
Introduction

Nearly two years ago, I began what I thought would be a simple and straightforward task: figure out the origins of place names in Everglades National Park. As a ranger, I had staffed the park's visitor center for countless hours and had spent quite a bit of time pouring over maps of the area. Every lake, river, bay, island, campsite and road had a name, though where they came from was often not readily apparent. Some were humorous, some were foreboding and others were simply intriguing. In my spare time, I began to casually pen a list of these monikers and their background stories.

It wasn't long after I began that I realized the tales of the Everglades were inextricably linked to the stories of our other South Florida national parks. Long before we established political boundaries between them, these areas were one; hosting the migration of countless characters between them. During the course of my research, I slowly began documenting the origins of names in the Big Cypress, Biscayne Bay, and the Dry Tortugas. Scarcely realizing it, my project had doubled in size.

Numerous writers have penned accounts of the better-known dramas in South Florida history. Because many such stories took place in the theater of these parks, documentation tracing the history of our more prominent nomenclature was easy to find. But in the wake of these familiar names remained a plethora of colorful monikers with no discernible explanation. Written resources were scarce, and hearsay and oral accounts were often all that remained to tell the tale. I committed myself to always finding the most reliable account available and documenting the source of my findings. My casual, part-time project had suddenly turned into a full-fledged academic paper.

Throughout college, I struggled to produce the requisite 10-page reports on philosophy, sociology, and chemistry. Thus, to be able to present to you this publication marks a significant personal accomplishment. Yet despite my pride and joy for the book you are now holding, I must confess a little secret: this book does not tell the whole story.

INTRODUCTION

This book was meant to serve as a tool for those interested in the cultural and natural history of South Florida. Throughout the text, I have given only a brief narrative of the events that unfolded in these locations. Others have written about them far more eloquently than I ever could, and I have been careful to cite these authors should you wish to read more.

The text does not cover every possible place name to be encountered in our South Florida parks. Due to the enormity of this project, I felt the need to limit myself to only those locations specifically noted on visitor maps. An abundance of lesser-known locations do exist, and are arguably just as compelling as those contained herein. But for the mere sake of preserving my sanity, I have only included here 445 individual accounts.

Libraries, interviews, and archives yielded only partial information on a number of the monikers in question. In these circumstances, evidence was carefully reviewed to attain plausible explanations. For these entries, the text reflects the author's best possible guess.

In a select number of instances, little or no information could be secured to explain the nomenclature of an area, and as you will find, I have not been shy to admit it. Thus, it is important for the reader to understand that this book has not been written in stone. Rather, this publication is a work in progress. I look forward to continuing my research and hearing from those who may be able to point me in the right direction. I dedicate this work to the community of South Florida, which has provided me with so much over the years, and I hope in turn, that the community will assist me in preserving their proud and unique history.

Questions, comments and suggestions may be sent to the author at:

LarryPerez@wordsonthewilderness.com