

Reprint Condensed

To the Trail Opening Guests with Compliments of Original Tamiami Trail Blazers

# The American Eagle

Screams for Lee County in Particular and Florida in General

Vol. 22

ESTERO, FLA., APRIL 26, 1928

No. 50

## History Making Motorcade Hewed Path Through Last Frontier

### Destination Was Miami

**Accomplished the Seemingly Impossible and Cut Trail Through Cypress Into Dade County. Cars Stuck in Mud Within 3 Miles of Grade.**

[The following article written by the Editor of The American Eagle, himself a member of the Trail Blazing Party, is reprinted from The American Eagle of April 26th, 1923.—Editor's Note.]

History is continually being made by intrepid and determined men who achieve success in exploits which their contemporaries have declared to be impossible of accomplishment. The explorer who fails is branded as a foolhardy adventurer, while he who succeeds is acclaimed as a benefactor in blazing the trail through the uncharted wilderness for the onward march of civilization and development.

With the outcome uncertain as to in which of these two classes they would eventually be rated, and notwithstanding predictions of failure on the part of those who claimed to best know the country, a little motorcade set out from Fort Myers on Wednesday morning, April 4th, determined to blaze the way through the trackless wilderness lying between Fort Myers and Miami along the approximate survey of the Tamiami Trail, and thus definitely ascertain the most feasible route, the character of the country through which it lay, and the physical obstacles to be encountered, without which necessary information no early completion of this great cross-state highway could be hoped for.

Setting out with seven cars from Fort Myers, the personnel of the party was as follows: W. Stanley Hanson, F. C. Garmon, C. Shawcross, R. W. Giles, L. J. VanDuy, George Dunham, Milton Thompson, Ora E. Chapin, J. W. Hill, Grover Hackney, L. A. Whitney, C. P. Corrigan, Clark Taylor, F. B. Hough, of Fort Myers, and Frank Whitman and Russell Kay, of Tampa. These were joined at Estero by Alfred Christensen, F. S. Lewis, Chas. H. Hunt and A. H. Andrews, while farther on down the line C. A. Prime, of Sarasota, John P. Cosden, of Easton, Md., Maurice Ayer, of Fort Myers and George P. Smith, of Everglades were added to our numbers.

These, with Abraham Lincoln (Assum-hachee) and Little Billie (Cornapatchee), two Seminole Indian guides, made up the total party of twenty-six members.

With the exception of two machines, all the cars in the motorcade were Ford's, and at Bonita Springs, where a short stop was made, a wag in the party introduced George Dunham to several of the inhabitants as Henry Ford himself. This was rather sudden, but George always tries to deliver the goods and before leaving promised to finance the building of a fifteen-story hotel at the Springs and secured

ruts which admittedly facilitates travel somewhat, but would not stand up under traffic and has cost the county more than twice as much as really good material should have done.

Going east from Royal Palm Hammock, the wooded hammocks give way more and more to open marsh country where tall reeds, switch grass and aquatic birds are seen. The road grade for long distances is overgrown with tall grass, weeds and bushes to such an extent that the car ahead is soon lost to sight to the observer in the rear. With the encountering of marl soil this heavy growth diminished,

tion was indulged in as to our proximity to the little settlement of Everglades. Guns were fired and spotlights trained on the sky in that direction but it later developed that no one saw or heard our signals.

When we went into Everglades to get supplies and try to get help for our mired vehicles we met Capt. George Storter, an old time resident and pioneer who told us that the Collier Company had a tractor at a logging camp which we arranged to use. At camp we found several of the cars mired and the tractor performed marvelously to get them to more firm ground.

Camp was made a mile or more west of Deep Lake Railway and, the ground being damp, we cut cabbage palm fans to sleep on. Going was heavy the next day (Friday) with much pushing and shoving of the cars before we reached the railroad grade about noon near a hammock called Lemon Camp, which we rechristened "Seminole City." The train arrived from Everglades with gas, oil and provisions which had been ordered the previous night by telephone. After spending the night in Everglades, we returned to camp and told Mr. Giles we could no longer take the time for his 3200 pound car which was often in trouble.

Before we reached Turner's River Cypress, we came onto an Indian camp where the mother of our guide, Abe Lincoln, lived and members of the party took their

pictures and bought Seminole Indian dolls at \$1.50 each. At Turner's River Cypress we ran into the problem of having to cut some stumps to facilitate the passage of the cars. Some towing was required through several boggy places and this is where we left another car—the front wheel had shattered when it hit a stump.

Some 98.8 miles from Fort Myers a well was dug since this was said to be the last place for miles where we could get fresh water. A deer was spotted galloping off and Little Billie left us to go hunting. He never rejoined the party.

Early Monday we sent a scouting party to skirmish out a feasible crossing of the next cypress. The ox trail had vanished and it was up to us to cut a new pathway through the uncharted wilderness.

The strenuous work of chopping trees and stumps, lifting and pushing cars, together with the uncertainty as to just where we were was beginning to tell on all of us. The heat in

### The Original Tamiami Trail Blazers



TOOK FIRST CARS ACROSS LOWER EVERGLADES IN 1923

Back Row, from left to right: Joe W. Hill, John P. Cosden, Geo. B. Prime, W. Stanley Hanson, Ora E. Chapin, A. H. Andrews, Chas. P. Corrigan, Little Billie \* (Indian), Frank S. Lewis, Abraham Lincoln (Indian), Milton Thompson.

Front Row, from left to right: Alfred Christensen, Fred C. Garmon, Grover C. Hackney, Clark Taylor, Fred B. Hough,\* L. A. Whitney, Chas. H. Hunt.

Not shown in picture: Maurice Ayer, Geo. W. Dunham, Russell Kay, Cyril Shawcross, Geo. P. Smith, L. J. VanDuy, Frank Whitman.

\*(Deceased)

the promise of several enthusiastic ladies to support him in his race for the presidency.

Stop was made for dinner at Royal Palm Hammock, 55.5 miles south of Fort Myers. This is one of two such unique natural beauty spots in Lee County containing many of these monarchs of the tropical jungle, and an effort will be made by the Tamiami Trail Association to have these palm hammocks incorporated into a great national park for the enjoyment of present and coming generations. This project is a timely one, as a number of fine royal palms have already been cut by ruthless vandals, presumably to obtain the seed for some nurseryman.

From Marco Junction east to Royal Palm Hammock the road for some distance is heavy sand and difficult to negotiate. Then for a few miles a poor grade marl is found in the wheel

making better going, but here a new difficulty was encountered in numerous washouts (some twelve or fourteen in all) which had to be detoured, or more frequently bridged. For this purpose heavy planking was employed which was sometimes carried forward to the next washout, and thus we destroyed if we did not literally burn our bridges behind us.

About a mile before the end of the grade was reached, George Dunham's car gasped its last, due to some serious internal trouble, and after a consultation of the Ford doctors present it was decided that a new engine was necessary. As it had been unfortunately neglected to carry one in the tool box, the car was left where it died, to be salvaged at some future time.

Camp was made the first night at the end of the road grade. Specula-

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the midst of the cypress, the unsatisfying drinking water and frequent shortage of rations added to our discomfort.

Imagine our feelings when we heard a shout up ahead and our scouts, Maurice Ayrer, George Prime and Abe gathered around the campfire to tell us they had found a survey stake with figures of Township 54, Range 33, Sec. 7. This meant that we were only 50 to 60 miles from Miami.

On Wednesday, just one week from Fort Myers, we decided to send a scouting party on to Miami to send messages to anxious relatives and forward provisions to the motorcade. The scouts struck a car trail some miles on, Abe returned to camp and the others, George H. Hunt, John P. Cosden and Ora E. Chapin proceeded to the end of the car trail where they secured a car at a construction camp and arrived in Miami at 1 a. m. Thursday.

Back at camp work was resumed with a will and some progress was made. The motor of an airplane was heard but apparently the pilot did not see the big smoke we put up. Just one mile of cutting had been done that day.

Abe brought in a deer and shortly after supper, Porter Richards of Everglades came into camp saying that Joe Taylor and Mr. Giles were about a mile back with the Elcar and a tractor. He said they were about famished for lack of food but had followed our tracks from Everglades with two tractors, one of which had broken down. He was given half the deer and returned to his companions.

We had cut our way through to the scrub cypress when we heard a shout and saw a big smoke. In a few minutes we were met by a rescuing party of three from Billy Roberts' camp. We soon reached their truck with its load of gas. We bumped over rough, rocky prairie in which it was impossible to run for long in high gear. In the muck a few miles further on, we mired to our axles but by dint of hard pushing, prying and laying cypress boughs in the ruts, two of the cars were extricated shortly after dark and made their way to Billy Roberts' Camp.

Friday morning began the rescue of the cars from the mire. Shortly after 9 a. m. a plane from Miami went by high overhead, circled the glades and came back to land at the camp. It brought a generous supply of provisions which were very welcome. The pilot, Capt. W. A. Carr, said he had observed our progress and did not see how we could have improved the route.

Saturday we began on the last boggy marsh land between us and the end of the grade fully confident that we could manage to cover the five-and-a-half miles before nightfall. But the short distance very nearly became our Waterloo as we were mired in it for a full week, and only then extricated by herculean efforts. Each driver plunged into the mire, going as far as he could before being strangled by the mud. The tractor finally rounded all the cars together about three-and-a-half miles from destination and there we stayed from Saturday to Saturday. Food was getting scarce, so six of us walked to McCreary's Construction Camp on the grade, several others coming in during the day. The camp was on rocky ground, the rain which had been threatening came down in a heavy shower and the wind was chill. On Sunday a car came out from Miami, taking several of the men back and Erben Cook arrived with provisions he had bought for us. The water lessened our chance of release from the mire.

It was at the suggestion of Mr. Cook

The American Eagle

First Tamiami Trail Motorcade

Wednesday, March 8, 1922



The Start at Fort Myers. Three Cars Were Ferried Across the River on a Barge



Making Their Way Over Approximate Routing Through the Woods, Cars Welcomed by Punta Gorda Citizens



At Punta Gorda and Other Points Along the Route, Other Cars Joined Motorcade to Tampa and St. Petersburg

that extra rims and tires be bolted to each wheel that the cars eventually came out of the mire mostly under their own power, though it took the united efforts of thirty white men, Negroes and Indians together with a tractor pulling on a rope, to dislodge some of them.

All hands arrived in Miami April 21st with the cars which were placed in the local Ford garage. On Sunday morning members of the party donned old clothes and motored to Coconut Grove to enact realistic stunts for the moving picture man. That afternoon we paraded down Flagler Street, to the city park, where we were welcomed by the mayor. Immediately after the ceremony three of the cars pulled out for the homeward journey to Fort Myers by way of Fort Pierce, Okeechobee City, Palmdale and LaBelle.

A log of the trip from Fort Myers to Miami shows:

	Miles
Fort Myers	.0
Estero	15.6
Bonita Springs	22.9
Naples Junction	37.3
Henderson Creek	46.9
Marco Junction	48.5
Royal Palm Hammock	55.5
End of Lee County Grade	68.9
Camp, Thursday, April 5	70.9
Seminole City (Deep Lake R.R.)	72.2
Lemon Camp (Camp Fri., April 6)	72.4
Seminole Camp (Abe's relatives)	76.6
Camp Saturday, April 7 (end of Turner's River Cypress)	80.4
Deserted Indian Camp (near Turner's River)	82.2
Gator Hook Cypress Strand	84.4
Noon C amp (end of strand)	84.6
End of Marl Prairie	87.2
Skillet Camp	87.4
Survey Stake, Tamiami Trail	88.1
Clark Taylor's well in Prairie	91.3
Camp Sunday, Apr. 8 (Pine Island)	92.8
Camp Monday, April 9 (Gannett Strand)	98.1
Abe's Hunting Camp (Rocky Hammock)	99.6
Beginning Roberts Lake Strand	100.7
Camp Tuesday, April 10 (R. L. strand)	100.8
Camp Wednesday, April 11 (R. L. strand)	101.8
Met Relief Party (Monroe County)	103.1
Billie Roberts Camp	115.9
Dredge (end of Dade County Grade)	120.
Miami	163.

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