

## IV. HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

This chapter provides background on the peopling of southern Florida that began after Spanish and British colonization efforts in the region ended in the late eighteenth century. During Florida's territorial and early statehood periods, opportunities for settlement brought many newcomers to Florida and laid the groundwork for the emergence and development of the Gladesmen Culture. Hunting and fishing were economic mainstays for the early settlers, with cattle raising, timbering, and tourism contributing to a developing economy. Landscape alteration and water management of the largely wetland environment can be seen to have occurred throughout southern Florida's development, and this is reflected in early drainage efforts to create usable land and more recent management and restoration practices.

### THE TERRITORIAL AND EARLY STATEHOOD PERIODS

Interactions between European and Native American peoples brought significant changes to indigenous culture in Florida, and by the mid-eighteenth century, the makeup of the native population had dramatically changed within southern Florida (Covington 1993; Mahon 1967). Diverse refugee groups from northern Florida and Georgia, as well as remaining Calusa Indians from the southwest coast of Florida, occupied the region that had suffered population loss after European contact; these people are today known as the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Florida (Terry and Dayhoff n.d.). They used many of the same site locations as the prehistoric occupants had, but site distributions show more selective and specialized use, as some sites were used for residential camps, some exclusively for cultivation, and some as hunting camps. Sites with cemeteries or single graves are also known. Seminole populations are thought to have initially favored locations along the eastern rim of the Everglades, but pressure from white settlers pushed them west and concentrated settlement into a smaller number of areas, most importantly "tree islands" that lie at slightly higher elevation within the largely wetland environment (Carr 2002:198-199).

Andrew Endicott led the first American survey party into Spanish Louisiana and Florida, with his expedition landing on the tip of the Florida peninsula in October 1799. Endicott's account of the area is one of the first. Near the end of Spanish rule in Florida, new settlers coming from Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina were interested in adding Florida to the United States. When Andrew Jackson invaded Florida during the First Seminole War in 1818, it became clear that Spain could no longer control the region and it was transferred to the United States in 1821, the same year Jackson was named the first Governor of the Territory of Florida (Adams 1990:4). Secretary of State John Quincy Adams commissioned Andrew Jackson "to receive, possess, and occupy the ceded lands; to govern the Floridas; and to establish territorial government" (Tebeau 1971:117). The relative prosperity of the 1820s was shortened due to hostility between the settlers and the Seminole Indians, culminating in the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). What was to follow were seven years of brutal conflict resulting in hardships to both Floridians and Seminoles.

During the Second Seminole War, the Seminole and Miccosukee were allied with the remainder of the Calusa, Arawaks, and Caribs of the Caloosahatchee region (Fritz 1963:6; Terry and Dayhoff n.d:21). Colonel Persifor Smith's assignment was to deny the Indians access to the coast and the Big Cypress Swamp. His column was responsible for establishing Forts Denaud, Center, and Keais (Knetsch 1996:21). Fort Dulaney was also established during this period at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River (Board and Bartlett 1985: 21). On January 24, 1838, a skirmish occurred just south of Jonathan Dickinson State Park (in Martin County) where Major General Thomas S. Jesup's troops encountered a force of 200-300 Seminoles and attacked them. After a short but fierce encounter known as the Battle of Loxahatchee, the Indians dispersed. After this point, most of the Seminoles moved deep into the Everglades and much of the hostility subsided (Mahon 1967).

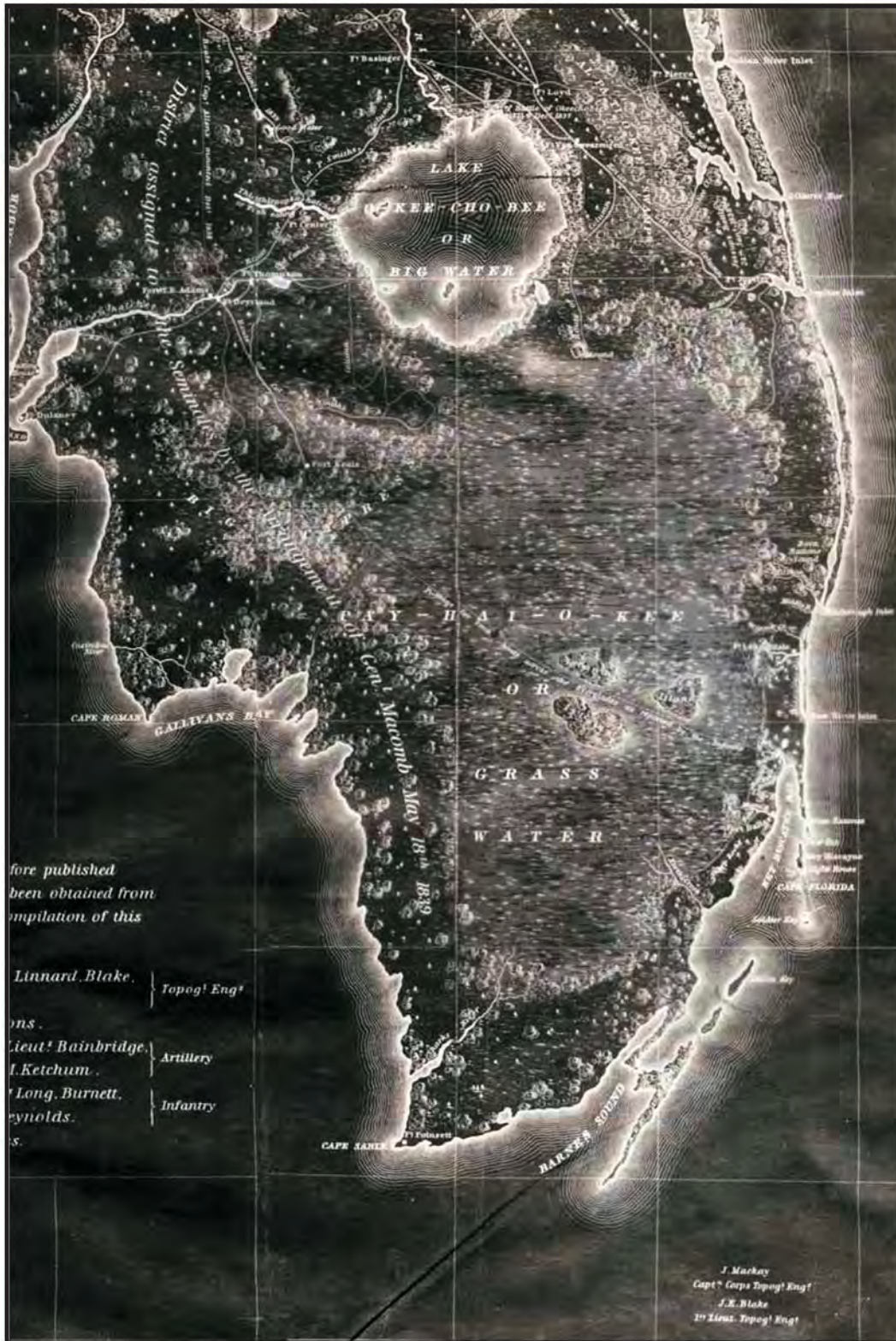
While the Seminoles had utilized the Everglades prior to the Second Seminole War, it was conflict that initiated more intensive occupation in small, dispersed settlements throughout the Everglades, many of which were located on tree islands formally occupied in prehistoric times. In 1842, the commander of all troops in Florida, Colonel William Worth, recommended that the Seminoles be allowed to remain in peace in Florida. The termination of the Second Seminole War followed and the conflicts subsided. The Seminoles were allowed to remain on a reserve in southwestern Florida, but the war had been costly to the Seminoles; out of a population of 5,000 in 1835, only about 600 remained in Florida after the close of the war (Covington 1993:106-109).

Due to the peace that had come to Florida, the federal government initiated a plan to attract settlers. The Armed Occupation Act was signed into law in 1842, and made land available for those who would brave the inhospitable frontier and risk the possibility of Indian attack. The land had to be two miles or more from a fort and not near the coast. Each family head or single man over 18 years of age could receive 160 acres of free land if they improved and defended five acres of land continuously for five years. Some land was given to current residents who sought to increase their existing landholdings, but the majority went to newcomers (Covington 1993:110; Grismer 1950:99). The village of Miami was platted just after the Second Seminole War in 1843 by William English and, in 1844, Miami became the county seat of Dade County.

The end of the Second Seminole War saw the development of a crude system of roads and trails from coast to coast that was used by homesteaders, cattlemen, and ranchers. In addition, military maps of the interior had been created that served useful during subsequent settlement. Figures 11 and 12 are maps depicting southern Florida in 1839 and 1865, respectively. The war also provided southern Florida with a series of forts that could be used as bases and settlements where supplies could be landed and taken to the interior, or where goods from the interior (e.g., hides, alligator skins, game, fish, feathers) could be brought and loaded for sale or export.

In January 1861, following South Carolina and Mississippi, Florida seceded from the Union. The state was asked to supply 5,000 troops to the Confederacy and the loss of heads of households and male labor devastated the Florida economy. Fort Myers, abandoned after the Seminole Wars in 1858, was re-commissioned in 1864 by Union forces under the orders of General D. P. Woodbury. His intentions were to assist the Union Navy in its blockade of the Gulf Coast, conduct cattle raiding from numerous wild and domesticated herds, provide a haven for Confederate deserters and refuge for Union supporters, and attract escaped slaves from southern Florida (Solomon 1999).

Figure 11.  
1839 Seat of War Map





During the Civil War, few settlers were in the present-day Miami-Dade County area and the region was affected little by the conflict. After the war property values were reduced considerably in Florida and the removal of slave labor slashed manpower dramatically. Across the frontier, only a few families in isolated areas remained at home. The cattle industry, however, managed to survive and some cattlemen's herds doubled and even tripled in size (Matthews 1998:59, 66).

The remaining Seminoles of southern Florida continued the occupation of cattle raising, long practiced by the Creeks, as they did from their arrival in Florida and their subsequent transformation into "Seminoles" (West 1995). The Seminoles kept both cattle and hogs in the Big Cypress area and around Lake Okeechobee, and the sale of livestock was said to represent one-third of their annual income (West 1995:30). The Creek Seminoles' Snake Clan was settled at Guinea Ford on Fisheating Creek, where they had been raising herds since about 1868 alongside pioneer cattlemen John Whidden and Jacob Summerlin (West 1995:30).

Communities in southern Florida began to take root, including Cape Sable, Cape Romano, Flamingo, Chokoloskee, and Boca Grande along the southwestern coast (Douglas 1988:271-271; Grunwald 2006:73). In south-central Florida and along the eastern coast, communities such as Okeechobee, Belle Glade, Homestead, and Hialeah began to grow. Settlers also lived in the backcountry, eschewing civilization for the freedom of living off the plentiful natural resources of the Everglades region. The people who occupied these remote areas across southern Florida were a hardy, resourceful, and independent people (Simmons and Ogden 1998).

## POST-CIVIL WAR DEVELOPMENT AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Significant growth began in Florida during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Notable local developments that occurred from the period between the Civil War and the 1890s were the establishment of trading posts by J. W. Ewan and William Brickell on opposite sides of the Miami River. Both dealt primarily with Seminoles living in the Everglades, and the stores became local community centers. Other attempts to found plantations and towns at this time mostly failed and the area remained largely unsettled (Parks 1991; Patricios 1994; Dade County 1982).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, southern Florida was largely a wilderness where those who lived outside established communities had to be totally self-sufficient (Simmons and Ogden 1998). Many settlers eked out a living by hunting and fishing while living in temporary camps in coastal areas (Tebeau 1957:233). Some of the animals that were hunted at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century were hunted until they were in danger of extinction or until laws were passed in the twentieth century to protect them (Tebeau 1957: 241). Settlers of the Everglades not only collected and hunted to eat and make a living, but hunting became a form of tourism in southern Florida, where many people began to come to visit Florida's natural environment and have the experience of hunting or fishing (Tebeau 1957: 242).

Meinig (1998:223) characterizes Florida during this period as a subtropical colony of the North rather than an extension of the South, because Northern businessmen and entrepreneurs drove development. In Miami, progress was helped along by oil and railroad magnate Henry Flagler's decision to extend his Florida East Coast Railroad to Miami. When the first train arrived in April 1896 the region was already starting to flourish and, by 1900, Dade County's population increased from 861 to 4,955 (Parks 1991, Patricios 1994, Dade County 1982). The new city of

Miami incorporated areas on both sides of the Miami River, where streets were laid out in a grid, and business, shopping, and residential districts developed. A bridge across the river, opened in 1903, facilitated the growth of upper- and middle-class residential neighborhoods on the south side. A segregated African-American district grew up west of the railroad tracks between NW 6th and 12th streets (Parks 1991, Patricios 1994, Dade County 1982).

Commercial fishing, both on a large and small scale, became the primary means of livelihood for many Florida pioneers in the region. Fishing methods ranged from two men in a skiff fishing with cane poles or hand lines to large-scale fishing operations utilizing nets and boats with steam engines (Tebeau 1957: 238-239). Clams, oysters, turtles, and turtle eggs were also harvested and proved to be a profitable market, as was the sale of fur and hides.

Exotic birds, caught primarily for their feathers for use in women's hats, faced extinction during the nineteenth century. In 1901 the Florida Legislature passed a law forbidding the killing of wild birds at nesting time for their plumage. The demand for plumage stayed high, however, and the trafficking of feathers was hard to stop (Tebeau 1957:240-241). Eventually women's hat fashions changed and the plumes were no longer in such demand. The sale of hides and furs also played a large part in the economy of southern Florida at this time.

Important industries that grew during this era included cattle ranching, farming, the lumber industry, and tourism. Cattle ranching in the area north of Lake Okeechobee and south of Orlando had long been an important Florida business. There were no fence laws in Florida, and cattle were free to graze on the open range of public lands. While Florida beef was not prize, there was a ready market for both meat and hides, making Florida one of the largest cattle-producing states east of the Mississippi at the beginning of the twentieth century (Proctor 1996:277). In some cases the combination of ranching and farming were common. After crops were planted for several years the owner might change it over to pasture to improve the soils (Tebeau 1957:250). Ranching in Florida started with frontier families. Indians and whites eventually came in conflict over rights to cattle ranges, and the Indians were forced out of that industry (Tebeau 1957:243).

The growth of new cities in Southern Florida focused on a strip of land between the Everglades and the Atlantic Ocean. Draining of the Everglades to permit further expansion began as early as the 1880s with Hamilton Disston, a real estate developer who purchased four million acres of the Everglades with the intent of draining and developing these lands. A development boom in the 1920s led to a doubling of the Miami-area population between 1920 and 1923, and fueled the establishment of outlying towns such as Hialeah, Miami Springs, Buena Vista, and Opa Locka. The boom peaked in 1925 but was cut short by a hurricane in September 1926 (Moore 1991; Dade County 1982).

During the 1920s, road and railroad construction greatly improved access to the region and promoted economic development. Southern Florida's permanent residents continued to grow in number, many raising commercial crops for developing markets in Key West and even New York City (Tebeau 1957:234). These crops included sugar cane, tomatoes, beans, bananas, cabbage, melons, okra, peppers, potatoes, and pumpkins. Pineapples were also grown in Florida, although this market could not compete with imported pineapples (Tebeau 1957:225, 236). The lumber

industry continued to be another successful economic pursuit in early southern Florida, as virgin cypress and pine timber were highly sought after; charcoal production also became a profitable livelihood (Tebeau 1957).

Because of the potential for land reclamation to increase the acreage available for agriculture, cattle and livestock raising, timbering, and other development, efforts to drain the Everglades began with Hamilton Disston during the mid-nineteenth-century and, over time, these would drastically alter the landscape of southern Florida. The State gained title to the Everglades in 1903 and canal construction began on the south side of Lake Okeechobee in 1906 with the dredging of the North New River Canal. By 1913, much of an extensive canal system was complete, including the Hillsboro, North New River, South New River, Miami, and Caloosahatchee canals. Control locks were built on the North New River and South New River Canals in 1912 and on the Miami Canal in 1912-13 (Everglades Engineering Board of Review 1927:28; McCally 1999). Subsequent developments included studies and reassessments of the canals and drainage systems, as well as reorganization of the entities overseeing them (McCally 1999). Some of these changes came after two major hurricanes in 1926 and 1928 caused severe flooding in the area around Lake Okeechobee, necessitating reconsideration of how best to manage and control inland waters in southern Florida that continues up to the present day.

During the Depression, Miami still managed to attract tourists, while New Deal programs built parks, public buildings, and housing projects. The Tamiami Trail opened in 1928 linking Tampa to Miami and providing important access to adjacent areas. Construction of the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) began in 1915 and took 13 years to complete at a cost of 13 million dollars. The stretch through the Everglades was the most difficult section to construct and constituted an unprecedented engineering feat (Janus 2001:21). Originally known as State Road 27, the Tamiami Trail became part of the federal highway system as U.S. 41 in the 1940s. At the same time, Miami underwent another boom, its population nearly doubling and growth being particularly intense in the outlying suburban municipalities (Patricios 1994).

The Second World War had an enormous impact on the State of Florida, where dozens of military bases were established or expanded. The war also spurred economic development and led to a huge postwar population surge. Additionally, civilian workers came to find employment in the various camps and bases that were established, and in the shipyards and other industries that expanded during the conflict (Coles 2002). It is during this time that airboat use increased dramatically, incorporating aircraft-styled propellers, airplane (or automobile) engines, and riveted sections of aircraft aluminum. Many soldiers, sailors, and marines who served in Florida later returned to the state to live. The state's population grew 46.1 percent during the decade of the 1940s, and would expand at an even more rapid pace during the 1950s. World War II helped serve as a catalyst for the state's explosive postwar growth. By 1943, approximately 172 military installations were in existence in Florida, compared to only eight in 1940 (Coles 2002).

Also in the 1940s, hurricanes, drought, widespread flooding, and saltwater encroachment led the federal government to establish the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project as a centralized program for addressing water control issues. In 1949, the Florida Legislature replaced the Everglades Drainage District with the Central and South Florida Flood Control District, which took on the management responsibilities for the flood control projects designed and built by the Army Corps of Engineers (McIver 1983:135; McCally 1999:152-153; SFWMD 2005; CERP

2008). The U.S. Government, particularly the Army Corps of Engineers, became involved in the problem at this time. Whereas this agency had been chiefly concerned with navigation, it later took on responsibility for floodway channels, control gates, and levees (CERP 2008).

Among the new modifications was the addition of a canal system to aid urban development in southern Dade County. Local interests in the area began petitioning for such facilities beginning during the late 1950s, ultimately resulting in the authorization of a project for the region in the 1962 Federal Flood Control Act. The main goals of this project were to remove flood runoff, reduce the depth and duration of the larger floods, and to prevent excessive drainage (USACE 2007:4-5). Modifications, such as enlarging existing canals and adding culverts/earthen plugs, were made in the 1960s and later (USACE, Jacksonville District and South Florida Water Management District [SFWMD] 2002:11; USACOE 2007:5). The most recent significant development in Florida water management was the creation of the state's five water management districts in 1972, including the present SFWMD. These authorities replaced the Central and Southern Florida Control District and reflected the state's changing demand for, and perception of, water resources. The SFWMD has the responsibility for ensuring water quality, flood control, water supply, and environmental restoration through the operation and maintenance of canals, levees, pumping stations, and other water control structures (SFWMD 2005).

During the 1950s and 1960s, Miami's Hispanic population grew substantially with the Cuban exodus of that period. Development included the construction of many new bridges that linked the mainland with the coastal islands. The potential for profits related to new development also resulted in many of the cattle ranchers selling their land to provide for future residential subdivisions. The Miami area population continued to spiral, reaching 54,500 in 1960, 87,500 in 1970, and 205,000 in 1980 (U.S. Census Bureau).

Today the city of Miami is the major metropolitan center of southern Florida, and contributing to the modern culture of the region are the descendants of the State's Native American population. The Brighton Indian Reservation is located near the northwest shore of Lake Okeechobee just north of Fisheating Creek. The Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation covers a portion of southern Hendry County and extends south into Collier County and east into Brevard County. Other reservations include the Tampa Orient Road Reservation, Immokalee Farms, State Reservation (east of Big Cypress Reservation), Dania-Hollywood Reservation in Broward County, and the Miccosukee Reservation along Tamiami Trail in Dade County.