

J. M. BARFIELD GIVES CREDIT TO BARRON G. COLLIER  
FOR PROGRESS

Barfield Has Served Since 1923

Mr. Barfield was appointed County Commissioner when the new county was created in 1923, and has been re-elected at every election. He came to Caxambas in November of 1892 where as a farmer and merchant he has watched the slow process of evolution from a lawless, remote country into the wide awake, progressive count of Collier. Therefore his tribute to Mr. Collier comes from a tangible knowledge of conditions that leads weight to this statment.

Born at Sunnyside, Georgia in 1866, Mr. Barfield grew up on a farm. For two years after he reached his majority, he was foreman for Gray and Dorsey on their Georgia plantations. Leaving Georgia in the early part of 1891, he went to Alabama and farmed for two years. There, he lost his health and wrote to his brother, B. H. Barfield, who had a year before left Lake Butler and come to Caxambas to escape the chills and fever with which he had become afflicted. The reply from his brother urged him to come at once.

Came to Marco For Health

Coming by rail to Arcadia, Mr. Barfield took the narrow guage to Punta Gorda, where he boarded ship for Fort Myers. At that time Captain Nick Armada was carrying the mail on a sail boat from Fort Myers to Marco via Punta Rassa and Naples. Mr. Barfield booked passage with Captain Armada and they set sail, making a record trip in thirty six hours that can now be made with ease in two.

Mr. Barfield's brother met him at Marco and they rowed down to Eubanks landing and walked across to Roberts Bay, where they took another skiff to the Audlow place and then footed it across the sand hills to Caxambas, taking the greater part of a day to traverse, by the present highway from Marco to Caxambas a distance of five miles that can now be easily made in ten minutes.

B. H. Barfield was associated with Mack I. Smith, at the time, growing vegetables, and Mr. Barfield, having completely forgotten his ill health by the time he reached Caxambas went to work for Barfield and Smith. About a year later, he bought out Smith's interest and some few years subsequent took over his brother's properties, growing vegetable and pineapples.

## J. M. Barfield Gives Credit (Cont.)

### Has Many Experiences

As the farm began to grow, it was necessary to secure another mule, and Mr. Barfield set out in search of such an animal, which he finally located at Bartow, about one hundred and sixty miles--or nearly a week over the fastest lines of transportation--from Caxambas.

Placing a small pack of supplies behind his saddle, Mr. Barfield climbed astride the mule and started back. After a long journey across the country, he reached the Caloosahatchee river opposite Fort Myers, and was transported across on ferry. Coming on down, Mr. Barfield and the mule took to the water at Gordon's Pass just south of Naples and got their first sea legs. Mr. Barfield could not swim but the mule could. "He was a high swimmer," smiled Mr. Barfield in telling of the incident; "I tucked my legs close under me and hardly got my feet wet."

After safely steering the good ship "Pete" into port on the opposite side, the pathless wilderness of mangrove and cypress swamps was negotiated for another sixteen miles. Mr. Barfield would not admit that he had any fear for his personal safety, but if corroborating stories of the number of panther and bear and alligators that then infested this wild region are to be believed, one must take a second look at Mr. Barfield's some six feet four inches of muscle and brawn to appreciatively pit his physical strength against the dangers he was to encounter.

### He Braves The Tide

When he finally reached Little Marco Pass the tide was going out so swiftly that one more accustomed to the fickleness of the waters would hardly have attempted its passage. But being an inland navigator where rapidly ebbing tides meant very little to his young life, and stopping for a moment on the water's edge while he listened to the weird calls of a panther to its mate, he possibly felt that, regardless of his inability to paddle his own canoe in the event that he were inadvertently separated from the first "kicker" that ever propelled a craft over the dangerous channel, he would be safer on the shores of the lonely island--if it could be reached--than to remain in the darkness, that was drawing close and fast with the setting of the sun, on the mainland, infested by ferocious beasts that seemed to be assembling in untold numbers. His mule, too,

### J. M. Barfield Gives Credit (Cont.)

appeared to feel the presence of hostile company, and did not hesitate in taking to sea.

Somehow the passage was safely made, and without mishap during the night, the early morning sun peeped over the mangroves from the east, and discovered man and mule slowly picking their way across the island. Arriving at Big Marco Pass, the "kicker" was again put into motion and the last voyage successfully concluded. Landing at Marco, the journey was finally completed overland to Caxambas.

### Burnham Comes to Island

In 1904 the E. S. Burnham Packing Company became interested in clams at Caxambas, and Mr. Barfield offered them a five acre tract along the water front for a factory site if they would build there and give their business to the general merchandise store that had just opened. They accepted employing quite a number of men in digging and canning the clams, all work being then done by hand.

The Ludlow Packing Company, engaged in the growing and shipping of Pineapples was also doing quite a business in this tropical fruit and with the combined acreage of the vicinity, including Mr. Barfield's hill side pinery, a total of some thirty cars were shipped during the year. This industry called for additional labor, all of which must necessarily be fed and clothed from the Barfield store and the merchandise.

With the business for vegetables, pineapples, and clams, sailing vessels--for steam or motor propelled boats were little known among the islands at that time--began to visit the harbor and the port began to rise in importance.

### Little Law Existed

Far distant from the county seat--as calculated in hours--little attention was paid to law and order by the county officials. The vicinity and bordering islands, too, were inhabited by a number of the descendants of the old Spanish Buccaneer regeme and army deserters during the Civil War, which coupled the territory with romance and adventure. Mr. Barfield did not escape his experience, and upon one occasion in particular successfully defended a youth, who had accidentally shot another in a drunken row, from being lynched by the wounded man's enraged comrades. Bad whiskey and much talk, while the man who had been shot hovered

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between life and death, combined to incense the mob, and in the darkness of the night an angry gathering assembled at Barfield's door, where the youth was held a prisoner. At the demand for delivery of the prisoner for the specific purpose of being swung to the nearest tree, Mr. Barfield projected his two hundred odd pounds into the doorway and successfully argued the matter. When the wounded man recovered, he proffered no charges and the matter was adjusted without the costs of the court added.

In 1906 Mr. Barfield married Miss Tommie Stephens, who had come to the island some four years previous with her parents, and had, been superintending the dry goods and notions of the store. Taking his bride to his home on the hill overlooking a picturesque body of water that had come to be known as Barfield Bay, their home soon grew into a hotel, which was successfully operated in connection with the store until the coming of Mr. Collier.

### Conditions Have Changed

"Today, continued Mr. Barfield in discussing the advantages of today over the past, "we are as well provided for as if we were in the heart of the commercial life of the country. Our tables are supplied with the fruits and vegetables and meats of the world's best markets. We are within only a few hours run of Fort Myers and Tampa, and by this time next year, within two hours of Miami. We have a railroad; we have steam and motor ships; we have a regular bus line connecting with the main State lines; we have our county officials within a few minutes run from any part of the county; we have real roads and highways; we have the Tamiami Trail; we have a great canal waterway, railroad, and highway far advanced in the process of construction from Immokalee through the magnificent cypress country to Everglades, furnishing transportation and drainage; we have Mr. Collier, Mr. Collier made it all possible."

While Mr. Barfield unhesitatingly places the credit where it belongs, we believe that if Mr. Collier were permitted a voice in the matter he would tell us that some of his success was due to the staunch loyalty and unselfishness of such grand old characters as Uncle Jim Barfield, who, through his generous selfsacrificing spirit has builded around his uncrowned deeds of pioneer valor an invisible kingdom that would follow his lead if it were to the depths of the great blue itself.