DITCH OF DREAMS

The Cross Florida Barge Canal and the Struggle for Florida’s Future

Steven Noll and David Tegeder
Hubbard Hart
Steamboat entrepreneur of the late 19th century
Ocklawaha River
Ocklawaha, St. Johns and Silver Springs Rivers and Silver Springs

FIRST CLASS TOURIST STEAMER SERVICE


Steamers leave Palatka Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 12:30 noon, or after arrival of morning trains from Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Miami. Returning leave Silver Springs Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 1:30 p.m. on arrival of trains from Tampa, Orlando and Ocoa.

See Time Schedule of Hart Line Booklet

Passengers advised to secure reservation of state room berths in advance by letter or telegram to

R. W. THOMPSON, Gen. Manager, Hart Line
Hart's Block, Palatka, Florida, P. O. Box A

Palatka, Florida,
Tourists Shooting at Alligators
FLORIDA—THE KEY OF THE GULF.

There is not a State in the whole Union that feels the want of internal improvements more than Florida. In every section of the State—east, west, middle or south—it is a constant theme of conversation with the whole population. Such a feeling would not pervade so universally, but for the simple fact, that nature, with her tremendous carving knife, has cut out Florida in such a peculiar, convenient, and accessible shape, whilst old Neptune has surrounded her, and, not content with that, has placed a number of his children inside of her domain as a hostage for the fulfillment of her destiny, which places before the people facilities too important for them to pass over unheeded. Nature has here contributed a large share of her favors, and has lavished her gifts most abundantly upon her favorite; but, like the beautiful of the fairer sex, artificial means are essential to her attractions, as well as to her utility and success.

Amongst the many proposed improvements brought to our notice, the Ship Canal across the St. John’s river, in the vicinity of Palatka, to Tampa Bay, is looked upon as one of the most important.

The Government has recently surveyed this line of canal, and we are now favored with Lieut. M. L. Smith’s (Topographical Engineers) report, which will fully satisfy every unprejudiced mind of the feasibility of the route, the undisputed necessity of the canal, and the magnitude of its influence upon the commerce of the country.
Ship Canal Across Florida.—The beautiful project of constructing a canal across Florida, is said to be impracticable. Gen. Bernard and Major Poussin, then in the service of the United States, undertook the survey in 1826, and made their detailed report in 1829, from which they conclude that there being no port on the coast of Florida, on the side of the Gulf of Mexico, into which vessels drawing more than eight feet of water can enter, and the ridge of Florida having an average height of one hundred and twenty feet, and there being no means of supplying water at the summit level, a ship canal across Florida is impracticable.—N. O. Crescent, June 14th.
Atlantic-Gulf Canal Starts Its Own

The route of the Florida Canal, which will join the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic, is shown on the map above. On the left, Lieut. Col. Bhron B. Somervell, Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, who is in charge of construction of the new waterway, which will be of immense benefit to shippers in the Gulf States.

Miami fears the Atlantic-Gulf Canal.
BIRD'S EYE VIEW
Of the canal across Florida from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean, as it will appear when completed.
NAILED TO A CROSS, WITH LIPS SEWED

Florida Man Found in Woods at Ocala—Figured in Labor Difficulties, He Says.

POLICE REMOVE SPIKES

Chief Calls Victim a Red—Sheriff Asserts the Case 'Looks Like a Fake to Me.'

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

OCALA, Fla., March 18.—George J. Timmerman, an unemployed bricklayer, was found nailed to a cross in a heavily wooded section near here today. His lips were sewn shut and a heavy hunting coat was tied over his head to muffle his groans.

Timmerman, who is 30 years old, was unable to give a reason for the assault. Officers, however, said he had been engaged in labor difficulties on the cross-State canal.

The man was found by a friend, James White, who heard weak groans as he was en route to his work at Camp Roosevelt, headquarters for construction on the Florida ship canal. He found Timmerman semiconscious.

Policemen summoned by White removed the spikes that had been driven through each of Timmerman's hands and both feet, and pulled out the stitches in his lips. They took him to a hospital. It was said he would live.

Timmerman mumbled that he was on his way to the scene of operations on the Gulf Atlantic ship canal to seek work when a man with a pistol halted him. He said the man forced him to enter the wooded section, where a heavy coat was thrown over his head and some one choked him.

Three or four other men joined in the attack, Timmerman said, and one of them told him:

"This ought to teach you to keep your trap shut. You should have stayed out of Florida while you were away."

Timmerman said he saw but one man and did not know him. The victim came here from St. Augustine, Fla., late last year and worked on the canal right of way until he was discharged.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
New York Times (1857-Current file); Mar 19, 1936; pg. 3
OFFICERS HERE BELIEVE CROSS CASE IS "FAKE"

County and City Authority Obtain New Evidence as Zimmerman Leaves Hospital

By UNANIMOUS VOTE COUNCIL AUTHORIZES REICH

GARNER Government Charges With Valuating Two Pearl Parts

CHARLES F. RHEE

C. E. M. Garner, who as police chief of the city and county has been in charge of the investigation of the shooting of G. T. Zimmerman in the public hospital, Monday morning, ordered the release of G. M. Zimmermann on bond.

The bond was set at $500 and the defendant was released. He was also charged with having made a false report to the police department.

The defendant has been held in jail since Saturday night.

FRIDAY, MARCH 22

Unidentified man found dead in hospital

An unidentified man was found dead in the hospital on Saturday night. The body was brought to the morgue. The cause of death is unknown.

The man was about 35 years old and was last seen alive on Saturday afternoon.

Police are investigating the case.

Senator votes on canal approval

Washington, March 22—President Roosevelt has signed the bill for the Ocala-Mina Canal. The bill was sent to the Senate last week.

The canal will cost $25,000,000.

WITNESS CALLS SENATE PROBERS POLECAT GROUP

WASHINGTON, March 22—Witnesses called by the Senate Probers' Committee in the case of the late Dr. W. M. Pollock, died in 1934, have testified before the committee.

The witnesses were called by the committee to investigate the charges made by Dr. Pollock against a number of medical men.

The committee is expected to report its findings soon.

AS CAMERAMEN SAW DRAMATIC FLOOD SCENE

Williamson accompanies installation of new equipment

Washington, March 22—Williamson, who has accompanied the new equipment to the building, said that he saw the equipment being installed.

Williamson said that the new equipment was installed in the building.

The equipment is expected to be ready for use in a few weeks.

APPROVAL FOR RELIEF GRANT IS PREDICTED

Washington, March 22—President Roosevelt has approved the relief grant for the Ocala-Mina Canal.

The grant will cost $25,000.

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FLORIDA’S CANAL STILL AROUSES IRE

Majority Accepts Army’s Word, but Southern Part of State Remains Opposed.

By HARRIS G. SIMS.
Editorial Correspondence, THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LAKELAND, Fla., Jan. 3.—A report made recently by the War Department to dispel the fears of those who are convinced that the cross-State ship canal now under construction will ruin much of Florida’s water supply has had little effect in changing the opinion of many directly interested in the project.

The average Floridian with only a layman’s knowledge of geology received the report as an official assurance that the Atlantic-Gulf waterway would be a good thing. His opinion, of course, is largely that of the passive and relatively disinterested spectator.

Furthermore, some of the anti-canalists have been quieted by the report because they regard it as unmistakable evidence that the issue is closed and that construction of the canal will be carried to completion.

Those more vigorously opposed to the project, however, have been aroused to explosive ire. The report says that the canal’s “only effect will be a dragdown of the ground water level for a distance of not to exceed ten or fifteen miles on either side of the deep cut of the canal.” This statement is pointed to by opponents as an admission rather than an explanation.

Most of the attacks are coming from farmers along the canal route, who maintain that they are more certain than ever that their supply of fresh water will be cut off, and from residents of South Florida, who oppose the project for various other reasons.

Pro-canalists point to the report as complete assurance that the waterway will bring many benefits.
Sinking of the GulfAmerica off Jacksonville Beach

April 11, 1942 – A new argument for the canal
Mr. Bert N. Dash,
Member, Executive Committee
of Canal Counties,
Ocala, Florida.

Dear Bert:

I want to extend to you my personal congratulations and appreciation for the canal victory which you, through faith, work and devotion to the task over the years, have made possible. You have accomplished victory over the most powerful opposition in the United States.

Senators Pepper and Andrews both did a splendid job and Senator Pepper, as Acting Chairman of the sub-committee on Commerce, handled the bill marvelously on the floor, particularly during the parliamentary maneuvers at the time of voting.

Please let's not overlook writing and having our friends write both of these Senators and give them a real pat on the back for a job well done. This is important!

The next task that faces us is to get the work under actual construction, and we have already started upon this phase. You may depend upon it that the opposition will not diminish its efforts, but will increase them at every point right up to the day that the canal is actually opened to traffic.

Warmest personal regards.

Sincerely,

WALTER F. COACHMAN, JR.,
Executive Vice President.
THE WATERWAY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA

GULF I.C.W.
EXICAN BORDER — 4 -- ST. MARKS

CROSS-FLORIDA
BARGE CANAL

SANFORD
TITUSVILLE
CANAL
(Proposed)

I.C.W.
ANCLOTE RIVER
TO
CALOOSANATCHEE
RIVER

OKEECHOBEE
WATERWAY

OPEN BAY WATER ROUTES
(Needed Projects)

POSSIBLE
CONNECTIONS

AUTHORIZED PROJECTS

COMPLETED
A Surprise Package From Washington
1/23/64
The Governor of the State of Florida
The Canal Authority of the State of Florida
in cooperation with
The United States Army, Corps of Engineers
cordially invite you to the
Groundbreaking for the Cross Florida Barge Canal
Thursday, February 27, 1964
at the Rodeheaver Boys Ranch
Honored Guest
The President of the United States

Program 11:00 a.m. Barbecue 1:00 p.m.
Dirt Is Turned On Barge Canal

President Sets Off Charge Of Dynamite

Thousands On Hand For Groundbreaking Event

Cross-State Canal Route

Tax Bill Is Signed, Sealed; Fatter Pay Checks Due Soon

FDR Pressed Button In '35 To Start Canal Work

In Viet Nam

Premier Claims French

Reminder Of The Past

History Repeats Itself
The Rains Came, But So Did President Johnson

Over 10,000 Welcome First Family

WASHINGTON (UPI) - Thursday's white house declared that "additional protective measures would be taken for President Johnson's trip to Florida Thursday because of the weather conditions." The declaration was made by a spokesman for the Secret Service, which said that "additional protective measures" would be taken "as a precautionary measure."

LBJ's Trip Well Guarded

NEIGHBORING COUNTIES HELPED WITH SECURITY

President Orders FBI To Halt FEC Sabotage

The President, in a move to halt FEC sabotage, ordered FBI agents to investigate the matter.

ST AUGUSTINE, Fla. (UPI) - The FBI began an investigation into the alleged sabotage of the FEC.

A PROTECTIVE UMBRELLA is put over Mrs. Johnson as she leaves the White House today. The President is scheduled to leave for a trip to Florida today, according to the White House.

Kay Larkin Airport Has Busy Day

At least 10 airplanes came to the Kay Larkin Airport today, bringing a total of 40 passengers. The airport has been busy all day, with a steady stream of planes arriving and departing.

Neighboring Counties Helped With Security

By FRED P. GREEN

Daily News Staff Writer

But Sheriff Puller did not have enough men on his staff to take care of all the area and he sent some of his men to help out in neighboring counties.

On the trip from the Kay Larkin Airport to the White House, Mrs. Johnson, looking trim and neat, was in a car with her driver, Mrs. Bryant. They were accompanied by a large group of Secret Service agents.

This large group of agents and staff members were on hand to take care of Mrs. Johnson and other dignitaries who were arriving at the White House.

The security at Kay Larkin Airport was tight, with a large number of Secret Service agents and federal marshals on hand to check the luggage and clear the area before the aircraft could land.

Neighboring counties were also helping with security, with a large number of local law enforcement officers on hand to assist with the task.

The President's motorcade arrived at the White House at 12:30 p.m., with a large crowd waiting to welcome him. The President, accompanied by Mrs. Johnson, greeted the crowd with a smile and a wave.
For The Time Allotted, They'll Hardly Stand On Ceremony
2/27/64
Holiday Inn
OF AMERICA

WELCOME
CROSS FLORIDA
BARGE CANAL
Marjorie Carr - “Our Lady of the River”
"So If It Doesn't Work, We'll Do Something Else"
The Crusher

Efficient Engineering Marvel or Environmental Destroyer?
Figure 9. View north toward Deep Creek from barge canal spoil bank showing remains of crushed trees - 6 September 1972 - pool elevation 13+ feet, m.s.l.
Marjorie Carr receives an environmental award from Governor Claude Kirk ~ 1969
From a “mere Micanopy housewife” to a major political player
Environmental Impact
of the
Cross-Florida Barge Canal
with special emphasis on the
Oklawaha Regional Ecosystem

Florida Defenders of the Environment
Box 12063,
Gainesville, Florida 32601
Conservationists Sue to Halt Cross-Florida Canal

WASHINGTON, Sept. 17—A group of conservationists from across the country filed suit in Federal Court yesterday to stop the construction of a $165-million barge canal across Florida. Environmental Defense Fund, Inc., a conservation group composed mainly of lawyers and scientists and based in Storrs Brook, L. I., asked the United States District Court in Washington for an injunction to stop the canal.

William M. Partington, assistant director of the Florida Audubon Society and a leader of the channel's opponents, said today that Florida conservationists had been upset by the proposed channel for years. They were prompted to file suit yesterday, he said, by the recent controversy over the proposed jetport in big Cypress Swamp that endangers the Everglades National Park in the southwest part of the state.

"The jetport controversy made our timing appropriate because it focused national attention on Florida," Mr. Partington said.

Palatka to Yankeetown

The channel is about 27 percent completed and would extend for 107 miles within Florida from Palatka south of Jacksonville to Yankeetown on the Gulf of Mexico.

The suit, filed against the Secretary of the Army and the Army Corps of Engineers, charges that the channel would "permanently and irreparably" damage the Oldsawaha River in north Florida and would drastically alter the ecological balance in the waterway's vicinity.

The Corps of Engineers is also charged in the suit with understimating the cost of building the canal, which is projected now at $165-million.

Roderick A. Cameron, executive director of the Environmental Defense Fund, said today that Congress authorized building the canal as a military waterway in 1942, but placed the channel on the inactive list after World War II. In 1964, Congress appropriated enough funds to start construction.

Mr. Cameron said the purpose of the canal, as envisioned during the war, was to shelter ships arriving from trans-Atlantic voyages so that vessels on their way to ports on Florida's western coast could avoid rounding the southern tip of the state by using the canal. At the time, it was feared that enemy submarines were lurking off the coast.

Argument of Corps

The Corps of Engineers argues that Florida's commercial barge traffic, which transports mostly fertilizers and other chemicals, would increase greatly if the canal is built.

The corps also says a canal would become popular for recreation, such as for boating.

Mr. Partington said the proposed 12-foot deep and 150-mile wide canal "has no real benefits" and was "just make-work project for the Corps of Engineers."

Another active opponent of the canal, Dr. David B. Anthony, a biochemist at the University of Florida, said: "The canal would destroy about 40 miles of the Oldsawaha and some 27,000 acres of hardwood forest along the river."

"As a result," he said, "it will convert a magnificent scenic river and extensive forest land into shallow, weed-filled impoundments."

The Oldsawaha River is about 140 miles long and runs through central and northern Florida.

Plans for a canal in Florida were first made by Congress in the 1920's. Andrew Jackson was believed to have been an advocate of the channel for military purposes. Since then, Congress has considered the waterway several times.

In the struggle over the Everglades jetport, conservationists have received support from Dr. Luna Leopold, one of the nation's leading ecologists and senior research scientists of the Water Resources Division of the Interior Department's Geological Survey.

A study prepared for the Interior Department by Dr. Leopold says that the jetport would "inexorably destroy the south Florida ecosystem and thus the Everglades National Park."

The report also concludes that an existing pilot training airstrip on the jetport site near the park is "in tolerable" because it will lead to "urbanization and drainage, which would destroy the ecosystem."

Last week, Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel, Transportation Secretary John A. Volpe and Gov. Claude R. Kirk pledged to save the Everglades, but endorsed maintaining the training strip. They said that measures would be taken to make sure the 500 training flights a day would not seriously pollute the water supply.

The Leopold report, however, stressed that its objection to the training facility did not center on flight operations. "The development in the surrounding land is already beginning, as a result merely of the probability that the airport will grow in size and importance," the report said. "Assuming the present types and operation of land use control, this development tendency will proceed unabated."

"So long as the training airport is in use," the report said, "pressures and plans for its expansion will continue and will inexorably and surely lead to ecosystem destruction completely."

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Federal Judge Halts Construction On Cross-Florida Barge Canal

By Sanford J. Ungar
Washington Post Staff Writer

A federal judge, ruling on a lawsuit by the Environmental Defense Fund, halted construction yesterday of the long-disputed Cross-Florida Barge Canal.

Declaring that he must "weigh the public interest" as well as fiscal and statutory considerations, U.S. District Judge Barrington D. Parker granted a preliminary injunction directing the Army Corps of Engineers to suspend the project, which was first authorized by Congress in 1942.

Construction began in 1964 and was expected to take another 30 years.
Help!!

Barge Canal Decision

Florida

Money Already Invested
“Don’t be alarmed, Sir, I’m a treasure hunter. I heard the taxpayers have lost millions of dollars in this thing!”
Top Ten Reasons to Restore the Ocklawaha River

1. Rodman Reservoir is an unhealthy ecosystem. The shallow weed-choked reservoir has experienced poor water quality, resulting in massive fish kills. (In 1985, 8.5 million dead fish; in 1987, 2.5 million dead fish; and in October 2000, 2 million dead fish.)

2. Greater economic opportunity. Restoring the Ocklawaha River and its associated 20 natural springs, now submerged by the reservoir, will bring economic development through increased ecotourism and a greater diversity of recreational opportunities. Plus, fishing will continue on the restored river and on area lakes.

3. Save taxpayer money. We now spend $300,000 to $500,000 every year in state tax dollars maintaining a dam that serves no purpose. A 2003 DEP analysis concluded that an additional $7.69 million of repairs would be needed on the dam and lock structures in the next two to three years. Restoration of this river will cost $13.9 million - for the amount of money the state has spent maintaining the dam since 1991 we could have a restored river by now.

4. River is better for drinking water. A water management district study concluded there would be more water available from a restored Ocklawaha without negative environmental impacts. It said water removal from the reservoir will stimulate hydrilla growth leading to low oxygen in the water and large fish kills.

5. Valuable wetlands will be created. Breaching Rodman Dam will restore 16 miles of river creating about 7,500 acres of forested floodplain wetlands, one of the most threatened ecosystems in Florida. (Fish and wildlife now at the reservoir will not be harmed by restoration the US Fish & Wildlife Service concluded.)

6. Protecting Endangered species. Several Threatened or Endangered species will benefit from breaching Rodman Dam including: manatee, black bear, indigo snake and Atlantic sturgeon. DEP studies show the dam is degrading the St. Johns River by blocking natural water and nutrient flows and the movement of animals.

7. Greater fish diversity. At least 13 species of fish are eliminated or drastically reduced in the Ocklawaha River watershed by maintaining Rodman Dam. Breaching Rodman Dam will allow the manatee, eel and migratory fish like shad, striped bass and mullet to commute freely to the upper Ocklawaha and Silver Springs for the first time since dam completion in 1968.

8. Greater number of sport fish. A comparison of sport fish abundance from the 1970s to 1993 showed a decrease from 67% to 16% in the Rodman Reservoir. Largemouth bass, specifically, dropped from 15% to 2% of the fish caught in the reservoir. The study concluded 1981 was the peak year for largemouth bass in the reservoir.


10. It's the right thing to do! Restoring the Ocklawaha River will provide the greatest economic and ecological benefits for the state of Florida and its citizens.
Rodman must be saved from the small but highly vocal minority that want it destroyed. The ecosystem supports many endangered plants and animals and has become a fisherman's paradise. The barge canal, in the beginning, may well have been an ill conceived project but just look at the tremendous recreational resource and animal habitat we have today!
Reservoir reservations
Proposed marina on Rodman reignites Ocklawaha battle

It's one of the most ambitious undertakings to capitalize on a local man-made wonder - or, some would say, one of the most foolhardy.
The owners of an RV park in Fort McCoy want to construct a 400-slip boat marina on Rodman Reservoir.
To take further advantage of their proximity to the 9,000-acre waterway, the Lake Oklawaha RV Park's owners also want to lay a 3,757-foot-long, 10-foot-wide shoreline boardwalk.
The estimated cost is in the neighborhood of $2 million, according to the contractor.

Opponents assert that the plan, if approved, would severely harm the environment. But it would also prove to be for naught, and thus should be stopped.
Since the reservoir will eventually be drained, they maintain, hundreds of fishing boats will - literally - be left high and dry.
Yet the project will go forward for now, primarily because the contractor believes the history surrounding the reservoir indicates that the water will be there long after he, and those opposing him, are gone.
Besides reigniting the decades-long battle over the restoration of the Ocklawaha River, the marina proposal has inspired one of the more fevered - and, to a large extent, orchestrated - protest campaigns state water regulators have seen recently.
Official state policy, dating back more than a decade, is to remove Kirkpatrick Dam, the construction of which created the reservoir in 1968 by plugging the river and flooding part of the Ocala National Forest.
New fight looms over stretch of Ocklawaha River flooded by Rodman Dam

March 4, 2012  By Kevin Spear, Orlando Sentinel

One of Florida's oldest environmental conflicts is heating up again, with two outdoors groups mounting a new effort to tear down a dam and restore a stretch of the Ocklawaha River north of Orlando that was once a crystal-clear ribbon of water flowing past clusters of springs.

The long-abandoned Cross Florida Barge Canal, an ill-fated attempt to carve a shipping route across Florida's peninsula, included the building of a dam in the 1960s that flooded 21 miles of the Ocklawaha east of Gainesville. Outraged environmentalists fought the dam before it was built and have lobbied since its construction to have it removed. Now they have given legal notice that they intend to sue the federal government this spring in hopes of forcing authorities to protect endangered wildlife by eliminating the structure and the reservoir behind it.

"The ecological value of the Ocklawaha as a restored river would be unmatched in Florida," said Erin Condon, executive director of Florida Defenders of the Environment, which has joined with the Florida Wildlife Federation in giving notice of their intent to sue. "It's one of Florida's most historic and beautiful rivers, and we want to see it back in that state again," Condon said.

The reservoir, which drowned 9,000 acres of Ocklawaha River and adjoining forest, is now partly drained in an effort to fight the growth of nuisance weeds and the buildup of muck that occur when the reservoir is full. The lower water level has revealed a graveyard of thousands of tree stumps that outline the river's winding channel. The resulting scenery, often described as eerie but compelling, has been attracting a steady turnout of visitors.

"They are stunned by what lies beneath all that water and encouraged to see the river herself, flowing virtually undamaged by the canal project," said Karen Ahlers, a member of the Putnam County Environmental Council. "So many people think the river was dredged and straightened … but quickly understand the potential for restoration."
Riverkeeper reaches deal with JaxPort, chamber
Agreement includes breaching Rodman Dam, restoring Ocklawaha River

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St. Johns River compromise