

ms 17.

The Ford International Weekly

# THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT

Entered as Second-Class Matter at the Post Office at Dearborn, Michigan, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois.

By the Year \$1.50

Published Weekly

Dearborn, Michigan, February 2, 1924

100th YEAR No. 51

Single Copy Ten Cents

## Paying the College Player No Crowd Without a Team and—No Team Without Cash

Dickering for Delegates Is Under Way



Making a Home in the White House



Blazing Tamiami Trail Across Florida

CHRONICLER OF THE NEGLECTED TRUTH



# Blazing the Tamiami Trail Across Florida

## How an Adventurous Motorcade Plunged Through a No-man's Land

By A. H. ANDREWS

This is the first part of a two-part story of the adventures of a motorcade that pioneered its way through the Everglades to blaze the Tamiami Trail. The second part will appear in *The Dearborn Independent* next week.

IN THE southern end of the Florida peninsula—first to be discovered and among the last of the states to be developed—is an area approximately one hundred miles in length and fifty to one hundred miles in width, extending south to Cape Sable, which has been appropriately designated as "the last remaining frontier."

Wild as in the days when the aborigines roamed the entire American continent; bordered on the west by a bewildering maze known as the Ten Thousand Islands which harbor wild bird rookeries and were once the rendezvous of pirates; penetrated on the north and east by the almost impassable muck lands of the Everglades; known only to the Indians and a few native hunters, and never completely traversed except by several adventurous explorers who made the journey afoot; little wonder is it that wild and exaggerated stories have found their way into print from time to time concerning this fertile and much misrepresented section.

Law and order are practically unknown in this "no man's land" which until very recently was some eighty to ninety miles remote from the nearest county seat. Here roam the only American Indians that have never been conquered and subdued by Uncle Sam, being the remnants of the Seminoles who fled to the fastnesses of the Everglades during the Seminole War. They are peaceful and harmless, however, except when under the baneful influence of "wycome" (whisky). The innumerable islands of the western coast with their many ramifying waterways afford an excellent retreat for moonshiners and bootleggers who industriously ply their calling, un molested, according to reports from the correspondent to Lee County papers from the little island settlement of Chokoloskee. Excerpts from his recent correspondence are given herewith:

"We expect a lot of moonshine among us soon. One of the teams went up the river last Monday with a load of barrels and stimp, so we think prospects are fairly good."

"We have lots of booze, moonshine and red liquor. Some of the team drunk every day. Yesterday they had a racket and one of our best moonshiners and bootleggers got cut up some and blood flowed very freely, and the ones that were able took him up to Everglade to get his hide patched up so it would not leak so bad."

"We are getting along fine; have plenty of booze and everything. We don't want any sheriffs nor anything. If we need anything it is more booze and more of the devil's disciples to drink it, and bigger knives and more pistols and guns."

So much for the "wild and woolly" nature of the country and the scattering inhabitants along its borders. Now let us call attention to the Tamiami Trail—what it is, the route traversed and what it will mean for the development of extreme South Florida from Tampa on the West Coast, through Bradentown, Sarasota, Punta Gorda, Fort Myers, Estero, Bonita Springs and Naples, to Miami on the eastern shore.

In 1915 Captain J. F. Jordon, of Miami, conceived the idea of a loop highway across the lower end of the state, connecting Miami with Fort Myers, and thence along the West Coast to Tampa. For some years northern tourists had been motoring to Miami each winter, only to find themselves at the "dead end" of the highway, with no outlet other than the back track over which they came. A similar condition prevailed at lower West Coast points. He reasoned rightly that the connecting up of these two dead ends would not only create a continuous stream of traffic, but would develop and make habitable the intervening lands.

Several preliminary surveys convinced him that the only feasible route lay well to the south of the Everglades and directly westward from Miami, there being less depth of muck and the rock there lying near the surface where it would be easily available for paving purposes. The commissioners of Dade County became interested and a bonding issue was carried for the building of a highway westward across the lower Everglades to the Lee County line. A reciprocal arrangement was effected with Lee County (then having a road graded and partly surfaced south from Fort Myers to Marco) whereby that county was to build a road from a point four miles north of Marco (Marco Junction) running in an easterly direction to connect with the Dade County road at the county line. Because of ultimately connecting Tampa and Miami this road was christened the Tamiami Trail.

Shortly after operations began the United States entered the World War. Work proceeded in Dade County under a great hand-



Trail Blazers at "Seminole City" on Deep Lake Railway, Lee County.



Blazing the trail into trackless country where no one or wagon ever crossed before.

cap, owing to labor shortage, and in Lee County construction work was suspended altogether, owing to failure of contractor and subcontractor to live up to their agreements, which forced the Lee County commissioners to take over the task.

Then came a proposition from the Chevelier Corporation, owning the two northern tiers of townships in Monroe County, directly south of Lee. This proposition was to the effect that if the Lee County commissioners would divert the Tamiami Trail from its original routing through Southern Lee, running it southeasterly to a point on the Monroe County line, the Chevelier Corporation would meet them there, building the Trail, at their own expense, through their lands in Northern Monroe County, and running due east to connect with the road being built from Miami. As this would relieve Lee County from building more than twenty miles of road, and as finances were already insufficient, the Lee County commissioners gladly accepted, which was acceded to by Dade County. (See accompanying map for original and subsequent routing of the Trail.)

Complications later arose when a wealthy New York advertising man purchased a tremendous area in Southern Lee County—said to be approximately one million acres—and agreed to take over the building of Lee County's portion of the Trail, doing the construction work at actual cost. Naturally enough, he desired to build the Trail along the line of the original survey through his lands in Southern Lee County, but the Dade County commissioners would not accede, as they already had changed from the original plan and were under contract with the Chevelier Corporation.

From all this there originated the Trail Blazing Motorcade which set out from Fort Myers on a Wednesday determined, if it were possible, to reach Miami over the approximate route of the Tamiami Trail; to explore the intervening country, note the obstacles to be encountered, log the distance across and publish the information gleaned on the trip.

There were ten cars that started with the motorcade—six light-weight machines—eight being of a well-known popular make—and one heavy touring car, a party of twenty-six men from fifteen to sixty-five years

and including two Seminole Indian guides who were picked up at the little settlement of Everglade, Little Billie (Cornspatchow) and Abraham Lincoln (Assumhachee). Comparatively few of the party were insured to physical labor.

After picking up four of the party at Estero, which included the writer, a stop was made at Bonita Springs, some twenty-three miles south of Fort Myers. About two miles south of Henderson Creek we arrived at Marco Junction where the main Trail departs from the Marco road, taking a southeasterly direction. Up to this point the country traversed had been sandy, pine flatwoods, which here gave way to open sand flats which overflow with salt water during exceptionally high tides, and for some distance the unsoftened grade proved very heavy to negotiate, being what is termed by the natives "ball bearing sand." The pine timber is again picked up several miles before reaching Royal Palm Hammock, at which point we stopped for dinner, 55.5 miles southeast of Fort Myers.

The Royal Palm is considered the most stately of all palms, having a massive, smooth, granite-colored trunk, resembling concrete in appearance, which is many specimens rises to a height of one hundred feet or more, overtopping the surrounding forest growth and surmounted by a wide-spread head of plummy green foliage, resembling in shape a gigantic feather duster. It is strictly tropical, a native of Cuba, but nature in some freakish mood transplanted some of these from their native habitat and some years ago there were discovered two big wild "hammocks" or native jungles of Royal Palm in Southern Lee County.

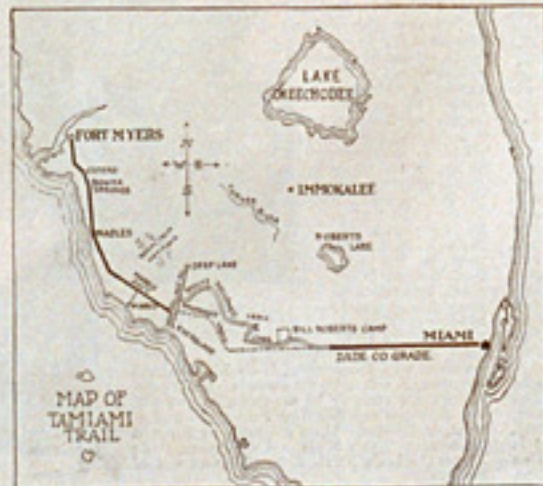
The best known of these palm hammocks is divided into two sections, it being between the two that the Trail is routed. An effort is being made to incorporate both hammocks into a national park and game preserve, and it is none too soon, for already some of these great monarchs of the tropical jungle have fallen before the axe of a vandal.

Leaving Royal Palm Hammock, the Trail traverses many miles of open marsh country covered with sawgrass, reeds and lily pads in which are seen aquatic birds. The road grade for long distances is so overgrown with brush and switch grass as frequently to obscure the car ahead from those immediately following. This heavy undergrowth gradually gave way as the marl prairie was reached, affording a fairly unobstructed view of the road for some distance ahead. We reached the end of the Lee County grade late Wednesday, and camp was made for the night.

After supper the hours were whiled away with singing and story-telling around the camp fire. We had frequently heard of "the jumping off place," but now we came to a realization of its meaning. For here was the trail's end, as far as construction work had progressed, and ahead lay nearly four miles of salt marshland—a marl prairie of about the consistency of yellow clay, and fully as boggy when wet. About a mile ahead lay the old walking dredge, attempt having been made to move it to a new location, but it had been hopelessly bogged and abandoned. Certainly anything but a promising route for a motorcade to negotiate!

Let us state here that prior to the departure of the motorcade from Fort Myers many predictions had been made by knowing ones to the effect that we would never get through to Miami, but one old resident, Captain G. W. Storter, of Everglade, who probably knows that country as well as any living white man, ventured the opinion that if we could cross this tidal marsh of approximately four miles intervening between the end of the grade and the Deep Lake Railway we would in all probability be able to go through to Miami, as he considered this the crucial test of the entire trip.

In anticipation of this difficulty three scouts had been sent out two weeks previously to investigate conditions. They found the ground at that time fairly firm and so reported. In the meantime, however, there had been several big tides over the marsh that had left it in a decidedly sticky condition. It seemed the best policy, while the



MAP OF TAMIAMI TRAIL.



Our two Indian "Companions"

nine cars were gone out of control several plain of action route, if possible into the more organized to others, including Everglade.

The tramp grass mill drive were drenched town, a lone line of the Railway, this owned project that connects the big grape the northward.

No southing, there was Everglade, Everglades by water stream.

Everglade sawmill, stores houses for the—quite different to the fact mentioned here. It is mostly all Everglade is flat and will give the nearest come one of.

Our little waiting car house. What activity was cars had already made a mad site route by course that, possible before, that that kept to the wheels as.

Late after at wide into the end of the visions were ground was the night was fore sundown lief from E was bogged hold of it so was complete fern ground, day under the two miles di.

The three for their can of gas and of our party companions, ran out of g distance, re balance of t fire and sleep damp ground.

After a was resumed Lake Railway bers being in Little Billie colin (Assum the preceding very soft, at best route, w lastly bogged have Little sick the best We arrived at a point de.

Some t bridge the e and we were beyond, this





Our two Indian guides, Little Billie—Indian name, "Corasatchee" and Abe Lincoln—Indian name, "Assumbachee."

nine cars were still on terra firma (one had gone out of commission and had been abandoned several miles back) to figure out a plan of action and decide upon a feasible route, if possible, before plunging the cars into the mire ahead. A scouting party was organized to cruise a route, while three others, including the writer, essayed the hike to Everglade for further information.

The tramp was tedious, and with the grass still dripping from the heavy dew, we were drenched when we reached "Carnestown," a lone warehouse where the surveyed line of the Trail crosses the Deep Lake Railway, this railway being a privately owned project some thirteen miles long that connects the town of Everglade with the big grapefruit grove at Deep Lake to the northwest.

No southbound suburban trains appearing, there was no alternative to walking to Everglade, which, by the way, is not in the Everglades but is a little town on a side-water stream near the coast in Southern Lee County. Everglade was busy indeed, with dredges, boat ways, sawmill, strap mill, machine shop, mess hall and bunk houses for the accommodation of several hundred men—quite different from its state on a previous visit—due to the fact that the New York millionaire previously mentioned had a few months before purchased practically all Everglade, the railroad, grove and approximately a million acres in Southern Lee County which he is developing into a vast industrial empire. The land is flat and with slight elevation above sea level, but once given the necessary drainage, will, it is believed, become one of the most fertile spots in all Florida.

Our little scouting party several hours later boarded a waiting car which returned us to Carnestown warehouse. While tramping back across the marsh some activity was noted, and soon it was learned that several cars had already left while others were preparing also to make a mad plunge into what they knew not. No definite route had been selected, each driver choosing the course that looked best to him and going as far as possible before bogging down. It was noted, however, that those who went the farthest were the ones that kept to the tall grass, which when bodded under the wheels served to keep them from miring so badly.

Late afternoon found us with seven cars strung out at wide intervals through the marsh and two still on the end of the grade. Cooking implements and provisions were scattered among the various cars; the ground was too damp to sleep on and the outlook for the night was anything but encouraging. Shortly before sundown a tractor was espied coming to our relief from Everglade. It mattered not whether a car was bogged to the chassis, for when the tractor took hold of it something had to move. When the road-up was completed seven cars stood side by side on fairly firm ground, with very good prospects for getting next day under their own power to Deep Lake Railway, about two miles distant.

The three men with the tractor left us that night for their camp, some five miles distant, for a fresh supply of gas and oil, and where good beds awaited them. One of our party decided to follow them in his car with two companions, but we learned the following day that they ran out of gas and were compelled to walk fully half the distance, reaching the logging camp about 1 a. m. The balance of the party made up bunks around the camp fire and slept as best they could on the damp ground.

After a hasty breakfast our journey was resumed in the direction of the Deep Lake Railway two miles distant, our numbers being increased by two Indian guides, Little Billie (Corasatchee) and Abe Lincoln (Assumbachee), who had joined in the preceding night. The ground was still very soft, and the pilots not knowing the best route, several cars soon became hopelessly bogged. It was finally decided to have Little Billie ride in the lead car and pick the best going, which proved effective. We arrived at the railroad toward noon at a point designated as "Seminole City."

Some ties were consigned to bridge the cars over the railroad ditches and we were soon at Lemon Camp just beyond, this being a little wooded "island"

in the prairie with a thatched shack where the Indians sometimes camp, and where fairly good water is obtainable.

Gas, oil and provisions had been telephoned for the preceding night and soon arrived from Everglade in abundant quantity, this being the last supply station on the way to Miami. In the meantime one of the two remaining cars had arrived from the rear with the information that the big touring car, weighing 3,200 pounds, had become hopelessly mired and the tractor had also bogged in trying to extricate it. Four, including the writer, volunteered to

A short distance ahead our first real barrier encountered was Turner River Cypress. A dim ox trail winds through it for 3.8 miles, but much fallen timber had to be removed and stumps cut down so that the low axles of the cars would pass over them. Several boggy spots were encountered.

We made camp that night at a little pine island at the edge of the cypress. There being so many men to cook for, the party, for convenience, had been divided into three mess squads. The man in charge of our squad being from Boston, canned beans constituted the chief article of diet—until the grub gave out altogether some days later.

There was one Florida "cracker" boy in our party—a good scout and woodsman who often proved a source of amusement. If there is one thing that the average native likes to do better than another when out in the woods it is to cultivate his vocal powers in yelling, yodelling and imitating all sorts of real and imaginary birds and beasts, so each night Clark was accustomed to stroll out into the forest for a tuning-up spell. On the night in question he gave a very realistic imitation of a wild cat, which caused one of our number, fresh from the haunts of the bulls and bears of New York and having his first experience in the Florida wilds, timidly to inquire: "Say, do you think that was really a wild cat?"

Early Sunday the trip was resumed and under more trying circumstances, as three cars were now out of commission, which necessitated the crowding of twenty-five men, with bedding, provisions and extra gas, into the seven remaining cars, and obviously there were places where the pulling was heavy and many had to get out and walk for a time. Even drinking water had to be carried for miles, occasionally across the dry mud prairies intervening between cypress swamps.

The Seminole Indian is a very reticent individual who tends strictly to his own business and never butts in upon the affairs of others. If you have a speaking acquaintance with him and honestly wish to know his opinion upon a given matter he will tell you the best that he knows, but he never argues or insists. If you ask a question and suggest a possible answer, he will agree with you at once. But let another person suggest a contrary solution to the same question and he will agree with him just as readily, being all things to all men.

For this reason it was found best to leave all consultation with the Indian guides to a member who understands much of their language and whom they trust implicitly. Both Seminole guides were highly intelligent specimens of their race and Little Billie, the elder of the two, has a fair common-school education, being able to read and write.

For some miles Sunday our route lay through rocky country, extending to and beyond the head of Turner River. Although there is a well-defined ox trail through Rockwell Cypress Strand, the road had to be cut through more than half the distance with palm leaves, sticks and branches. This was the prettiest cypress of all, containing a rank and varied growth of tropical jungle vegetation and some sizeable timber, also a small lake in the center of the strand. By the time the last car was hauled through to the pine timber all hands were nearly famished and dinner was served.

It was here that Abe warned us to fill our water jugs, as we would find no more drinking water for many miles. The journey was then resumed through long stretches of dry and cracked mud prairie with the hot sun beating down unmercifully upon us. Skillet Camp, the farthest outpost of lower West Coast hunters, was reached about mid-afternoon. We had been told that near by in a clump of palmettos we would find a cache of canned goods and other provisions that had been left by a recent hunting party, but investigation revealed nothing more than empty water jugs, cans and cooking utensils.

A survey stake of the Tamiami Trail was noted a short distance farther on, but no marks could be discerned upon it. Then followed several miles of dry prairie, running so dry in fact that the dust rose in clouds behind the moving caravan. At a low spot in the prairie the practiced eye of one of our woodsmen detected possibilities for a well, and with a few minutes of vigorous work with a shovel we soon had plenty of drinking water of fair quality. More prairie running and we finally halted about sundown at a little pine island. It was here that the first deer was sighted which bounded off like a flash across the prairie, and as provisions were beginning to run low Little Billie decided to take his gun and go on a foraging expedition. This was the last we saw of him. We learned later that he became lost, not knowing this country, and found his way into an Indian camp some miles distant.

An exceptionally early start was made Monday morning, but our ox trail had faded out. From here on we must blaze a trail through absolutely virgin territory where not even an ox team had penetrated. Our general course had been southeasterly, but now ahead of us a short distance appeared a formidable looking cypress barrier. We had not gone far when a halt was called while Abe skinned the cypress timber for several miles to the southwest looking for the most likely crossing point where the big timber could be avoided as much as possible.

Abe had been through the cypress afoot but it was a different thing to lead a motorcade, where almost every foot of the way must be hewn with axes. At length, after an hour's wait, came the signal to proceed. We were soon at the designated spot and chopping a roadway into the trackless depths of Chatham Bend Cypress, camping for the night in the midst of this cypress, 98.1 miles from Fort Myers.



Monarchs of the tropical jungle. Hundreds of these stately Royal Palms are found growing wild in Royal Palm Hammock, bordering the Tamiami Trail in Lee County.

return to the scene. By dint of much prying and employment of many planks the car was partially raised, but darkness overtook us before further progress could be made.

Returning to camp, we found a railway car awaiting to carry us to Everglade, where the party had preceded us, and we arrived at the hotel, tired, hungry and dirty, and ready for the only shave, bath and comfortable bed on the entire trip until reaching Miami.

The character of the country that lay ahead of us was uncertain, and while the probabilities were that we had sufficient men to push any individual car through almost any marshy place, nevertheless time was an element to be reckoned with, as we were approaching the rainy season when the lands, now dry, would be inundated, making further progress impossible.

Arriving back at the Lemon Camp, a hurried meeting was called in which the owner of the big touring car was told that the party had already been delayed on his account and could no longer wait for him. He had brought the big car against the protests of the motorcade members, simply to advertise this automobile, for which he was agent, claiming that he would put it through anywhere that a light-weight car would go. He had failed in his claims and had delayed the party which had not come to advertise anybody's car, but to promote the Tamiami Trail. Having arranged for another tractor, with men, to extricate his car from the mud and put it back on the grade for the return trip to Fort Myers, we felt that our obligation to him ended there, so preparations were made to break camp right after dinner.

Several miles on across the prairie we found drier and firmer going, passing stands of pine timber en route, and soon came to Abe's camp where he lives with his mother and two sisters. To one unfamiliar with Seminole Indian life and customs a short description of a typical camp might be of interest. A site is selected somewhat more elevated than the surrounding flatwoods whereon are usually built from two to five or six palm-thatched shacks, closely grouped. There are no walls, while filling almost the entire interior of each is a high platform of rough-hewn planks, and upon these platforms the Seminole lives, eats and sleeps, suspending his mosquito bar from the roof. The hogs and chickens occupy the ground beneath, with fleas "ojus" (plenty) in consequence.



TREKKING ACROSS THE MUD PRAIRIES.