

Chapter 5: First a Wildlife Refuge, Then a National Park

The Everglades National Wildlife Refuge

World War II was not over in spring 1945, when the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) became responsible for patrolling 400,000 acres in the Everglades under the agreement worked out with Governor Holland. The preserve was a discontinuous collection of state- and federal-owned land, supplemented by a few private parcels where owners had granted easements to the FWS.²⁵³ FWS personnel began limited patrols in the Everglades National Wildlife Preserve around May 15, 1945. The service saw its mission as limited largely to attempting “to prevent rare species from becoming extinct,” i.e., protecting the large bird rookeries. Both the FWS and NPS expected that a national park would be established within 10 years, and that no development to accommodate visitors would occur until NPS was in charge. Managers in the Department of the Interior wanted Dan Beard, who was familiar with the area from his work on the 1938 *Wildlife Reconnaissance* (see pages 109-112 above), as refuge manager. Beard had been drafted into the U.S. Army in March 1944 and was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, as a training sergeant in early 1945. It required two letters from Secretary of the Interior Ickes to the secretary of war, Henry Stimson, to get Beard discharged from the Army. In January 1945, before Germany had surrendered, Stimson refused to let Beard go. Ickes wrote again in late May after Germany’s surrender, but the Army waited until Japan’s surrender in August, finally discharging Beard in October. At the time of his discharge, Beard was stationed at Alamogordo Army Air Field (later renamed Holloman Air Force Base).²⁵⁴

On October 26, 1945, Dan Beard took charge as manager of the Everglades National Wildlife Refuge from interim manager Claude F. Lowe Jr. Beard was able to set up his office at a USDA plant introduction facility in Coral Gables, known as Chapman Field because of an adjacent airstrip. The following February, Beard filed a report with the FWS regional office in Atlanta. He noted that the increased use of airboats and Glades buggies was making access to remote areas of the Everglades considerably

²⁵³ Because of the discontinuous array of parcels, no map of the preserve seems to have been prepared; at least, none has been located.

²⁵⁴ “U.S. to Supervise ‘Glades Game Refuge,’” *Miami Daily News*, Apr. 30, 1945; SOI Harold L. Ickes to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, May 30, 1945, EVER 22965; “Appointments to Everglades National Park Positions,” DOI press release, Sep. 23, 1947, CP, EVER 22204; personal communication, Albert Beard to Nancy Russell, Mar. 19, 2011. Dan Beard’s son Albert notes that the family was living in Cloudcroft, New Mexico, in summer 1945 not far from the site of the first atomic bomb test, the Trinity test.

easier. Airboats were developed by mounting an airplane propeller on a shallow draft boat, allowing for high speed travel in shallow waters (figure 5-1, airboat). A Glades buggy, known sometimes as a swamp buggy, used oversized balloon tires set high off the ground, permitting overland travel in marshy areas (figure 5-2, Glades buggy with treads). These innovative vehicles made it easier for wardens to patrol deep in the Everglades, but they likewise provided access for hunters and plant collectors. Beard thought that Glades buggies should be banned in the refuge and the use of airboats limited. The new refuge manager also forwarded a wish list of desired equipment to his superiors. He wanted an airplane, two cabin cruisers, a houseboat, two Glades buggies, one or two airboats, three trucks, and a station wagon. During the period that it patrolled in the Everglades, the FWS gave greatest attention to protecting rookeries. Wardens also tried to discourage the taking of deer and alligators and achieve better enforcement of state fishing regulations. To make this easier, in October 1946, Governor Caldwell established a state game refuge in the Everglades and deputized Beard and his small staff as state conservation agents. The commissions went to Claude F.



Figure 5-1. An airboat in the Everglades



Figure 5-2. A glades buggy with treads, circa 1947, photograph by Wolfe Studios

Lowe Jr., Jack C. Watson, and James V. Kellum. Another warden was Marcus Barney Parker, who already had a state commission, having protected rookeries as an Audubon warden. Barney would later become an NPS Everglades ranger.²⁵⁵

The FWS had wardens based at Royal Palm State Park, at a private fish camp on Coot Bay, and in the keys. Refuge Manager Beard saw educating the public as a major part of his responsibilities. He preached conservation everywhere that he went. Additionally, he attempted to persuade commercial fishermen to abide by the state regulations governing fishing in Florida Bay, something that the NPS felt the state had never pursued. Beard's staff worked with state wardens to identify and confiscate illegal nets and made some progress with fishermen. Beard established a working relationship with Kenneth Marmon, superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Seminole Agency at Ft. Myers. He was clearly looking ahead to the time when the national park

²⁵⁵ Refuge Narrative Report, Everglades NWR, , Oct.-Dec., 1945, EVER 308034; "New Manager of the Everglades National Wildlife Refuge is Daniel B. Beard," *Miami Herald*, Dec. 12, 1945; RDR1 Allen to Dir. Drury, Oct. 25, 1946, NARA Ph, RG 79, 79-67-A-1022, box 100; Daniel Beard, Report on Everglades NWR, Feb. 11, 1946, EVER 30803; Daniel Beard, Special Report on Concessions at Everglades National Park, July 28, 1953, NARA Ph, RG 79, 79-62-A-420, box 3; J. T. Hunt, Supervisor, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, to Dan Beard, Oct. 29, 1946, Gov. Caldwell papers.

would be established and decisions would need to be made about Indian camps within the park boundary. In the winter of 1946-1947, the National Audubon Society began offering to the public, for a fee, guided tours of some of the bird rookeries in the Everglades refuge (see chapter 20). The tour leader was typically Charles M. Brookfield, head of the Tropical Audubon Society. With the FWS barely able to provide protection for the bird rookeries, this visitor-oriented activity by Audubon was welcome. Seasonal Audubon tours continued through the winter of 1960/1961.²⁵⁶

As detailed above in chapter 4, Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug declared the establishment of Everglades National Park on June 20, 1947. The FWS would continue to patrol areas that had not yet come into federal ownership (Florida Bay in particular) until spring 1950, while the NPS began the task of asserting control of a new national park and planning its development. NPS managers seriously considered two men as possible park superintendents: Dan Beard and C. Ray Vinten. Region One Director Thomas J. Allen noted that at one time Vinten might have been interested in the post, but that he was finding his role as coordinating superintendent for southeastern parks and monuments increasingly rewarding and had firmly rooted himself in St. Augustine with the purchase of house. Allen further observed that Beard “is more thoroughly acquainted with the area than any other person either in or outside the Park Service.” Dan Beard was also well known in the NPS because of his father’s prominence as a conservationist. The regional director called Beard “a natural for the position.” Director Drury agreed and announced Beard’s appointment as the first superintendent of Everglades National Park on September 23, 1947. Gerald F. Baker then became the manager of the Everglades National Wildlife Refuge.²⁵⁷

Planning the Dedication of Everglades National Park, December 6, 1947

One of the first tasks confronting Dan Beard was planning for the official dedication of the new park. Beard would have preferred to defer the ceremony until the park had built some facilities to accommodate visitors, but public sentiment in Florida demanded an early dedication (figure 5-3, program for park dedication). The state was proud of its \$2 million appropriation for land acquisition and believed it should be recognized with a prominent and timely park dedication. Secretary of the Interior

²⁵⁶ Daniel Beard, Refuge Manager, to Lloyd L. Smith Jr., Biologist, May 13, 1947, NARA Ph, RG 79, 79-58A-360, box 8; Thomas Allen, RDR1, to Dir., May 13, 1947, NARA Ph, RG 79, 79-58A-360, box 7; Pamphlet “Tropical Wildlife Tours, 1950-1951 Season,” CP; SMR, Nov. 1962.

²⁵⁷ RDR1 Thomas J. Allen to Dir. Drury, Apr. 22, 1947, EVER 22965, ser. I, subser. A, box 2; “Everglades Park Staff Appointed,” *Miami Herald*, Oct. 10, 1947. Soon after his appointment, Beard recalled the kindnesses extended to him as a 14-year-old when he visited Yellowstone National Park during Horace Albright’s superintendency. Daniel B. Beard to Horace Albright, Dec. 11, 1947, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 904.

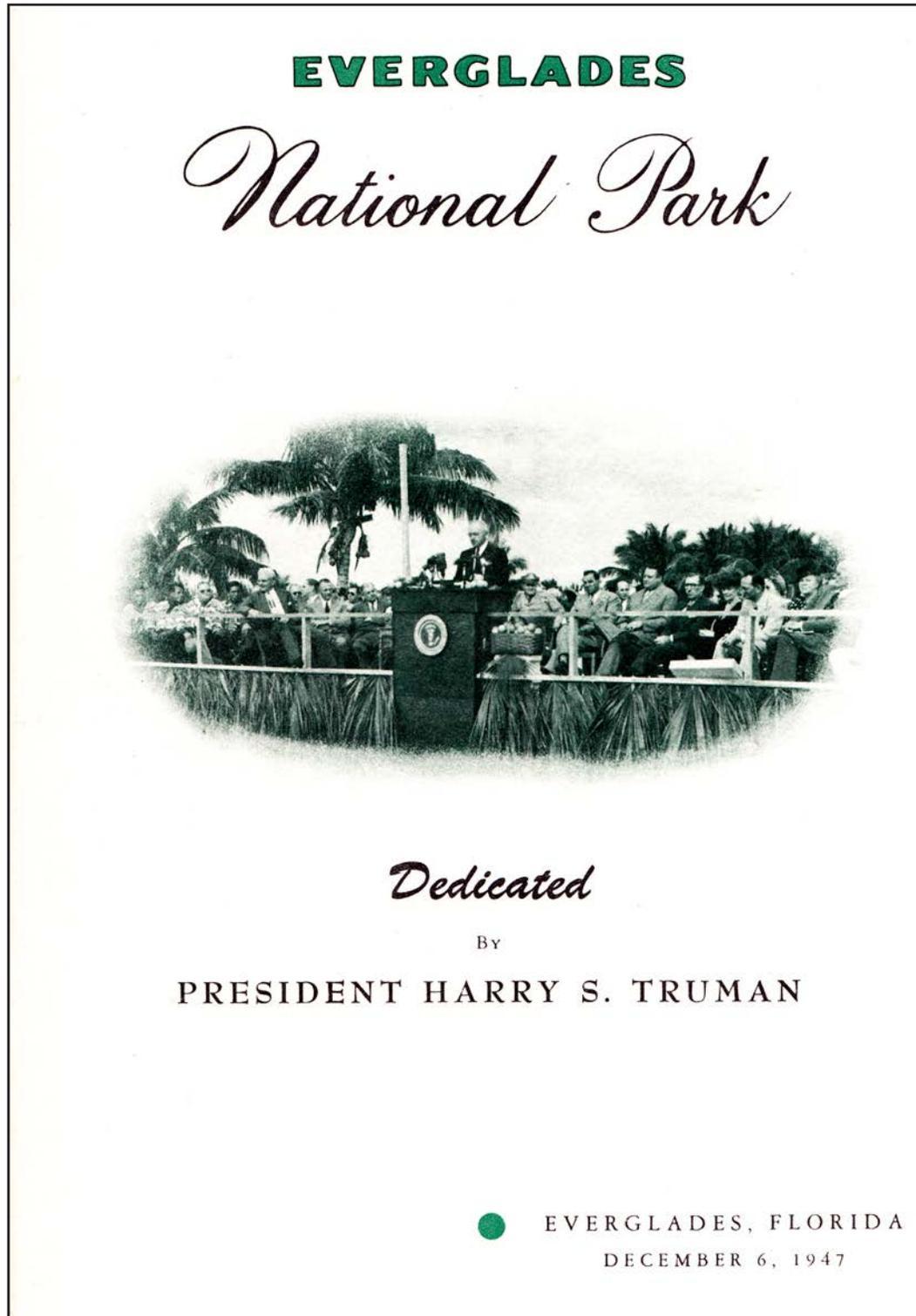


Figure 5-3. Program for the Everglades National Park dedication, December 6, 1947

Krug agreed that an early dedication was desirable. Because the newly established park had a small staff and limited appropriations, the Everglades National Park Commission (ENPC) stepped in, making most of the arrangements and paying for many of the expenses of the dedication. From the very beginning, all concerned believed in the unmatched promotional value of having President Truman speak at the dedication. The president had established a Winter White House not far away at Key West, making it more likely that he could fit in a visit to the Everglades for the dedication. As late as November 17, Truman was unwilling to commit to an appearance, partly because of a special session of Congress, but he finally agreed to attend.²⁵⁸

Following some informal discussions about the dedication, the ENPC executive committee on April 26, 1947, formed a special dedication committee. The committee was chaired by McGregor Smith of FP&L and had Harold Colee, G. G. Ware, Karl Bickel, Joe Hall, and Kennard Johnson as members. ENPC chair August Burghard and executive committee members John Pennekamp, Will Preston, and Gilbert Leach pledged themselves to assist in any ways they could. By the time the executive committee met again at the end of September, it had reasonable assurance that the president would be available, and December 6 was set as the date for the dedication. After discussing Royal Palm State Park, Hialeah Race Track, Crandon Park on Key Biscayne, and the Orange Bowl Stadium as possible sites, the committee agreed that “Everglades City would be the logical place for the dedication.” Miles Collier was a guest at this meeting, and his assurance of considerable financial and logistical support from the Collier Corporation surely played a role in this choice of venue. Among the early decisions were that there would be a fish fry for invited guests prior to the dedication, that Seminole Indians should be invited, and that the president would be entertained at the Rod and Gun Club in Everglades City (figure 5-4).²⁵⁹

Further planning for the dedication took place at a combined meeting of the ENPC executive and dedication committees on-site in Everglades City on October 19, 1947. Superintendent Beard, Regional Director Allen, and Ray Vinten all attended the meeting, held at the Everglades Rod and Gun Club. After inspecting several sites, the group decided that the dedication would take place about a mile south of the center of town “at the bend of the river, north of the airstrip.” A local arrangements committee headed by Miles Collier, as well as a program committee and an invitation committee, both under John Pennekamp, were established. McGregor Smith reported that plans for the fish fry were well in hand, and Miles Collier agreed to contact the Ringling Brothers Circus in Sarasota to borrow bleachers, folding chairs, and a tent

258 “U.S. Creates Glades National Park,” *Miami Herald*, June 21, 1947; ENPC Executive Committee Meeting, Sep. 25, 1947, EVER 58941; Ken Hechler, “My View from the White House—Truman’s Environmental Legacy Is Being Exaggerated,” in *The Environmental Legacy of Harry S. Truman*, Karl Boyd Brooks, ed. (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2009), 112.

259 ENPC Executive Committee Notes, Apr. 26 and Sep. 25, 1947, EVER 58941.



Figure 5-4. Everglades Rod & Gun Club, Everglades City

(to be used in case of rain). Two more meetings in Miami in October and November resulted in additional decisions, including that a select group would have lunch with President Truman at the Rod and Gun Club. John Pennekamp announced “that it was decided to serve dry martinis before the Club luncheon.” Later, in 1972, a newspaper reported that a silver dollar was embedded in the club’s bar counter, marking the spot where Truman set down his cocktail. Subsequent remodelings at the club have left no trace of this unique memorial. Consultations among the Secret Service, the Florida Highway Patrol, the U.S. Navy, and the Collier County Sheriff helped ensure the safety of both the president and visitors. Later reports indicated that the Secret Service demanded that several bridges on the Tamiami Trail between Naples and the road to Everglades City be repaired before the event.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Meeting of ENPC Program and Invitation Committees, Oct. 28, 1947, Meeting of ENPC Executive Committee, Nov. 26, 1947, EVER 58941; Tom Morgan, “HST Came to Park’s Dedication in Moment of High Drama Here,” *Miami Herald*, Dec. 27, 1972. The *Miami Herald* made reference to an “Amazon Brigade” of 50 African-American women who were working to prepare the site for the dedication, “Everglades Scrubs Ears for Gala Day,” undated article [Nov. 47], EVER 42054.

Everglades National Park Commemorative Postage Stamp

On the day before the dedication, a U.S. commemorative postage stamp honoring Everglades National Park was issued at the Florida City Post Office. The decision to issue the stamp, which added considerably to the national attention given to the park's dedication, arose from discussions involving Florida Power & Light's chief legal representative, Will M. Preston. One of Preston's legal partners, Paul R. Scott, was a good friend of Postmaster General Robert E. Hannegan.²⁶¹ Scott obtained Hannegan's backing for the stamp, and the entire Florida congressional delegation lined up behind it. Through the efforts of John Pennekamp, Garnett Megee, a Miami artist and former employee of the U.S. Bureau of Engraving, was commissioned to design the stamp. Megee's design featured a great white heron with the map of Florida as a backdrop. Superintendent Beard approved the representation of the heron. A ceremony in Florida City on December 5, 1947, marked the first day of issue of the Everglades commemorative three-cent stamp (figure 5-5). Regional Director Allen and Governor Caldwell spoke to attendees, and the Homestead High School Band played musical selections. Third Assistant Postmaster General Joseph J. Lawler presented special albums containing stamps to Governor Caldwell, Senator Holland, Paul Scott, Will N.



Figure 5-5. First day of issue cover using Everglades National Park stamps

261 Hannegan was postmaster general from May 1945 to December 1947.

Preston, and John Pennekamp. First-day cancellations of the Everglades stamp totaled 466,647, and 802,500 stamps were sold, bringing in \$24,075 to the federal treasury.²⁶²

The Publication of *The Everglades: River of Grass*

Another event that added to the éclat of the park's dedication was the publication the previous month of Marjory Stoneman Douglas's book, *The Everglades: River of Grass*. From early on, Douglas had supported the creation of a national park in the Everglades and had maintained her membership in the ENPA. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, she pursued a very successful career as a writer of short stories, several of them set in the Everglades. She had not, however, been a leader in lobbying federal and state officials on behalf of a national park. That she ended up writing the most celebrated and widely read book on the Everglades may almost be said to have been a result of happenstance (figure 5-6, Marjory Stoneman Douglas).²⁶³

Douglas's friend, the novelist Hervey Allen, was co-editor of the Rivers of America series put out by Farrar and Rinehart. Allen had a winter home south of Miami on the edge of the Everglades.²⁶⁴ One day in 1943, he visited Douglas and asked if she would be interested in writing a book on the Miami River for the series. As she considered the idea, Douglas thought she could write a far more compelling book about the Everglades, with the tiny Miami River included as a sidelight. John Pennekamp of the *Miami Herald* put her in touch with Garald Parker, a U.S. Geological Survey scientist then studying the water supply for the cities of Southeast Florida. As Douglas remembered it, she asked Parker, "Do you think I can get away with calling it the river of grass?" He replied that he thought so. Douglas spent the next three years researching and writing the book, relying heavily on Parker's insights on the hydrology and ecology of the Everglades. Among many others, she also consulted archeologist John M. Goggin, C. Kay Davis of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, local naturalists David M. Fairchild and Dr. John C. Gifford, and David O. True of the Historical Association of South Florida.²⁶⁵

Combining ethnography, history, geography, and natural history, Douglas's book appeared in early November 1947 to rave reviews. Farrar and Rinehart's first printing

²⁶² "Local Artist Designs Glades Park Stamp," *Miami Herald*, Sep. 3, 1947; SMR, Dec. 1947; "Florida City Celebration Rate [sic] as Gateway," *Miami Daily News*, Dec. 6, 1947.

²⁶³ Davis, *Everglades Providence*, 310-326, 394.

²⁶⁴ Allen burst upon the literary scene with his hugely successful 1933 historical novel, *Anthony Adverse*, which sold more than 750,000 copies in its first three years. James D. Hart, *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), 261-262.

²⁶⁵ Davis, *Everglades Providence*, 357-362; Marjory Stoneman Douglas, *The Everglades: River of Grass, 60th Anniversary Edition* (Sarasota: Pineapple Press, 2007), 386-390; Marjory Stoneman Douglas, with John Rothchild, *Voice of the River: An Autobiography* (Englewood, Fla.: Pineapple Press, 1987), 190-192.



Figure 5-6. Marjory Stoneman Douglas

completed a doctoral dissertation on the history of the Everglades, one that remains useful to this day. Dovell pointed out a number of errors in the book, which Douglas corrected in subsequent editions. Overall, he was complimentary, concluding that the book was “an outstanding contribution to the growing body of published Floridiana, one that is greatly needed.” Because Douglas’s book so thoroughly satisfied the public’s demand for a book on the Everglades, Dovell was never able to find a publisher willing to turn his meticulously documented dissertation into a book.²⁶⁶ Published just

of 7,500 copies sold out by Christmas, and *The River of Grass* has not been out of print since. *The Reader’s Digest* published a story from the book, “An Early Pocahontas,” in its December 1947 issue. Noted authors like John Hersey, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, and Harnett T. Kane wrote glowing notices. Writing in the *New York Herald Tribune*, Pulitzer-Prize winner Hersey observed that Douglas “has put into this description an unearthliness, a strong rhythm, a compactness of natural imagery that is dazzling, and, above all, an organization and discipline that approaches poetic form.” The most knowledgeable reviewer was Dr. Junius E. Dovell, writing in the *Florida Historical Quarterly*.

Dovell had recently com-

²⁶⁶ Davis, *Everglades Providence*, 394-396; John Hersey, *New York Herald Tribune*, Dec. 7, 1947; Junius E. Dovell, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 26/3 (1948):275-278.

as the park was dedicated, *The Everglades: River of Grass* brought a great deal of positive attention to the area, surely motivating many Americans to visit the new national park.

Dedication Day, December 6, 1947

To protect the crowd at the dedication ceremonies at Everglades City from mosquitoes, U.S. Navy aircraft sprayed DDT on 500 acres surrounding the Everglades airport. Although the toxicity of DDT and other pesticides was little understood at this time, at least three Florida residents wrote letters complaining of the effects of the spraying on wildlife. Herman C. Shuptrine of Tampa called it “a slap in the face of every conservationist . . . in the State of Florida.” NPS Director Drury looked into the matter and concluded that because the dedication site was 22 miles from the nearest park lands, it “could have no possible effect on the Park.”²⁶⁷



Figure 5-7. Miccosukee presenting shirt to President Truman at park dedication

²⁶⁷ “DDT Spray Planned for Park Area,” *Miami Herald*, Dec. 4, 1947; Herman C. Shuptrine to Congressman J. Hardin Peterson, Dec. 5, 1947; Congressman J. Hardin Peterson to Charles DeArmas, Feb. 6, 1948, Peterson papers, box 34. Marine biologist Rachel Carson brought attention to the devastating effects of DDT on wildlife in *Silent Spring*, which was serialized in *The New Yorker* in spring 1962 and published in book form that fall. More than 10 years later, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned almost all uses of the pesticide in the United States, effective Jan. 1, 1973. Peter J. Bernstein, “Farewell, DDT,” *Miami Herald*, Dec. 12, 1972.



Figure 5-8. Miccosukee shirt given to Superintendent Dan Beard at park dedication, now at South Florida Collection Management Center

December 6 was a typically sunny, late fall South Florida day. President Truman arrived in Naples from Key West on his plane, the *Sacred Com*. On the tarmac to meet him was Governor Caldwell. The president was behind the wheel as the motorcade set off for Everglades City, where Secretary Krug and Senators Holland and Claude Pepper were waiting. In Everglades City, William McKinley Osceola, Cory Osceola, and Ingram Billie gave Truman a traditional Seminole shirt, sewn by William's wife from 5,000 pieces of cloth (figure 5-7, Miccosukee Indians presenting shirt to Truman). The Indians later presented similar shirts to Secretary Krug and Superintendent Beard (figure 5-8, Miccosukee shirt given to Dan Beard).²⁶⁸ They also presented a handbag of palmetto fibers with buckskin handles for Mrs. Truman and a tribal flag that the president said he would pass on to his daughter Margaret. At the airport some 2,000 enjoyed fried mullet, hush puppies, beans, coleslaw, and pickles. Meanwhile, the presidential party had cocktails, stone crab, key lime pie, and a large cake in the shape of the Florida peninsula at the Rod and Gun Club. Truman and the VIPs arrived ten minutes early at the temporary grandstand that had been prepared, and the formal dedication events kicked off promptly at 2:00 pm.

Master of Ceremonies John Pennekamp first introduced Deaconess Harriet M. Bedell, of the Glade Cross Mission in Everglades City, who gave the invocation.²⁶⁹ August Burghard then presented a plaque in the shape of the park to Ernest Coe, whose bitterness over not getting the larger park that he dreamed of made him a reluctant participant in the dedication. Coe later acknowledged to Burghard that he had to be persuaded to come forward, but that "in being human I loved it and thank you." Director Drury recognized the pioneering efforts of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs in establishing and safeguarding Royal Palm State Park. Mrs. Jennings was an honored guest, and Drury presented a plaque to her. Senators Pepper and Holland made brief remarks, Governor Caldwell formally presented the area on behalf of the state, and Secretary Krug formally accepted it on behalf of the federal government. The President's address came next, followed by the benediction, given by the Reverend E. A. Finn, and the singing of the national anthem by Wah Nese Red Rock, a member of the Ojibwa Totem Tribe who lived in Florida at the time (figure 5-9, President Truman dedicating the park). The Fort Myers High School Band played selections during the ceremonies. Attendance was estimated at 4,500 by the *New York Times* and 7,000 by the ENPC. The Florida Highway Patrol later announced that not a single automobile accident had occurred.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Dan Beard's colorful shirt is now in the collection of the South Florida Collections Management Center.

²⁶⁹ Bedell came to the Everglades in 1933 and received permission from the Episcopal Diocese of South Florida to establish a mission to the Seminoles (see chapter 19).

²⁷⁰ Program, Everglades National Park Dedication, Ernest F. Coe to August Burghard, CP, EVER 22847; "Wah Nese Red Rock; Singer and Indian Rights Activist," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 9, 1988.



Figure 5-9. President Truman dedicating the park, on the platform with Secretary of the Interior Krug, Florida Senator Claude Pepper, and Mrs. Jennings

Because Truman had waited until the last minute to confirm his attendance, his speech was not drafted in the White House, but was prepared by the NPS. Beyond dedicating a new national park, President Truman reaffirmed his administration's natural resource management goals and conservation policies in his address, which was printed in full by the *New York Times*. Truman called the park's establishment "another great conservation victory" that "enrich[ed] the human spirit." He went on to emphasize the importance of conservation of natural resources to the nation's economic well-being. The President noted that "[f]ull conservation of our energy resources can be accomplished by continued construction of dams, hydroelectric plants and transmission lines; by greater use of natural gas." As historians like Karl Boyd Brooks have shown, the Truman administration departed from the Roosevelt administration in emphasizing "wise-use" conservation over preservation, and the president's remarks reflected this shift. Truman closed his address by reemphasizing the inspirational qualities of national parks:

As for conservation of the human spirit, we need places such as Everglades National Park, where we may be more keenly aware of our Creator's infinitely varied,

infinitely beautiful, and infinitely bountiful handiwork. Here we may draw strength and peace of mind from our surroundings.²⁷¹



Figure 5-10. Audience at the park dedication

The NPS, the ENPC, the Florida Democratic Party, and the state's newspapers all seemed very pleased with the park's dedication and the coverage it received. Portions of the ceremony, including the presidential address, were broadcast nationally by the National Broadcasting Company and the Mutual Broadcasting System (figure 5-10, Audience at park dedication). Everyone from the Collier Corporation to the Florida National Guard seemed eager to make the day a success. Contributions to the dedication from companies and individuals were valued at \$2,138, equivalent to almost \$23,000 in 2014. In addition to underwriting the fish fry and other expenses, the ENPC gave all the surplus plywood and other salvageable materials from the event to the park.²⁷²

²⁷¹ "President Pleads for Conservation," *New York Times*, Dec. 7, 1947. See Karl Boyd Brooks, *The Environmental Legacy of Harry Truman* on Truman's natural resource policies.

²⁷² Miles Collier to Gilbert D. Leach, Managing Director, ENPC, Dec. 12, 1947, Gov. Caldwell papers, box 26; ENPC Meeting Minutes, Jan. 11, 1948, EVER 58941.

Ernest F. Coe: A Summing Up

Ernest F. Coe, consistently regarded since 1947 as the father of Everglades National Park, lived to see its first three years of operation (figure 5-11, Coe letter with attached leaf). He never stopped urging the NPS to move immediately to acquire all the land within his original boundary. As he had with hundreds of others, Coe called on Superintendent Beard to share his thoughts on the Everglades. Coe was increasingly embittered and impoverished in the last years of his life. After his wife died in July 1940, Coe invited a Mr. and Mrs. Hane, who had worked in various capacities on his property, to live with him. The Hanes stayed on for more than 10 years, cooking, cleaning, and caring for him. Toward the end of Coe's life, they also apparently covered his living expenses and loaned him money. Coe believed that the ENPA and ENPC owed him something like \$25,000 in back salary. The bulk of this was due from the ENPA; as of February 5, 1948, Coe calculated that the association owed him \$13,949.08. For about two years, until Governor Cone demanded his resignation, Coe drew \$4,000 a year as executive chairman of the ENPA, at a time when the median family income in the U.S. was \$1,160. Surviving records do not indicate Coe's annual ENPA salary and how often the salary could not be paid. The association did pay his travel expenses and the maintenance on his private automobile for extended periods. At times, Coe seemed to think the federal government also was in his debt, noting that "another plan is to ask Congress for an annuity for me on the basis that I have done a great national service." Within six months after the park's dedication, Coe's friends were seriously concerned about Coe's finances and mental state. In June 1948, Pennekamp wrote Regional Director Allen, "He has a great many people disturbed down here with almost daily threats that he is going to commit suicide because he has no money and has exhausted all of his resources."²⁷³

Many in the Miami area tried to help Coe, but he was a proud man and refused most assistance. He accepted fairly regular checks from family members in other parts of the country, but the Rotary Club of Miami and others resorted to subterfuge to assist Coe. The Rotarians, for example, paid to have the garage on Coe's lot renovated to rent out as an apartment. Finally, the NPS came up with a way to help that was acceptable to Coe; he was hired as a "collaborator" to work on a chronological history of Everglades National Park. He eventually received about \$1,000 for this work. His "Story of the Everglades National Park Project from the Inception of the Idea, Including Its Establishment and Dedication" may be consulted in the South Florida Collections

273 "Death Takes Mrs. E. F. Coe," July 11, 1940, unidentified newspaper, EVER 42054; Ernest F. Coe to Alice and Ed, Jan. 30, 1948, and Oct. 16, 1948, CP, EVER 22883 and EVER 22884; ENPA Financial Statement, Feb. 5, 1948, CP, EVER 22638a; John Pennekamp to RDR1 Allen, Apr. 13, 1948, NARA Ph, RG 79, 79-58-A-360, box 8.

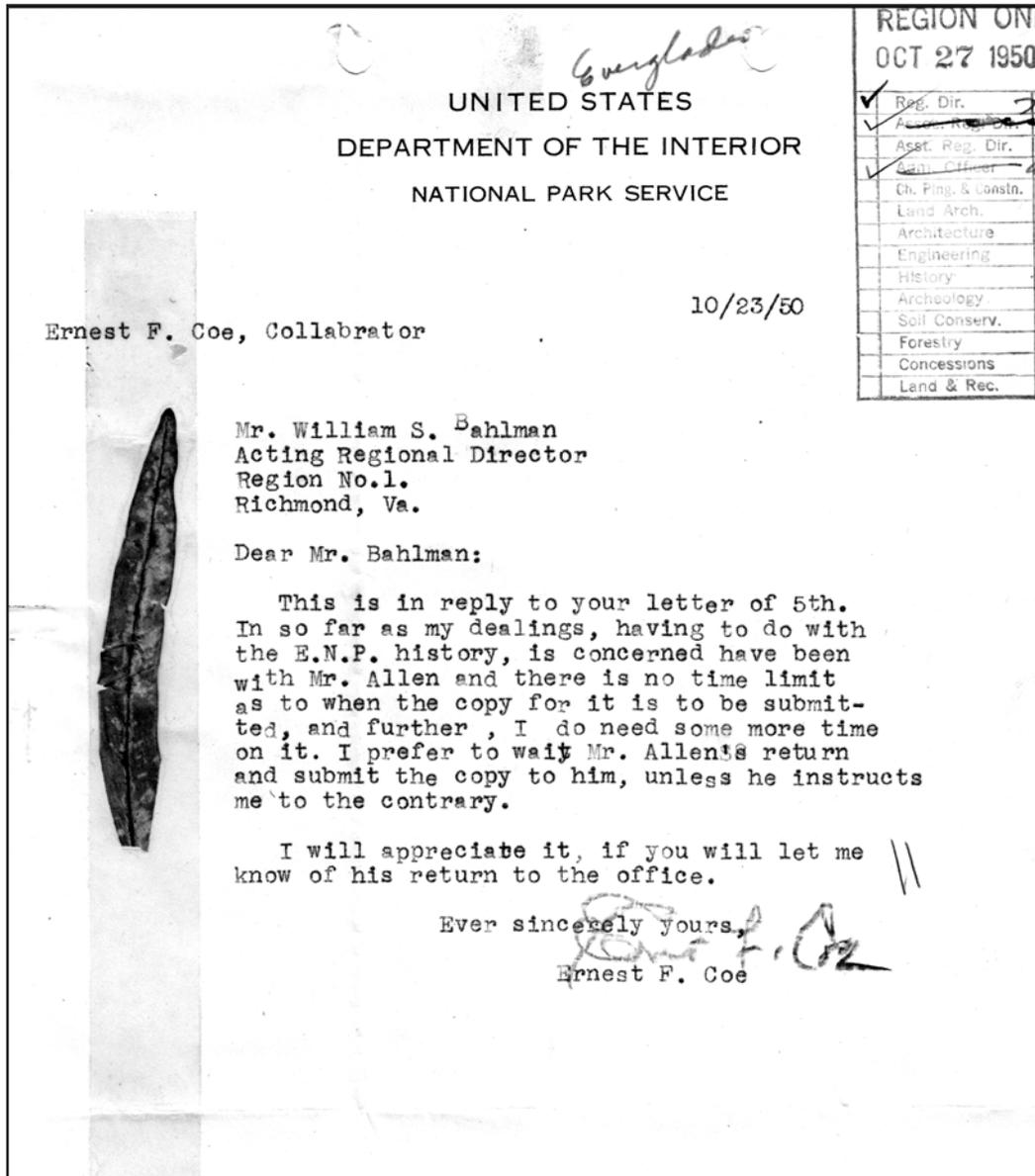


Figure 5-11. In his later years, Ernest Coe adorned each letter with a piece of tropical foliage

Management Center. Although financial compensation proved meager, honors came Ernest Coe's way in his last years. The Massachusetts Horticultural Society bestowed its highest award, the George Robert White Medal, on Coe in 1948. The Fairchild Botanical Garden gave him its Thomas Barbour Medal, and in 1947, Dade County made him one of its Citizens of the Year. Shortly after delivering the manuscript of his park

history to the NPS, Coe became ill. He went into the hospital in December 1950 and died on January 1, 1951, at age 84.²⁷⁴

Horace Albright captured Ernest Coe's place in the Everglades National Park story as well as anyone, when he wrote him at the time of the park's establishment:

I wanted to . . . salute you as the man that not only dreamed of this great park, but planned it and through many years of discouragement and disappointment that would have caused a less farseeing and courageous man to drop the project, carried on and won the victory for the American people. . . . [H]ad it not been for John Muir, there would have been no Yosemite. . . . and had it not been for Ernest F. Coe, there would have never been an Everglades National Park. So you join the immortals of the National Park System.²⁷⁵

Asserting National Park Service Authority over the New Park

In March 1947, five months before entering on duty as Everglades National Park's first superintendent, Dan Beard offered NPS Region One his thoughts on the protection and administration of the area as a park. Expanding the protection of wildlife and beginning a program of fire protection were his top priorities. Beard was already thinking in terms of three ranger districts (see chapter 21). He submitted a wish list of required equipment similar to the one he had prepared for the wildlife refuge. In addition to standard ranger and clerical positions, Beard believed the park needed a naturalist, an aquatic biologist, and a landscape architect. Among the projects he thought immediately necessary were the plugging of the Cape Sable canals to retard salt water intrusion, establishing a ranger station at Shark River, repairs to the Ingraham Highway, and the partial backfilling of the Homestead Canal. Other tasks confronting the new superintendent and his staff were finding a site for park headquarters, working with the NPS land office in identifying and contacting land owners, and assisting visitors.²⁷⁶

Beard had been managing the wildlife refuge from an office in Coral Gables, but headquarters for the park could not be that far away. The superintendent was able to rent offices as well as garage and shop space in the Redlands Chamber of Commerce building at 65 Northeast First Avenue in Homestead, moving into these facilities in November. This remained headquarters until June 1953. A small staff was

274 Ernest F. Coe to members, ENPA, Mar. 19, 1948, Gov. Caldwell papers, box 26; Ernest F. Coe to Ed and Catherine, Jan. 29, 1949, CP, EVER 22822; Ernest F. Coe to NPS Acting Dir. Demaray, Aug. 8, 1949, NARA II, RG 79, NPS AF, box 1407; H. L. McCay, Sec., Rotary Club, to Louis A. Miller, University of Miami, Apr. 14, 1950, CP, EVER 22604; Alice Bennes to Friend, Jan. 4, 1951, CP, EVER 22863.

275 Horace Albright to Ernest F. Coe, July 5, 1947, NARA Ph, RG 79, 79-67-A-1022, box 100.

276 Daniel B. Beard, A Proposal for the Protection and Administration of the Everglades National Park, NARA Ph, RG 79, 79-58-A-360, box 7.

soon assembled: James H. Smith came on as chief clerk in September 1947, and Willard Dilley and Erwin Winte as the park's first two rangers in October. Until September 1948, the park's accounting and personnel functions were handled by the office of southeastern parks and monuments in St. Augustine. Appropriations for the park were \$67,000 in fiscal year (FY) 1948 and \$103,000 in FY1949.²⁷⁷ The NPS established a land office headed by Leon M. Gray at Dinner Key in Coral Gables in September 1947. The activities of this office and the history of park land acquisition are covered in chapter 6.²⁷⁸

By October 1947, NPS rangers were making boat patrols in cooperation with FWS wardens. As of spring 1948, rangers were working out of the old Royal Palm Lodge (renamed the Royal Palm Ranger Station) and at Coot Bay, but the NPS as yet had no jurisdiction over Florida Bay. In October 1948, Beard noted that the "appearance of Mrs. Barnes [wife of Ranger Paul Barnes] in an historically bachelor environment [Coot Bay Ranger Station] is resulting in many, worthwhile changes." The small NPS staff concentrated on protecting rookeries, but did what it could to limit illegal alligator hunting, fishing, and frog gigging. Beard's early monthly reports note evidence of gator hunting and a confrontation with turtle hunters. Not until January 1949 were automobile counters installed, but Beard estimated visitation at 20,000 to 22,000 over the winter of 1947/1948. Visitors that first winter were reported to be largely understanding about the poor condition of the Ingraham Highway and the lack of restrooms and other facilities. By the second winter, however, Ranger Paul Barnes was reporting that "almost every visitor contacted complained bitterly about the unsafe condition of the road . . . [A] continuing majority of visitors are irked by lack of concession facilities at this [Coot Bay] station." Rangers and the park naturalist gave programs at Royal Palm on weekends, but the interpretive program still needed outside assistance. Tropical Audubon continued its tours, and the ENPC produced the first park brochure in May 1948.²⁷⁹

In the first years of administering Everglades National Park, the NPS faced a dilemma. There was considerable pressure from visitors and Florida opinion leaders to rapidly develop the park for visitor use. Land acquisition, however, was ongoing, so that any major improvements to Ingraham Highway or the addition of visitor facilities would almost certainly have driven up land values. How the NPS approached the responsibility of developing Everglades National Park is the subject of chapter 7.

²⁷⁷ The federal fiscal year (FY) differs from the calendar year. Until 1977, the federal fiscal year ran from July 1 to June 30. Beginning with FY1977, this changed to October 1 to September 30.

²⁷⁸ SMR, Oct., Nov. 1947, Jan., July 1948, June 1953; Daniel B. Beard, A Report on Everglades National Park, July 14, 1948, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 924; Daniel B. Beard, A Report on Everglades National Park, June 1947-April 1949, CP, EVER 20209a.

²⁷⁹ SMR, Mar., Apr., July, Oct. 1948, Jan., May 1949; Daniel B. Beard, A Report on Everglades National Park, July 14, 1948; Daniel B. Beard to RDR1, June 13, 1949, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 904.