

Traditions

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Collier County Museum.

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Old "Number 2" Returns to Collier County

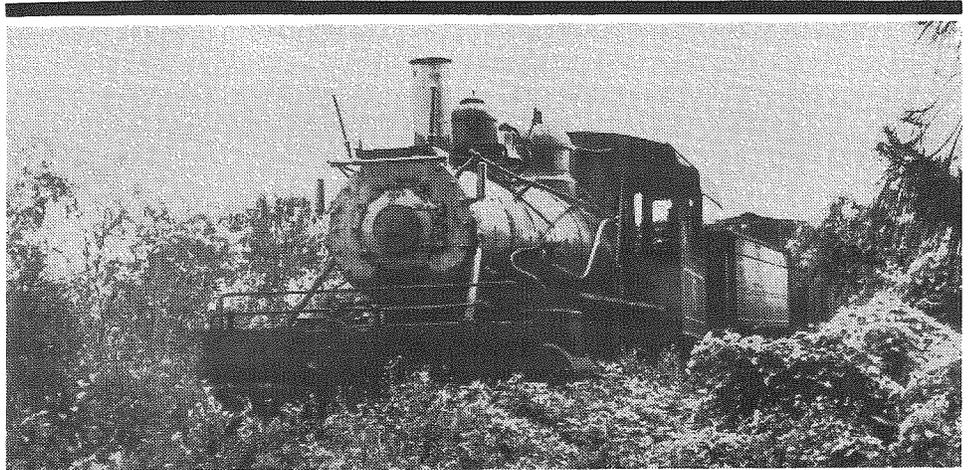
by Lynne Howard Frazer

From 1944 to 1957, the Lee Tidewater Cypress Company operated four steam engines through the watery swamps of the Fakahatchee Strand. The old iron work-horses, antique left-overs from a bygone age, were still well-suited to the demanding logging operations of the swamp. Over thirty years later, one of the old locomotives, Number 2, is back in Collier County, returning an important part of the logging history of the "unknown swamp."

Built by the Baldwin Steam Locomotive Works between 1904 and 1913, old Number 2 was designed as a "prairie-type" engine, with a 2-6-2 wheel arrangement suitable for running either forward or backward. The Baldwin Company, "one of the greatest and most famous locomotive makers in the world," made a considerable number of "prairie" engines, according to Ben Kline, Curator at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania. Prairie engines were first developed in the 1880's and could be custom ordered from the Baldwin Company.

As early as 1913 lumber company surveyors struggled into the Big Cypress Swamp to examine one of the last stands of virgin cypress. By 1943, the Lee Tidewater Cypress Company was ready to begin harvesting the huge trees, and the tough little Baldwin engines were introduced to the grueling work of logging in a swamp.

Before laying any track, a "timber cruiser" surveyed the land and recorded the



"Number 2" in Copeland, photo by Tom Morgan

location of bad trees and gator holes, estimating the cut board feet available in the stand. The cruiser determined the direction of the logging railroad by finding the most profitable area to harvest.

Following the survey of the land, Miccosukee and Seminole Indians hacked their way through the forest and chopped a right of way for the railroad. This back-breaking work involved cutting a sixteen-foot wide strip for the train through the ancient trees and swamp undergrowth. The "drag-line" operators then filled in the underwater railroad bed with muck and marl, sometimes only making five feet of headway during a work day. When the roadbed was considered firm enough, the "steel-gang" laid down the standard gauge rail, using a special track laying machine. It took approximately three months of work just to lay one mile of track. In 1954, Randolph Swain, a log boss, said that, "A swampin' railroad don't let you rest none, not ever. Get it built, you got to start looking for washouts. We've got

section crews working over it all the time, keeping it up the best they can, but that log train ain't easy on it, locomotive and skeleton cars weigh about 350 tons, and add onto that the weight of those logs."

Every workday morning, one of the steam engines left from the logging camp at Copeland to travel along the precarious track to the heart of the swamp. The train moved slowly through the cypress stumps and towering royal palms at a speed of about twelve miles per hour. Once the train stopped, work crews scattered in different directions, some continuing the railroad construction and others preparing the trees for harvesting. Almost half of the labor crew was involved with the train or railroad bed. The other lumbering jobs included girdlers, sawyers, skidders, and crane operators.

After the logs were laboriously pulled out of the swamp, the cypress was loaded onto skeleton cars and sent 400 miles north to the mill at Perry, Florida. The long-lasting cypress, known as the "wood eternal" was processed and shipped all over

the world, and was used in countless ways, including "stadium seats, burial boxes, boats, and vats." During World War II, the United States government was the sole customer of the Lee Tidewater Company. Since all the wood harvested by the company was bought by the government, the company bought California redwood for the workers' cottages.

By 1957, about the same time the Baldwin Company ceased production of locomotives, the Lee Tidewater Cypress Company had cut all of the economically harvestable trees from the swamp. Recognizing that the few virgin stands of cypress left in the swamp should be preserved, the company offered to donate a large portion of the Corkscrew Stand, forming the basis of the future Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. The logging equipment was sold and the four locomotives, almost fifty years old, were ignominiously retired onto a rail siding across from the Copeland post office on Highway 29.

According to a 1962 article in the Miami Herald, the last use of the Lee Cypress engines was when one was repainted with the heralds of the Flagler System to appear in the movie "Winds Across the Everglades" with Burl Ives. Was engine Number 2 the star? It is possible and a search is now underway to find a copy of this film, a potentially valuable source of information about the old logging locomotives.

Five years after the end of the logging operation, the rusting locomotives, covered with climbing vines, were sold to the Monadnock, Steam Town, and Northern Corporation. The new owner, F. Nelson Blount, hoped to restore the engines, but died before completing the project. The trains were trucked to New England and were later sold to collectors in Georgia and Illinois. By 1986, the engines were resting on the farm of John Thompson of Illinois.

Mr. Thompson generously donated old Number 2 to the museum, and the engine and coal tender returned to Collier County on March 31, 1987. Work is now underway to restore the train with the help of a \$5,000 grant from the Merrill-Lynch Realty Company. Based on original photographs, the exterior of the locomotive will be restored, but the old firebox will remain forever cold.

Though the number "2" is just a black shadow on peeling paint, and moss is growing in the cracks around the steam dome, the venerable old engine is still an eye-catcher, and a rare remnant of the logging heritage of Collier County. Stop by the museum and watch the restoration of this important new exhibit.

New Acquisitions

An early twentieth-century Edison Disc Phonograph which once belonged to "Barefoot" Williams was recently donated to the museum. Barefoot Williams was a colorful figure in local history, often remembered for selling oysters on Naples' 5th Avenue. Today his memory lives on with "Barefoot Williams Road," which leads from Rt. 41 to Henderson Creek. His large record collection included such titles as "Frog Legs on Crutches," and "Henry Jones, Your Honeymoon is Over."

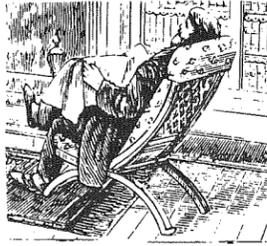
Nationally renowned doll maker Ann McNichols Longo donated her most recent historical doll, Don Pedro Menendez. Menendez is third in a series representing historical figures of southwest Florida. Only ten dolls are made in each limited edition. The faces and hands are entirely handcrafted porcelain. Longo designs and makes each small costume, taking care to represent the figures as accurately as possible.

The Menendez doll will feature prominently in the museum's new exhibit hall as part of a fresh new portrayal of the Spanish Explorer period of the sixteenth-century, when the great military might of Spain met the equally powerful, warlike Calusa Indians of southwest Florida.

Remnants of the little-known Calusa Indian culture were also given to the museum, including such artifacts as shell hammers, shards of pottery, and shell net weights. This large collection will add to our knowledge of the intriguing Indian society which once lived in Collier County.

The Naples Junior Woman's Club made the first major donation of a video camera, video cassette recorder, and television to the future Children's Discovery Room of the museum.

From the Director's Chair



by Ron Jamro

Welcome to the premiere edition of *Traditions*, the new quarterly historical journal of the Collier County Museum. Through this and future issues, we hope to bring our readers periodic updates on museum events and activities, news of additions to our growing collection, and progress reports on the Museum's exciting expansion program.

But more than that, *Traditions* will offer a wide range of interesting and carefully researched articles about the people, places and events that make up our county's colorful past.

I am pleased to report too, that with the launching of *Traditions*, we are just weeks away from completing the first phase of the museum's building program. These achievements were made possible through your generous gifts, by substantial support from the Collier County Board of County Commissioners and by an outstanding Board of Directors of the Friends of the Museum.

Key to our future planning is the continued commitment to excellence, not only in preserving and presenting the Museum's collection, but in our effort to provide a learning resource of the highest caliber. Our educational and outreach programs, ably supervised by Elaine Gates, have grown from a handful of students, to an audience of over 4,000 in one year. In addition, work is underway with the Naples Junior Woman's Club to develop an innovative Children's Discovery Room.

It is also my pleasure to introduce Lynne Howard Frazer, the newest addition to the museum staff. Lynne comes to us from the College of William and Mary and Colonial Williamsburg, with a M.A. in Colonial American history. In addition to editing *Traditions*, Lynne will be responsible for the museum's collection.

In many ways then, this first issue of *Traditions* crowns a year of tremendous growth. We are sincerely grateful for your help and pledge that the achievements you have made possible to this point are but a promise of what we hope to be.

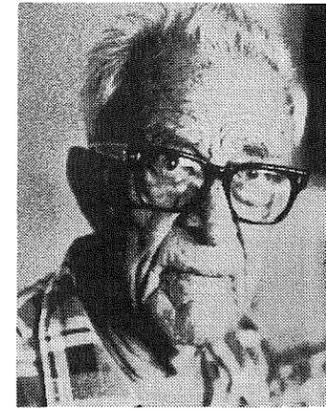
Craighead Lab Moved to Museum

by Lynne Howard Frazer

One of the late Dr. Frank C. Craighead's dreams has finally come true. His laboratory/workshop was moved on March 23, 1987 to the new Collier County Museum property, fulfilling his hope of locating and preserving his office near the museum. The famous entomologist and ecologist's laboratory has had a long journey to its new home.

Dr. Craighead first came to Florida in 1915 as a young entomologist to study the disease-carrying pine bark beetle. He returned to Florida in 1917 to continue his research, and visited Paradise Key, now called Royal Palm Hammock. The exotic, unspoiled beauty of Florida fascinated Dr. Craighead as he traveled through the state. He later wrote, "I still retain vivid impressions of that trip - the tropical verdure of Paradise Key, the cool, watery tunnels under leafy canopies of the custard apple swamps, the overhanging trees along the bends of the sinuous Caloosahatchee River, their branches festooned with myriads of orchids and bromeliads. By the time I was able to move to south Florida thirty years later, much that was not good was sadly obvious."

After writing several books and working as head of the entomology division of the Department of Agriculture, Dr. Craighead retired to southwest Florida and was appalled by the thoughtless destruction of a misunderstood environment. Craighead continued his research of Florida's ecology and served as a consultant to the Everglades National Park. His little "board and batten" style laboratory in Estero Woods, furnished with "concrete blocks and pine shelves," served as a center for his research.



Dr. Frank C. Craighead, Sr.
courtesy of The Naples Daily News

At the age of eighty-seven, Dr. Craighead hoped to donate his valuable collection of documents, objects, and artifacts to Collier County and to "locate his laboratory/workshop on County property in order to have access to the Collier County Museum." The Board of County Commissioners recognized and honored Craighead's work by naming November 16th as "Frank C. Craighead Sr. Day," and in 1978 passed a resolution authorizing the temporary location of the laboratory on county property. The small, simple building was "plucked from the wilderness" and moved to the county government center.

Four years later, Dr. Craighead died at the age of ninety-one and the fate of the little lab rested with the Collier County Government. Five months after his death, the Craighead building was in the way of the justice center expansion and was scheduled for destruction. Fortunately the structure was moved again to another site in the government complex and was used as an office for the county's Fleet Management division.

Five years later, the old workshop was again in danger of destruction, when the Fleet Management office moved to new quarters. Since the Collier County Museum was undergoing expansion on a new and larger site in the government center, the time was right to fulfill Dr. Craighead's dream.

Behind the new museum the little laboratory finally has an appropriate and useful place in Collier County. The building will once again serve as an office and laboratory and will now be a work and research center for the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society. The old workshop will be an important part of the museum's educational program, teaching visitors about the science of archaeology and interpreting Calusa and Aboriginal Indian life through excavated artifacts. Dr. Craighead was intrigued with the aboriginal Indians of Florida and the surviving ancient shell mounds and hoped that "a thorough study of these remaining habitats will eventually be made and something more revealed of these vanished peoples."

We will all benefit from the foresight and dreams of Dr. Craighead.



Join Us as a Museum Volunteer

Although the museum is still under construction, volunteers are needed in many areas. Volunteers work with the staff in various behind-the-scenes projects and are an essential part of the museum's educational programs, interpreting Collier County history for school groups and adults. If you would like to be a part of the museum's future, call 774-8476.

We hope you have enjoyed this first issue of *Traditions*. As a valued Friend of the Museum, a complimentary subscription is automatically included in your membership privileges.

Please remember that the Museum relies heavily on your support to continually expand and improve our educational programs, exhibition areas and research facilities. If you believe our history should be preserved, we urge you to consider joining the Friends of the Museum today.

Yes! Please enroll me as a Friend of the Museum. Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of \$_____.

Benefactor...\$10,000 or more Patron...\$1,000 or more Sponsor...\$500 or more Contributor...\$100 or more Subscriber...\$25.

I do not wish to join at this time, but please send me a year's subscription to *Traditions*, the Museum's quarterly newsletter. My \$8 payment is enclosed.



Please return to: The Collier County Museum
3301 Tamiami Trail East
Naples, Florida 33962



World War II Bombers in Collier County

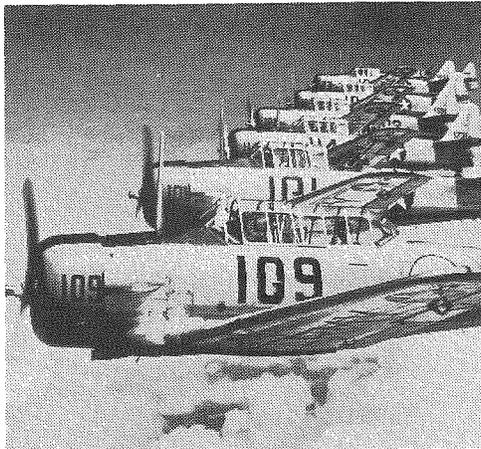
by Elaine Gates

An important research project underway at the museum is aimed at reconstructing the history of the Naples Army Air Field, now Naples Airport, which was built during the Second World War. The Naples Army Air Field was constructed as an auxiliary base to the Buckingham Gunnery Training School in Fort Myers.

At first, pilots from the Naples field towed targets behind their AT-6 trainer planes so gunnery students from Buckingham could practice firing machine gun rounds out of B-24 and B-17 bombers. Later, a large squadron of fighter planes, the famous P-39's and P-40's, was added to the Naples field and the pilots began flying simulated attack missions against the huge bombers from Fort Myers. Inside the bombers, trainee gunners defended their aircraft from mock attack by firing blank ammunition at oncoming fighter planes. Cameras mounted on the guns recorded hits and misses.

In 1944, an armor-plated P-39 was developed for these missions, with gunners firing plastic frangible bullets directly at the target planes. A direct hit set off flashing red lights mounted on the nose and wings of the plane, earning them the nickname "pin ball machines."

The Naples Field took on a far greater significance than just an auxiliary field for Fort Myers. The base became an experimental, advanced training school



for fighter pilots. Here, experienced pilots and flight instructors from around the country perfected their skills in low altitude flying, navigation over unfamiliar territory, night flying, and aerial "dogfight" maneuvers. The missions were dangerous and occasionally resulted in the loss of both pilots and their aircraft.

At the height of the war, several hundred men were assigned to the Naples Army Airfield, with up to ninety missions flown from the base every day. Naples residents, led by Mrs. Stephen Briggs, provided servicemen with a movie house on base and weekly dances at the Naples Depot and the Naples Beach Club.

To date, the museum has acquired copies of the Naples Army Air Field Operations Diary, base newsletters, official photographs of the fields, and several oral history accounts of veterans.

The museum is searching for additional photographs and information on the Naples Air Base and we encourage anyone with information to call us!

A Poker Hand from the Past

by Tom Morgan

See how many aces-correct answers- you can draw from these five wild card questions from Collier County's past. Answers are below.

1. How long did it take for the first 1923 crossing of the 110 mile Tamiami Trail?

2. Who built the first Naples' canal and where was it located?

3. Where is the county seat of Collier County?

4. How much did the first Naples town lots cost?

5. When was Naples' first hotel built?

1. Eleven days, and some cars among the 10 didn't make it even with tractors to push and pull them. The 27 men with 2 Indian guides had provisions flown in by air.

2. The first Naples canal ran from about 9th Avenue South diagonally southeast to the bay. Nobody knows who built it and when, but it was shown on Bernard Roman's Florida map of 1775.

3. East Naples is officially the county seat, though a 1959 election debated between Everglades City and East Naples. Everglades City was the "temporary" seat for 36 years before the county government moved to its present location in 1962.

4. In 1887 Naples town lots brought \$10 each and reportedly were given away as circulation prizes by a newspaper.

5. The 20 room frame hotel was built in April, 1888 on 2nd Ave., now Gordon Dr.

001-113-7410

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