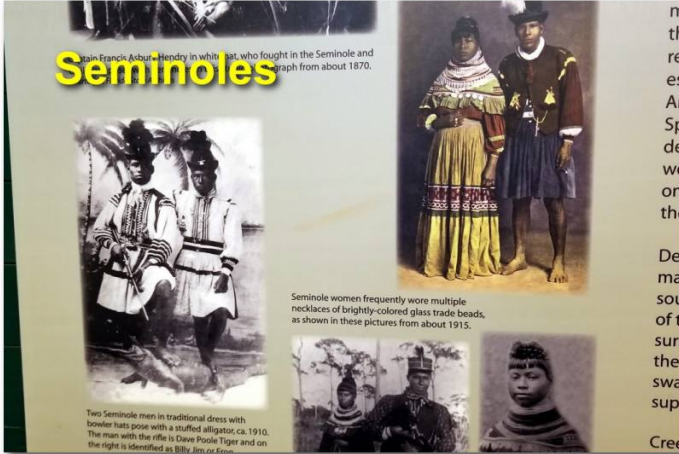




Museum of the Everglades



People of the Everglades The Calusa and Seminoles



Seminole

Francis Ashut-Hendry in white, who fought in the Seminole and

Seminole women frequently wore multiple necklaces of brightly-colored glass trade beads, as shown in these pictures from about 1915.

Two Seminole men in traditional dress with bowler hats pose with a stuffed alligator, ca. 1910. The man with the rifle is Dave Poole Tiger and on the right is identified as Billy Jimmie Jones.



Building the Tamiami Trail The Walking Dredge



Building the Tamiami Trail

Building the Trail



Opening Day Motorcade Tamiami Trail Opening - 1928

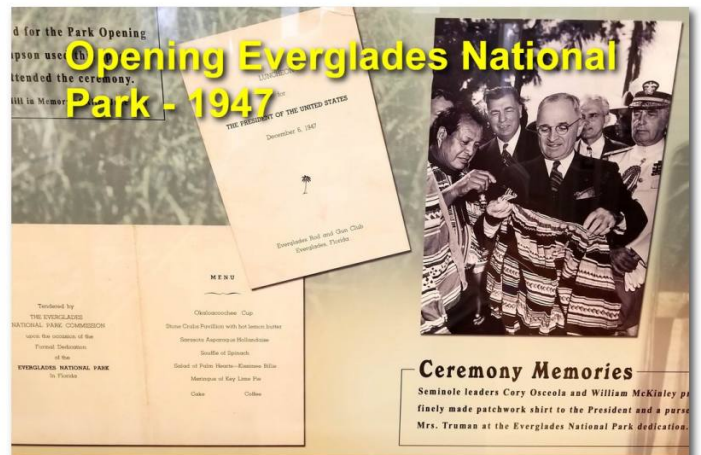
The Tamiami Trail opening in April 1928 was celebrated with a motorcade from Tampa to Miami. Celebrants arriving in the town of Everglades were treated to a parade and three-day county fair. Boy Scouts march on Broadway toward the Barron River. The three-story Everglades Inn is festooned in bunting to the left of the picture. April 26, 1928.

The Tamiami Trail officially opened with a grand and fitting flourish—a large motorcade traveling the length of the trail from Tampa to Miami, greeted by crowds of celebrating townfolk and visitors along the entire route. From April 24 to April 26, 1928, the procession traveled an estimated 26 mph through spruced-up cities and towns alflutter with decorations designed to show each place at its best. And the town most resplendent with bunting, electric lights, and fireworks was Everglades, where motorists stopped for two hours to enjoy Collier County's first fair and a barbecue.



Illegal Trades Moonshine No mention of drugs!

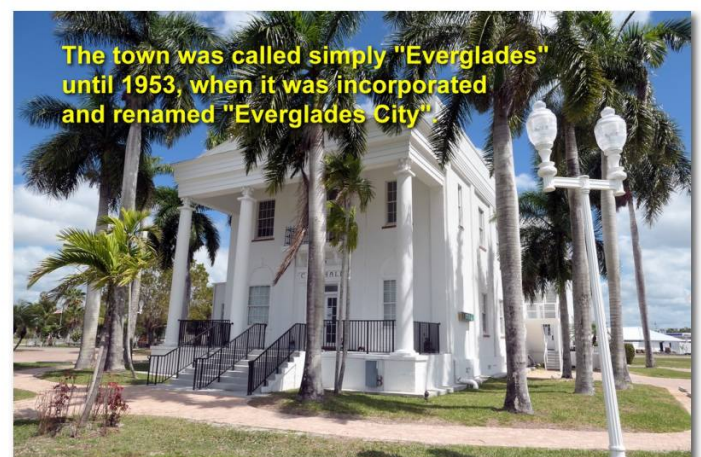
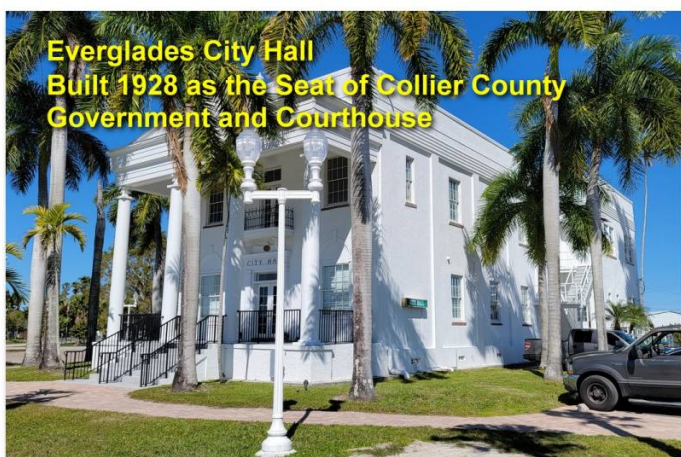
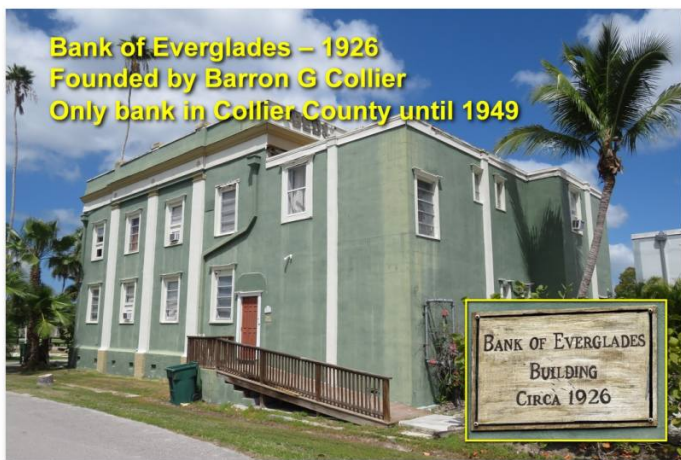
Illegal Trades

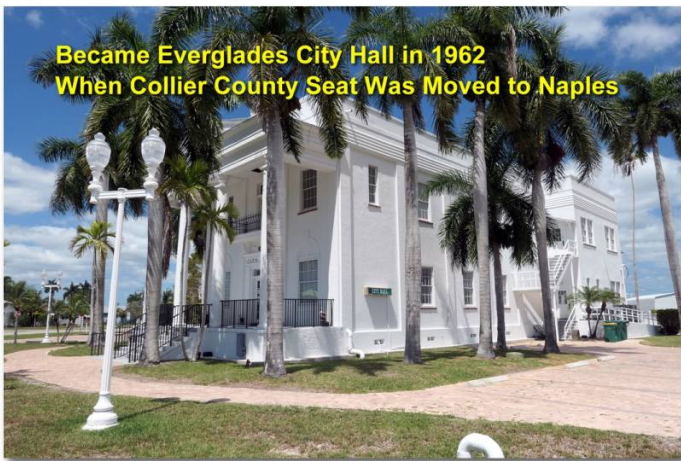


Opening Everglades National Park - 1947

Ceremony Memories

Seminole leaders Cory Oscola and William McKinley presented a finely made patchwork shirt to the President and a purse to Mrs. Truman at the Everglades National Park dedication.

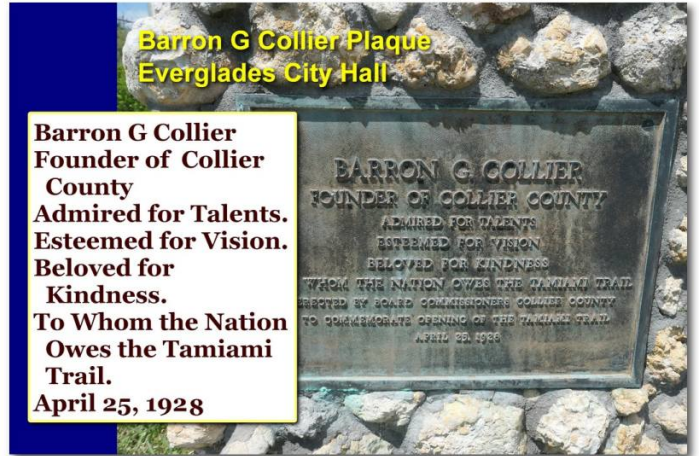
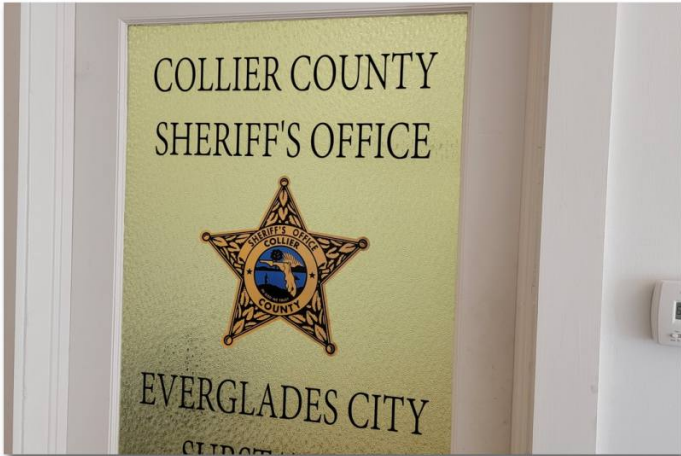




Became Everglades City Hall in 1962
When Collier County Seat Was Moved to Naples



1st Floor
Water Billing
Historic Society
Library
Tax Collector
Sheriff Substation
2nd Floor
Mayor City Clerk
City Council Chambers
Bookkeeping
Flood Admin
Sheriff Admin
Fire Admin



Barron G Collier
Founder of Collier
County
Admired for Talents.
Esteemed for Vision.
Beloved for
Kindness.
To Whom the Nation
Owes the Tamiami
Trail.
April 25, 1928



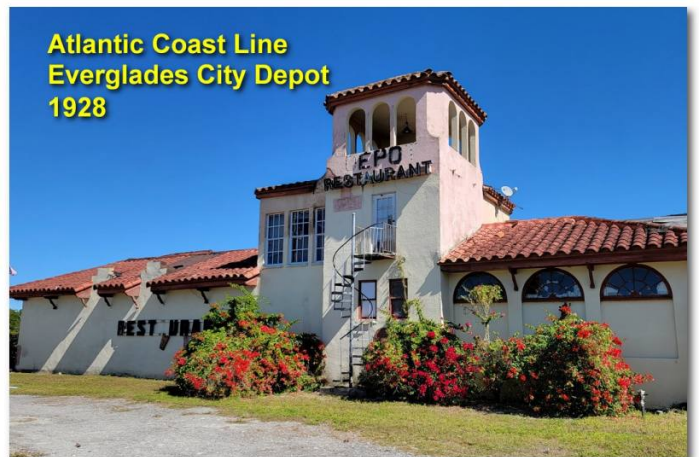
Everglades Community Church
1940



Everglades Community Church
At the Roundabout - Copeland Ave
at Broadway

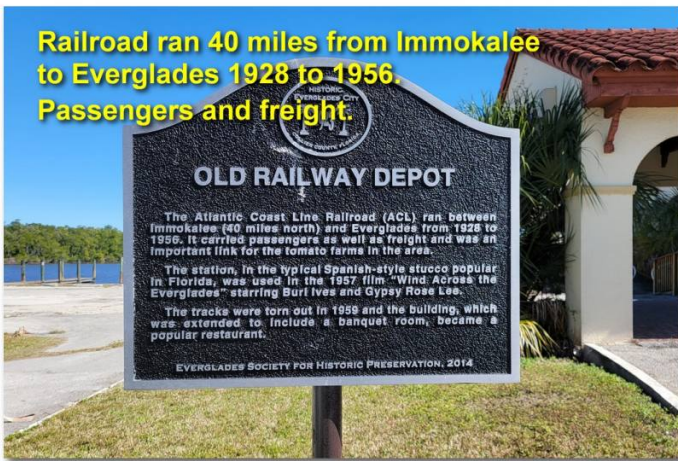


Temperature in the 30s in February 2022



Atlantic Coast Line
Everglades City Depot
1928

**Railroad ran 40 miles from Immokalee to Everglades 1928 to 1956.
Passengers and freight.**



**Everglades Airpark.
Local County-run airport.
www.colliercountyfl.gov/
650 E.C. Airpark Road
Everglades City, FL.
2,400' runway – 15/33.
Self-service fuel 24/7.
Viewing area with seats.**



Public Viewing Area



**Everglades Airpark
President Harry Truman was here in 1947
to dedicate Everglades National Park**



**The Collier family built the airport in 1947
so they might fly in daily from their home
base in Palm Beach. When the Colliers
relocated to Naples in 1968, they sold the
airport to the County.**



**Approximately 4,800 aircraft operations
(take-offs and landings) a year = 13 a day.**



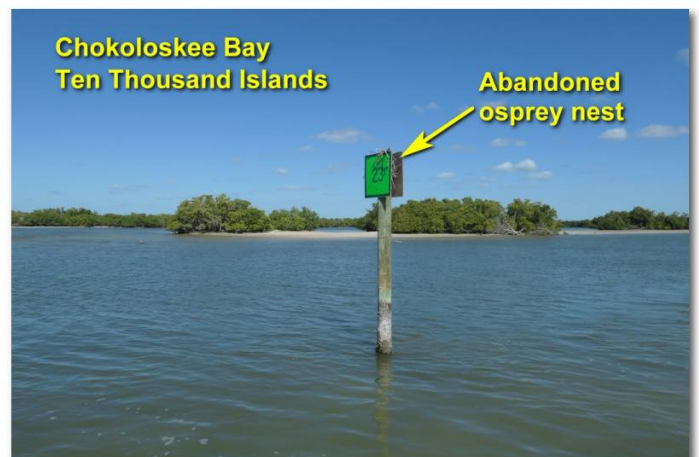
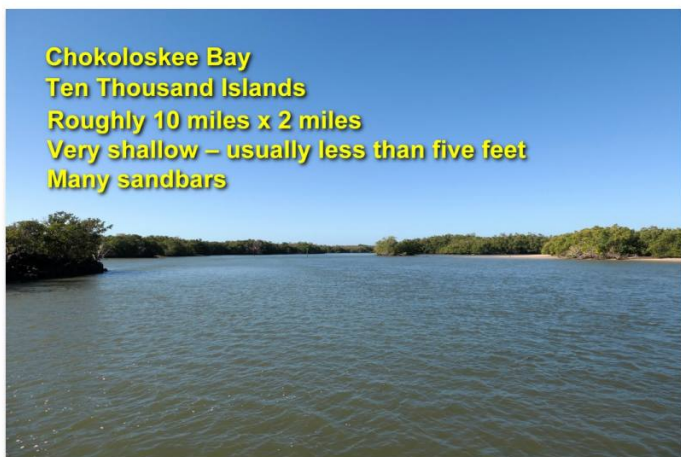
**Everglades National Park
Gulf Coast Visitor Center
815 Oyster Bar Lane
Everglades City, Florida 34139
(239) 695-3311**



**Daily from 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Small museum. Walking and kayak tours.
Tickets for boat tour.**

- Boat tour of 10,000 Islands - next slide.
- Departs hourly (if 6 or more people).

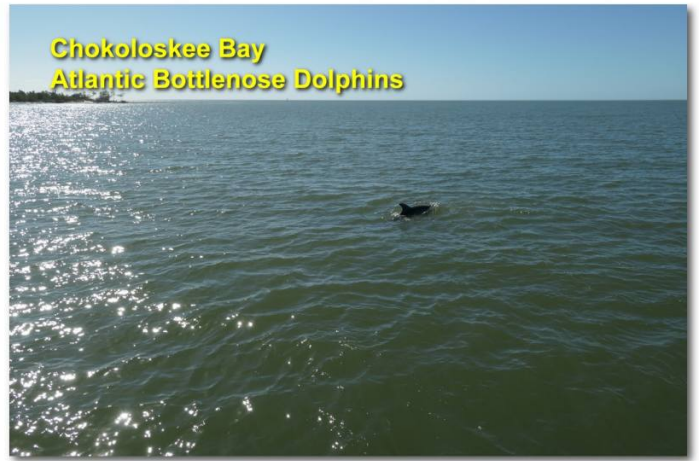
**Chokoloskee Bay Boat Tour
Everglades Florida Adventures
(855) 793-5542
<https://evergladesfloridaadventures.com/>
Adult \$40. Senior \$36. Children \$20.
(+vehicle entrance fee \$30.00 – but they do not ask.)
90-minute excursion across Chokoloskee
Bay on a 45 ft passenger catamaran.
Into Indian Key Pass, and through the
mangrove islands of Everglades National
Park. Birds, dolphins, manatees.
Narrated by Ranger or Naturalist.**



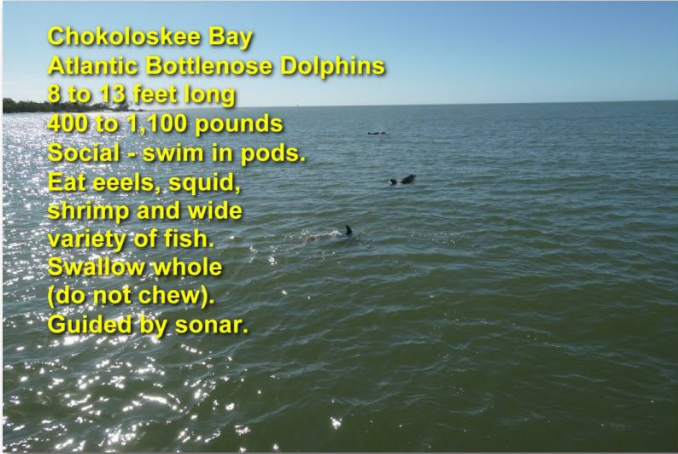
Excellent Narration by Ranger Nick
February 2022



Chokoloskee Bay
Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphins



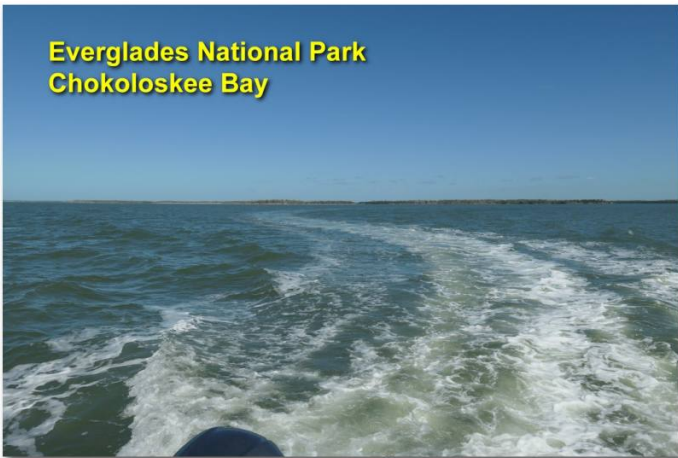
Chokoloskee Bay
Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphins
8 to 13 feet long
400 to 1,100 pounds
Social - swim in pods.
Eat eels, squid,
shrimp and wide
variety of fish.
Swallow whole
(do not chew).
Guided by sonar.



Curious. Following our boat.



Everglades National Park
Chokoloskee Bay



Ernest Hamilton Observation Tower
875 Copeland Ave.
Everglades City, FL.
\$2.
100 steps.
360 degree views of
mangroves, Everglades,
10,000 Islands.

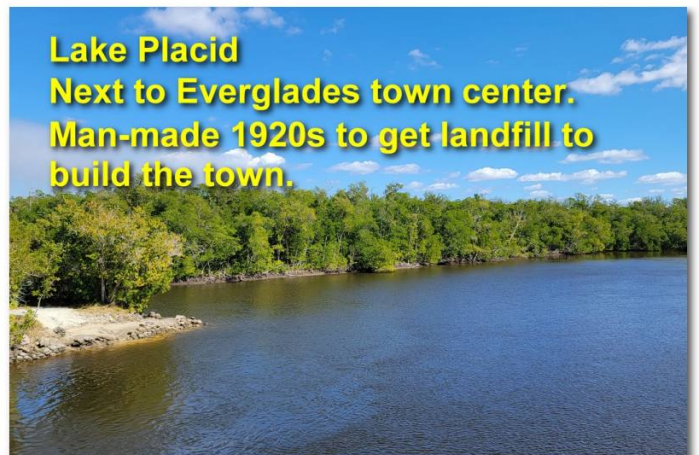


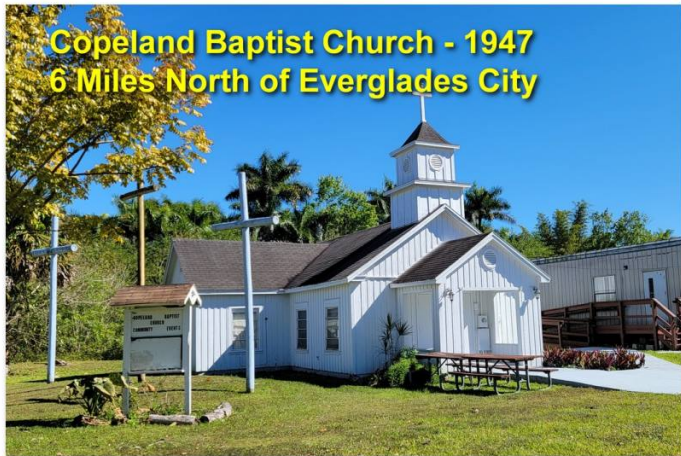
Ernest Hamilton Observation Tower
Just Before the Causeway to Chokoloskee

Look for This Sign



Lake Placid
Next to Everglades town center.
Man-made 1920s to get landfill to
build the town.





Town named for David Graham Copeland 1885-1949.

- Civil Engineer.
- Annapolis graduate.

Barron Collier's hand-picked associate to manage the building of Everglades City and the Tamiami Trail. Which he did with military precision.

- Chairman of Collier County Board of Commissioners 1929-1947.
- State Legislator 1947-1949.

Things to See on Chokoloskee Island

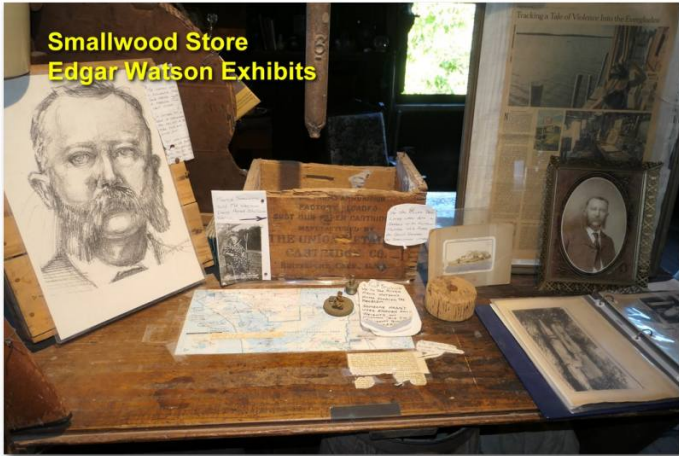




Ted Smallwood Store
National Register of Historic Places
360 Mamie Street, Chokoloskee
Daily 11am to 5pm, \$5
www.Smallwoodstore.com



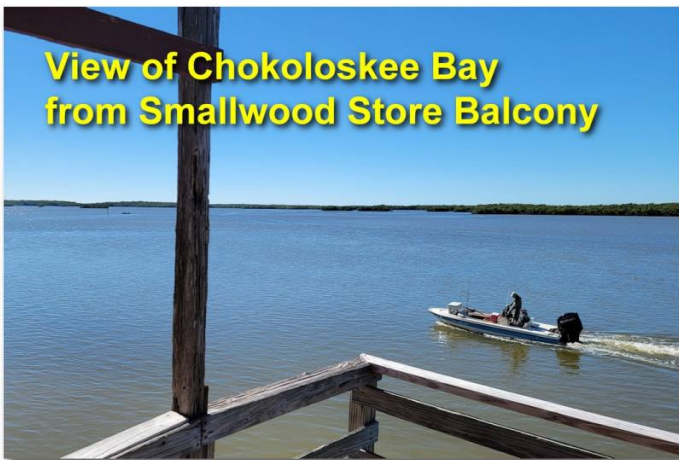
Smallwood Store
Chokoloskee



Smallwood Store
Edgar Watson Exhibits



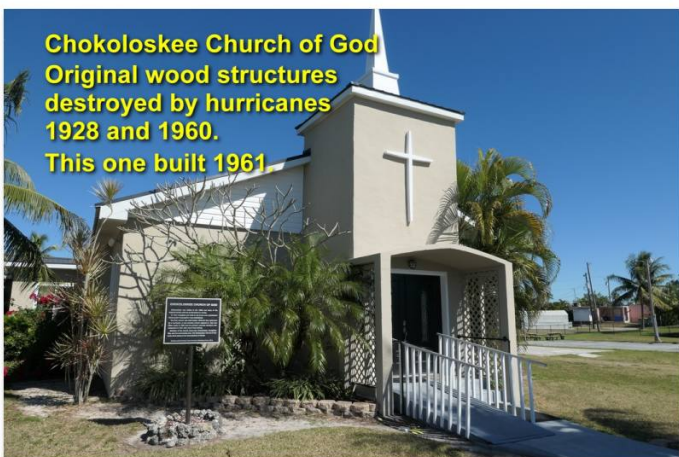
Smallwood Store
Do Not Miss This
Video of
Reminiscences
by Totch Brown,
colorful Chokoloskee
resident caught up
in the marijuana
smuggling raids
in the 1980s



View of Chokoloskee Bay
from Smallwood Store Balcony



I could not resist buying a treasure!



Chokoloskee Church of God
Original wood structures
destroyed by hurricanes
1928 and 1960.
This one built 1961.



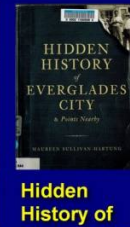
Recent Houses in Chokoloskee Are Built in Stilts



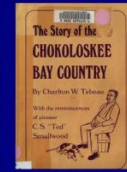
Recommended References



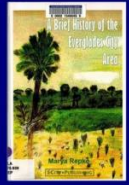
Florida's Last Frontier by Charlton Tebeau. My opinion: The best of these.



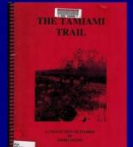
Hidden History of Everglades City & Points Nearby by Maureen Sullivan-Hartung



The Story of the Chokoloskee Bay Country by Charlton Tebeau.



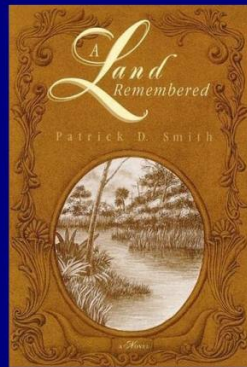
Marya Repko



Maria Stone

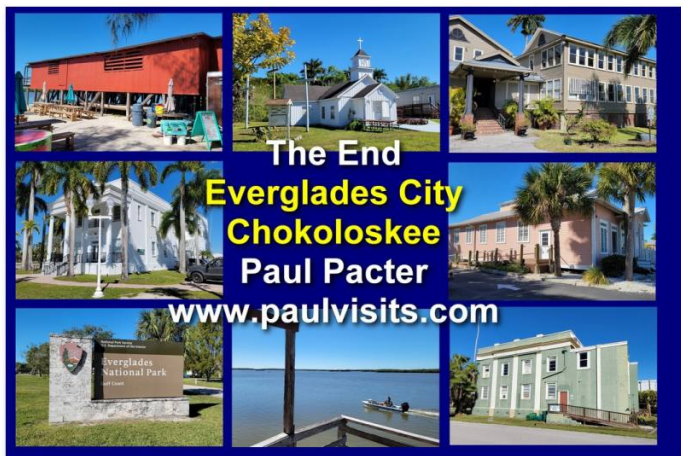
A Land Remembered - Patrick Smith Outstanding!

"The story of three generations of the MacIveys, a Florida family who battle the hardships of the frontier to rise from a dirt-poor Cracker life to the wealth and standing of real estate tycoons."



Paul Presentations - June and July 2024

Baker Senior Center	
Rome Part 2	Monday June 3, 3-4:00pm
Albania	Monday, July 1, 3-4:00pm
Headquarters Library - Orange Blossom Drive	
Everglades City and Chokoloskee: The Pioneers of Collier County	Thursday, June 6, 2-3:30pm
Easy Nature Hikes in or Near Naples	Thursday, June 20, 2-3:30pm
Harry Potter Studios and Trivia Quiz	Thursday, July 11, 2-3:30pm
Naples Regional Library - 650 Central Ave	
An Adventure in Rural Sardinia (Italy)	Weds, June 5, 2-3:30pm



The End
Everglades City
Chokoloskee
Paul Pacter
www.paulvisits.com