



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

AND

FORT JEFFERSON NATIONAL MONUMENT

P.O. BOX 279

HOMESTEAD, FLORIDA 33030

John Ogden

IN REPLY REFER TO:

N2623

July 13, 1988

Memorandum

To: All Staff Members, EVER

From: John C. Ogden, SFRC

Subject: John T. Stewart's 1907 Everglades "diary"

Attached is a complete copy of a very readable report prepared by John T. Stewart, Drainage Engineer, U.S. Department of Agriculture, based upon his survey and observations in the Everglades region between 20 January and 6 April 1907. This report is perhaps the best I've seen for presenting a remarkably detailed description of the Everglades and adjacent country, prior to the time of any significant drainage. Mr. Stewart reported on such a broad range of topics, including vegetation, water depths and flow directions, soil types, agricultural practices, wildlife and topography, that his full "diary" leaves one with as good a composite image of the old Everglades as will be found in a single primary document. In addition to his own observations, Stewart included interviews with about 15 residents of south Florida who knew something of the interior region, as well as portions from earlier Everglades survey reports (1883, 1887).

A brief bit of history will help put Stewart's report in perspective. My source for this background information is the book, "Lake Okeechobee," 1948, by A.J. and K.A. Hanna. Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, elected governor of Florida in 1904, was somewhat of a populist who vigorously opposed the here-to-fore uncontained power of the railroad corporations in Florida. One of Broward's highest priorities was to develop a state drainage policy for the Everglades region, and to begin immediate implementation of that policy, as a way of cutting off the railroad's interests in controlling drainage through their own subsidiaries. Broward charged forward so rapidly and naively in his determination to have the state control the drainage process, that heated opposition developed (not just from the railroads) over the ways and means to accomplish the task. Although the Everglades was state-owned land, the U.S. Department of Agriculture saw a way of becoming a catalyst for drainage, by offering technical assistance to Broward at a time when he desperately needed reinforcements in his political battles to push the drainage program. Thus the survey team, lead by Stewart, came to Florida early in 1907 in an attempt to collect the additional information needed for selecting the canal routes, and for determining the priority lands for drainage. Stewart visited the regions both around Ft. Myers and Miami-Ft. Lauderdale, and lead the team that ran a survey line across the Everglades just north of the present Alligator Alley alignment. Stewart's instructions included the advise that he "Keep a very full diary in which you enter

everything relative to the appearance and production of the country that you are going through. State what kind of fish you see and their abundance, what kind of grass, what kind of fowls and trees, and your experience in carrying out the work."

John Stewart's attempts to follow these instructions are in the pages that follow.

Attachment

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.