

## Highlights of Trail History

By Bill Clarke, Jr.

The Tamiami Trail--that trail of dreams that has been written and talked about so much--will soon be ready for travel from end to end. It is a masterpiece in engineering, and a monument to the courage and persistence of man, therefore it will be an inexhaustible subject for discussion and written articles in years to come. Many, many men have given their aid in its construction; and a roll call of all those persons who have helped make it a reality would cover many pages.

Soon after the creation of Collier County in 1923, A. R. Richardson was appointed as the County's first engineer. A few months later he returned to his beloved Everglades Drainage District, and succeeded by A. W. Frederick. Mr. Frederick, who made the original and only survey between Carnestown and Dade county line since the creation of Collier County was organizing his party for the survey about the time the Marion dredge was heading from Port DuPont to Carnestown, under the efficient supervision of Otto Neal. At this time, also, the first Bay City dredge was being transported to Carnestown for assemblage.

One of the most important places in the Frederick's expedition was the position of an ox driver and cook combined. Finally, Dave Morrison was recruited for the place, and everyone knows that Dave is the champion ox driver of southern Florida. Dave also knows a great deal about Dutch oven and coffee pot machinery.

When the outfit now organized and completed, the party started from Carnestown to survey the route, over which the present Trail is being built to the Dade County line. In this article, detail and technical matter will be left out, and only the highlights not booked in the daily routine will be touched upon.

### Monotony Is Broken

At Skillet Camp Cypress, which is twenty-one miles east of Carnestown, the first episode started one evening just before dark. Dave had finished feeding his pet oxen, and was mixing enough dough to make his biscuit to feed a hungry crew, which was taking honors away from the 'gators when it came to mud crawling. The crew had just returned to camp from the line. Peter, seeing Dav's biscuit dough all mixed, playfully picked up a ball of it and threw it at Dave. It landed on Dave's face, and Dave, although he later claimed that he was not hungry, threw a hatchet at Peter. Nathan, however, saved the day by

### Highlights of Trail History (Cont.)

pulling Peter out of the way just in time. It was then that Mr. Frederick returned to camp, and things commenced to quiet down.

#### Bandits Visit Camp

Several nights later the entire camp was aroused by Dave's continuous cry: "Who's that?" There would be a pause, then: "What do you want here?" Then Dave came running from the cook tent, where he slept alone, over to the main bunk tent, greatly agitated for a man with his experience in the woods.

There was a chorus of: "What's the matter, Dave?" Dave explained that there were three strange men standing by a tree near his tent. They had two rifles and a shot gun, and were not Indians. However, a thorough search around the camp revealed not one, and Dave was given credit for having had a night mare. The next morning, however Dave showed us the tracks of the men, so it was apparent that his foreboding was due to no such hallucination.

This was certainly very strange, as the camp was surrounded by a dense swamp, and there were no white inhabitants for many miles around. The only manner in which it could be explained was that it happened about the same time the Ashley gang of the East Coast Bank bandits had committed one of their main crimes, and, after being chased by a posse were hiding somewhere in the swamps, coming to the camp to give it the once over. After this, Dave would not stay at camp while the others were out on the line.

#### Snake Is Killed

Over near the Dade County line one time Frederick, Harrington, and I were wading across a cypress slough which was about waist deep on them, as they were tall men. The water came much higher on me, for I have never been tall. We were traveling in Indian style some distance apart. About the time I reached the center of the slough a friendly cotton mouth moccasin rolled off a log, and commenced to swim in the opposite direction. Harrington pulled out his automatic and took a crack at the snake, missing it by some distance. Mr. Frederick followed suit, also missing, and about this time the snake became flustered and

Highlights of Trail History (Cont.)

With both men shooting automatics and missing the snake from several inches to yards, it was a question of either to move and get shot or stand still and get bitten. As a last resort, I climbed a cypress. Finally, the snake "gave up the ghost." Both Frederick and Hamilton claimed to have killed it; but more than likely it died from exhaustion trying to keep up with me. I could tell more, but this will suffice.