

HISTORY of NAPLES, FLORIDA

| Chapter | Title | Page | Chapter | Title | Page |
|---------|----------------------------|------|---------|--------------------------|------|
| 0 | Index & Introduction | 1 | 5.9 | Where do we work | 87 |
| 1.1 | Calusa Beginnings | 3 | 5.10 | Living Legacies | 91 |
| 1.2 | Calusa Empire | 7 | 5.11 | Women | 97 |
| 1.3 | Calusa Relics on Marco | 8 | 5.12 | Gladesmen | 102 |
| 1.4 | Seminole Wars | 11 | 5.13 | Murderers | 105 |
| 1.5 | Early Locals | 13 | 5.14 | Rum Runners | 109 |
| 1.6 | Colliers on Marco | 17 | 5.15 | Mr Watson | 112 |
| 1.7 | Game Changers | 18 | 5.16 | Stadium | 114 |
| 2.1 | Ft Myers | 19 | 5.17 | Swamp Buggies | 117 |
| 2.2 | Italy | 21 | 5.18 | Sports | 119 |
| 2.3 | Koreshan Unity | 22 | 5.19 | Mousquito Control | 122 |
| 2.4 | Ted Smallwood | 25 | 5.20 | Hospital | 125 |
| 2.5 | Escaping Winter | 27 | 5.21 | Hurricanes | 128 |
| 2.6 | Game Changers | 31 | 5.22 | Charities | 130 |
| 3.1 | Collier, ahead of his time | 33 | 5.23 | Arts | 132 |
| 3.2 | David Copeland | 36 | 5.24 | Museums | 134 |
| 3.3 | First Mayor | 39 | 5.25 | Historian Doris Reynolds | 136 |
| 3.4 | Orange Blossom Special | 40 | 5.26 | Hurricane Donna | 137 |
| 3.5 | Vision of Collier | 42 | 5.27 | Naples Zoo | 143 |
| 3.6 | Tamiami Trail | 47 | 5.28 | Remember Donna | 146 |
| 3.7 | Game Changers | 50 | 5.29 | Black Community | 149 |
| 4.1 | War Years | 52 | 5.30 | Naples Built on Water | 152 |
| 4.2 | Training Pilots | 57 | 5.31 | Changes in Education | 156 |
| 4.3 | Tourism | 59 | 5.32 | Sunniland Oil | 159 |
| 4.4 | Port Royal | 61 | 5.33 | Game Changers | 161 |
| 4.5 | Game Changers | 63 | 6.1 | Construction | 162 |
| 5.1 | Naples Pier | 65 | 6.2 | Environment | 166 |
| 5.2 | Nearby Cities | 67 | 6.3 | Building | 171 |
| 5.3 | Architecture of Naples | 69 | 6.4 | Game Changers | 174 |
| 5.4 | Fifth Avenue & Third St | 72 | 7.1 | Economy | 175 |
| 5.5 | Everglades City | 75 | 7.2 | F G C U | 180 |
| 5.6 | Bonita Springs | 78 | 7.3 | Hope For Haiti | 182 |
| 5.7 | Marco | 80 | 7.4 | Oil Rig Explosion | 185 |
| 5.8 | Immokalee | 84 | 7.5 | Game Changers | 186 |

Naples Daily News Lighthouse Project

Five hundred years ago Spanish explorers and missionaries visited Southwest Florida in search of gold, glory and souls to save. They found the Calusa, a proud people thriving in and around what is now Naples, Bonita Springs and Marco Island. The Calusa religion confounded the Spanish priests who offered salvation through the father, son and holy spirit.

The Calusas had a trilogy of their own: the past, the present and the future. They believed a person's shadow represented the past, the pupil of the eye was the present and an individual's bright, shimmery reflection in the water was the future.

In a way, the Calusa belief system serves as an inspiration for our Lighthouse Project that kicks off today with this special 112-page section celebrating the history of Southwest Florida. Before the end of the month two more special sections will be published — one on who we are today as a community and the other on what our future may hold.

The project is a renewed commitment to inform, engage and empower the community we serve. That is the mission of a daily newspaper, a commitment to remain uniquely relevant as we approach our 100th birthday that's little more than a decade away.

The lighthouse is a symbol of our motto as an E.W. Scripps newspaper: "Give light and the people will find their own way." To help shine a light on where we are headed we need to examine our past, know who we are today and look into the future. We thank all those who have helped and will continue to help us in this mission.



Phil Lewis, executive editor



Dave Neill, publisher

Chapter 1 <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/apr/01/early-locals-calusa-lighthouse-project/>

Chapter 2 <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/apr/01/building-utopia-koreshan-unity-faith-estero/>

Chapter 3 <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/apr/01/game-changers-chapter-three-barron-gift-collier/>

Chapter 4 <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/apr/01/the-game-changers-chapter-four-modern-era/>

Chapter 5 <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/apr/03/changing-economy-work-evolve-grown-lighthouse/>

Chapter 5A Winds of Change <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/apr/02/hurricane-donna-legacy-collier-lighthouse/?lighthouse=1>

Chapter 6 <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/apr/02/game-changers-chapter-six-lighthouse/>

Chapter 7 <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/apr/03/economy-boomed-red-light-loomed-horizon-lighthouse/>

Chapter 8 Who we are, etc <http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/apr/22/lighthouse-who-we-are-middle-population-older/>

CHAPTER ONE: Ancient to 1873 Calusa Beginnings

Before we came, they were here. They were the Calusa, a centuries-old chiefdom with a reign stretching between Florida's coasts. They were the Spanish, who brought disease that decimated the natives. They were the Creeks and Yamasee, who toted guns and chased the Calusa to Cuba. They were the Seminoles, who sought refuge from a vengeful military. They were the early settlers, searching for a rural, tropical paradise. In Southwest Florida's earliest days, they all came. Almost all went. And they left behind a fascinating legacy. They all fought for a piece of this valuable land, the place we call home.



Our slice of paradise was always going to be a popular place to live. It was inevitable.

Indeed, people have called Southwest Florida home for millennia. Archeologists tell us the earliest indigenous people hunted mastodon here during the last Ice Age.

Although here, meaning the Greater Naples area, was 50 miles inland at the time. The oceans being lower, a consequence of Global Cooling.

The Calusa, numbering some 10,000 strong, headquartered their civilization on what is today Mound Key. They were a warlike force to be reckoned with when the earliest Spanish explorers arrived in the 1500s.



The flat-bottomed boat Kokomis, shown docked at the old Keewaydin Club in 1989 when still operational, ferried guests across Gordon Pass from the tip of Port Royal to Key Island. Launched in 1934, the Kokomis made the five-minute crossing between Naples and Keewaydin until 1999. A ceremony Friday at the Collier County Museum dedicated the refurbished vessel which will be an exhibit at the museum.

Ask Juan Ponce de Leon. His apocryphal search for the Fountain of Youth died, along with him, at the point of a poisoned arrow.

But the Calusa were no match for the two gifts the European interlopers bestowed upon them: disease and gunpowder.

And the Seminoles — really a conglomeration of Creek tribes driven out of Alabama and Georgia by white intruders, ultimately were forced to give ground here, too.

Their departure cleared the way for the next round of settlers: snowbirds.

They arrived by boat, a handful at first, from places such as Kentucky and Ohio. They came to visit. And some decided this would be a great place to live, to set up the tourist trade.

They founded the cities and towns we live in today. And what began as a trickle became a flood in the latter half of the 20th century as people poured into the Sun Belt.



Consider: Fewer than 16,000 people lived in Collier County in 1960. Today it is north of 300,000. A 20-fold increase in 50-odd years. And that number does not reflect the annual population bulge during what we fondly call "the season."

All of Florida was going through a stunning growth spurt during those years, flocking to the coasts, swelling established towns and starting new ones.

There is only so much waterfront property, after all, and it was destined to be snapped up. Inevitable.

What was not inevitable, though, was the character and the culture of these rapidly growing cities.

God may have made the sun and sand and sea, but men and women made the decisions that defined how we live.



Lower the top on the family jalopy and take a tour of the peninsula's perimeter, all 1,197 miles of Florida coastline.

Key West at the southernmost tip, laid-back, Parrothead country, could hardly be more different than button-downed, military-creased Pensacola.

Jacksonville really is South Georgia; Miami is North Havana. Panama City Beach is cheap motels, beach bars and tattoo parlors. Naples is

Well, Naples is different.

Naples is dinner cruises sailing out of Gordon Pass into the Gulf, and fishing charters in search of trophies and catch-and-release.

It's the multi-million dollar homes of Port Royal. It's the Phil and Fifth Avenue South. And the Naples Beach Hotel, and the Waldorf Astoria and the Ritz — and the other Ritz. And the Naples Winter Wine Festival.



And golf courses. Is it ever. More golf courses per capita than anywhere else in the world, reportedly.

But Naples and environs isn't all glitz and glamour. Sure, it's dancing after dark at Handsome Harry's, but it's also doin' the Buzzard Lope, mixing it up with Harley drivers and Queen Mary, down at Stan's Idle Hour in Goodland.

It's airboat tours through the sawgrass of the 'Glades and checking out the skinks and scat on the boardwalk at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

It's Nordstrom and Saks and Gucci, sure, but it's also Tin City and Master Bait and Tackle.

It's Norman Love chocolate and Dairy Queen. Bentleys and swamp buggies.

It's gated communities up and down the southwestern coast. And it's farms and farm workers east of I-75.



The Naples area is easy beach access, and all the beaches are public, unlike other less hospitable stretches of shoreline in the Sunshine State. You may not own a mansion on the beach, but the beach is just as much yours as anyone's. As are the spectacular sunsets.

Yes, Naples is a playground for the Jet Set, and that's what it's famous for. But it is so much more. What it is, is unique. And it got that way deliberately.

Greater Naples, Southwest Florida, the Paradise Coast — whatever moniker you want to use — is no accident, it's not random.

It is the result of pioneering and visionary people who gambled on taming a wilderness. People who had the audacity to build roadways through swamps to link the coasts. Who named counties and towns after themselves. People who built grand hotels drawing the likes of the Edisons, Fords and Lindberghs in the early years and presidents and princes today. People who rebuilt after hurricanes. And rebuilt again. People who constructed homes, schools and universities. And hospitals. And marinas. And restaurants—lots of them. It's the consequence of people who have loved this place. Who have given of their lives and treasure so that we can enjoy the communities we have today.



Did they pave paradise to put up parking lots? Yep. But that pavement leads to the beach, and to the Pier, and the galleries, and the theaters, and the opera, and the never-ending succession of arts festivals — all the things that make this place popular. Why, in part, we call this place paradise.

That said, we've learned. Vast acreage has been set aside and wetlands restoration efforts are underway. People have literally laid down their lives to protect the environment here. Still, the tension between growth and preservation is destined to be an ongoing struggle.

So, our stretch of coast may no longer be an untamed natural wonder, but by any reasonable standard it is unquestionably a wonderful place to live.

And that's no accident.

On purpose. That's what Naples and its surrounding communities are. Cities and a region whose character has been defined by the people who have lived here. A place that is still evolving. A work in progress.

How will that work in progress unfold? What will the future hold? We will provide the answers to those questions through the choices we make.

To make the best decisions, it is useful to understand how we got here in the first place.

Which is what this special edition of the Naples Daily News is all about: a look at our yesterdays to help us shape our tomorrows.

CHAPTER ONE : Ancient to 1873 Calusa Empire



Mound Key, in Estero Bay, was the ancient capital of the Calusa nation.

On a remote Estero Bay island accessible only by boat, southern Florida's capital city once stood. For centuries, the Calusa kingdom called Mound Key home. Thousands of tribe members would live on the 181-acre island, building a rich history that can still be found in its shell mounds that reach 30 feet high.



FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

This conception of the Calusa king's house on Mound Key is considered to be accurate. Although many Americans view native societies as sometimes crude and simple, the Calusa, like many native groups, were skilled architects and builders. They also developed a complex political system that influenced nearly all of Florida.

"From all indications, that was the capital town for many, many hundreds of years," said scholar Jerald Milanich, who has extensively researched the Calusa.

For reasons unknown, Mound Key became the cultural and political epicenter of Southwest Florida's first and largest tribe, serving as the capital and home of its chief. Other Calusa sites — Marco Island, the Ten Thousand Islands, Pine Island, Useppa Island — bear the tribe's artifacts, but none are repeatedly named in historical documents as the hub of Calusa activities.

From Mound Key, the chief, or cacique, ruled tribes spanning from Tampa to Key West, hosting occasional Spanish and Jesuit dignitaries and organizing attacks on unwanted visitors. One historical drawing depicts a large, domed house for nobles that could comfortably hold 2,000 people. Inside that home, the cacique lived luxuriously.

"He sits in a special seat, he's fanned by people as incense burns, and he has a special house," said William Marquardt, director of the Randell Research Center in Pineland, which documents Calusa heritage. "He has

power of life and death over his subjects. The Spaniards say he has special knowledge and communicates with the spirit world. He's a true king. He's not just some village chief."

The island also was home to hundreds, if not thousands, of tribe members whose shell mounds gradually rose above the Estero Bay waters.

Researchers might question how Mound Key became the Calusa capital, but those mounds, made out of Calusa trash, offer a hint. The island's nearby estuary provided plentiful shellfish, the remnants of which form the mounds.

"People are misled to think it was a pile of refuse," said John Paeno, who gives guided tours of the island. "I always start out by describing them as a large and important civilization, with central canals and pyramids that are thousands of years old on Mound Key."

Mound Key



After centuries of rule, Mound Key and the surrounding Calusa sites were abandoned in the early to mid-1700s, when European diseases and American Indian invaders from Northern Florida wiped out the civilization. Pirates and looters would occasionally dock at the island in the 1800s, hiding out in the land protected by Fort Myers Beach.

Now, the state owns all but nine acres of the island, which is open to the public. Evidence about why Mound Key became the capital could be held under those shell mounds, but for now, the land will remain untouched.

"Why that was the capital city, I don't think any of us will quite know," Milanich said.

CHAPTER ONE: Calusa relics in a Marco Bog



Frank Hamilton Cushing

Braving swarming mosquitoes, daily downpours and repugnant swamps, anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing spent five months along the Southwest Florida shoreline in 1896 digging through coastal muck. All the while, as he and two men cut through mangroves and slogged through slime, Cushing documented his expedition in search of American Indian artifacts, stunned at his findings.

"I may be permitted to add that never in all my life, despite the sufferings this labor involved, was I so fascinated with or interested in anything so much " Cushing wrote.

In that largely untouched bog at present-day Marco Island, Cushing, a misunderstood and envied figure of the time, led one of America's great archaeological expeditions and unearthed remnants of this area's first people, the Calusa tribe.

If not for Cushing's foresight, little might be known about Southwest Florida's earliest inhabitants. Records kept by Spaniards offered some clues about the Calusa, a fierce and independent group, but Cushing's discovery of hundreds of Calusa artifacts — masks, wood carvings, pottery, woven nets and more — shed light on daily life, rituals and survival tactics.



The Key Marco Cat, maybe the most well-known of all Calusa artifacts.

"Cushing was an eccentric genius, a one-of-a-kind archaeologist that loved field work but also had a visionary imagination where he could look at the artifacts and almost become one with the prehistoric people," said Brent Weisman, a University of South Florida anthropology professor who co-edited Cushing's recently found manuscript.

"He was a very big-picture thinker."

The expedition to the Marco Island area came with a dose of serendipity. Born weighing a pound and a half and afflicted by health problems growing up, making him thin and frail, Cushing devoted himself to anthropology. Enthralled with Indian culture, he spent nearly five years living among New Mexico's Zuni tribe, an unprecedented approach to documenting Native Americans.

Cushing later found himself in Philadelphia at the same time a former British military officer passed through with artifacts he found in Southwest Florida. Recognizing the importance of the artifacts, Cushing commandeered a

boat, the Silver Spray, and brought with him an artist, Wells Sawyer, and a conservator, Carl Bergmann, down the coast to an island known as Key Marco.

The trio, helped by a smattering of recently settled locals, found a unique preservation site of muck and peat.

"There are so few wet sites that we can actually glean info from to know more about the people that lived on this coast," said Phyllis Kolianos, a Cushing researcher and expert.

At Key Marco, Cushing employed revolutionary archeological tactics, carefully mapping and documenting the dig.

While some artifacts disintegrated within seconds of contact with air or sunlight, Cushing unearthed many still-iconic pieces. The famous Key Marco Cat, a 6-inch wooden cougar carving, is held at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., as are several Sawyer paintings of masks. To date, no Florida excavation has revealed a similar number of intricate carvings preserved so well.

Using the findings, Cushing then drew conclusions about Calusa life — their religious beliefs, means of survival, traditions and political structure. Nobody made such links at the time, and few would for decades to come.

"He wasn't an archaeologist that went in there after the artifacts," Kolianos said. "He was looking for how these people lived and more information about their whole living area."

The logic had its critics, who argued Cushing made unscientific leaps between artifact and history. But Cushing's conclusions have been proven right, said Randolph Widmer, a University of Houston associate professor who has written about Cushing.

"At that time, he was either considered a genius or there was incredible jealousy of him," Widmer said.

Four years after the excavation, Cushing died in 1900 from choking on a fish bone. A manuscript of his went unpublished, lost for nearly a century until Kolianos spotted it in 1999 at the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives.

While archaeologists have made several modern Marco Island excavations, including three involving Widmer in the 1990s, rampant development means Cushing's finds may never be matched.

"When I was down there last, they had built condos over almost every part of the site that was there," Kolianos said. "I honestly feel there is very little work that could be done."

CHAPTER ONE: Seminole Wars



Men on horseback re-enact the Second Seminole War. The battle re-enactments honor the Seminoles' struggle and sacrifice to remain in their homeland. In the 1800s, the Seminoles found themselves at war with settlers. Eventually, many boarded ships to move west while several others stayed behind.

It was, the legend goes, a war started over bananas. In the early winter of 1855, 11 soldiers surveying areas outside Fort Myers came across Seminole chief Billy Bowlegs' deserted camp. By some accounts, the men ravaged Bowlegs' land, pilfering bananas in the process.



Hiacleah welcome sign depicts Seminole Indian Jack Tigertail in traditional dress.

Two days later, a group of about 40 Seminoles attacked the soldiers' campsite, killing two and wounding four.

With that, the third and final Seminole War had started.

For the next three-plus years, the U.S. military made its last attempt at pushing out the state's remaining Seminoles, engaging in a costly and haphazard South Florida conflict that ended nearly five decades of battles between the sides.

A cease-fire agreement resulted in about half of the Seminole tribe moving west; the rest staying behind and carrying on the Seminole lineage that remains today.

"I think now (the Third Seminole War) is more of a pride thing," said Seminole tribe member and historian Willie Johns. "We were able to resist almost 50 years of combat from a larger foe, and we kind of wreaked havoc on them, too."



Shirley Brown's uncle Frank Brown is pictured with Seminole Indian Josie Billie in an undated photo. Shirley says her grandfather, William, was the first white man to trade with Seminole Indians in Big Cypress, and he and his family lived in Immokalee long before it was even called Immokalee.

From the outset, the odds were stacked against the Seminoles, outnumbered 15-to-1. Two previous wars against the federal government — one in northern Florida from 1817-18, and a second, bloodier war in Central Florida from 1835-1842 — had pushed the Seminoles south.

Tribe members, however, had a few advantages. They were familiar with the terrain. The vastness of South Florida made tracking the roughly 100 Seminole warriors difficult. And the enemy was unprepared for the challenge.

"I think all those things worked together for the Seminoles," said Brent Weisman, a University of South Florida anthropology professor.

"They certainly had the geography on their side and they used it to their advantage."

Throughout 1855 and much of 1856, the war tilted toward the Seminoles. From Bradenton to Miami, tribe members attacked quickly, avoiding large-scale battles.

"They used small groups and would ambush them guerrilla style — pretty much what we met in Vietnam," Johns said.

Soldiers fire on a Seminole village during a re-enactment of the Battle of Royal Palm Hammock, the final battle in the last Seminole War, during the Native American and Pioneer Festival at Collier-Seminole State Park.

Lacking organization, compensation, and many times sobriety, a miserable Florida volunteer army flailed against the Seminoles.

In his book, "The Seminoles of Florida," historian James W. Covington cited a military account of slogging through the South Florida swamps:

"The grass was two feet higher than our heads and was so dense that we could not see a foot ahead of us. To add to our misery, the sun shone with a terrible force upon us and not a breath of fresh air could reach us. Worse than all, the water was poison and our feet soon felt the effects of it."

A U.S. military reorganization in late 1856 evened the scales, and sporadic fighting continued into the following year. By March 1858, Bowlegs, the Seminole chief, struck a deal with the government: in exchange for moving west, the Seminoles would receive about \$10,000, plus \$500 per warrior and \$100 per woman and child who boarded a ship bound for New Orleans.

About 125 Seminoles left for the West from Fort Myers. An estimated 100 Seminoles stayed behind, including Sam Jones, an iconic Seminole spiritual leader.

"Sam Jones fought to the very end," Johns said. "He survived and lived to be about 90 years old, and he's kind of the strength and soul of the Seminoles."

Among the more than 3,000 Seminole tribe members still in Florida, many have ancestors who stayed behind, living deep in the swamps through decades of poverty and hunger.

"I think the legacy of the war is simply the fact that the Seminoles are still here, that you can try as hard as you want, but if people are determined to stay in their homes they're going to do it," said John Missall, author of "The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict."

"The simple fact that they did hold on and never gave up, it's an inspiration for a lot of people," he said.

CHAPTER ONE: The early locals in SW Florida

There were a variety of settlers here long before we called this place 'home'



Calusa society, on top of the world.

Led by legendary explorer Juan Ponce de León in the winter of 1521, two Spanish ships carrying 200 men sailed onto the Southwest Florida coast where a deadly ambush awaited.



Researchers believe the Calusa were a well-developed society in part because of the proof that remains of artfully designed canals, thought to be constructed entirely by hand. This illustration is of a canal located at the Pineland site.

The Spaniards had made landfall here before in 1513. They stayed for three weeks, exploring the land and occasionally sparring with the mysterious Calusa tribe, a centuries-old people of La Florida.

Eight years later, it was now time to colonize.

But before the Spanish could disembark, Calusa oars hit the saltwater. Eighty canoes rushed toward the Spanish, powered by screaming men armed with poison-laden arrows and spears pointed with sharpened bones. In the fierce battles that followed, dozens of men from both sides were killed. But the invaders were repelled.

De León, the man mythically known for searching for immortality at the fabled Fountain of Youth, was mortally wounded in the thigh by a Calusa arrow, one slathered with sap from the manchineel tree — bearer of the "death apple."

As Calusa scholar John Worth said, de León should have known better.

"He had every reason to believe the Calusa were going to be hostile to him, and yet the place where he met the most resistance is where he brought back two ships," Worth said. "My only theory — other than pure insanity — is he went to the place that had the greatest potential for human labor."

In this area's earliest days, nobody — not de León, not the Spanish politicians, not the religious zealots — could compete with the Calusa, Southwest Florida's greatest chiefdom.

'They found a paradise'

On a cloudy Sunday afternoon in a small Riverside Park artist's cottage, Calusa enthusiast John Paeno sits on a wooden stool, twirling a red bandana in his hands. Chest-length white hair falls over his black vest. Incense burns in the background.

Surrounded by hand-made artifact replicas, Paeno, a former state parks employee in New York, launches into a history of the Calusa Indians — how a capital was established on Mound Key in present-day Estero Bay; how royal infighting and incest bred jealousies; how gun-toting North Florida Indians and European disease became their demise.

The Calusa were a great people, Paeno said, building a civilization they valiantly fought to keep in the days before Barron Collier and the building boom and tourist rush.

"They battled everybody and drove everybody out," said Paeno, who spins Calusa yarns on Sundays in the cabin and leads monthly Mound Key tours. "They found a paradise and they defended it."

No written documentation from before the early 1500s exists about Calusa life, but artifacts offer clues.

The Calusa tended to live close to the coast, where fish and crustaceans were plentiful. They fashioned tools out of shells and were proficient wood carvers. Shell mounds, which can still be found today, piled up along the water. The remnants would form some of the coastal topography and development sites still in use today.

"It's a thriving area of Florida, and the landscape and climate that everybody goes to now — it gives people a connection to the Calusa," said Worth, a professor at the University of West Florida in Pensacola. "Right now, we're eating those very same fish and wading in those very same waters."



Reaching at least 20,000 in population, with a realm stretching north to Lake Okeechobee, east to Miami and south to the Keys, the Calusa controlled a large part of the state until the early 1700s.

While researchers debate the length of the Calusa reign, historians agree the tribe was organized by 500 A.D. at the latest.

Two differing theories explain how the Calusa established their dominance. One suggests it was a natural evolution.

"I think the Calusa developed this system over hundreds of years, maybe around 800 A.D.," Calusa researcher and anthropologist Jerald Milanich said. "When the Spanish show up, I think certainly the social complexity was already there."

William Marquardt, director of the Randell Research Center in Pineland, which documents Calusa heritage, offers another theory, albeit a less popular one: The Spanish had landed in Florida earlier than de León's first voyage, whipping the Calusa into action.

"I think they knew exactly who the Spaniards were," Marquardt said. "Very shortly after that, they figured if they were going to compete with the Spaniards, they would have to develop an enhanced organization."

Regardless of theory, this much is known: The Calusa were a headstrong, isolated people entrenched in their home and beliefs.

The isolationists



Paintings depicting the Calusa Indians by Theodore Morris. Carlo's Queen. In 1566 Pedro Menendez de Aviles arrived by ship at the Calusa's chief town near the present Fort Myers. He described a town of 4,000 men and women and the chief's house that held 2,000 people. Carlos controlled over fifty towns in southern Florida and many of these towns paid tribute to him.

While Calusa history is meager before de León's fatal voyage, it becomes clearer through the copious notes Spaniards made during their sporadic stops in the 16th century.

Details about their daily lives are revealed in a short memoir penned by Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, a Spaniard shipwrecked among the Calusa for 17 years.

The men and women were dressed only with minimal covering. There was no gold or silver, the main attraction for outsiders. They were great warriors, skillful with the bow.

The paper trail runs deeper during this time period, but it is offset by the lack of contact between foreigners and the isolationist Calusa.

When Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto was blazing a path through northern and Central Florida, he avoided moving south for two reasons: the lack of agricultural structure gave little incentive for takeover, and the Calusa had developed a reputation.

"I don't think there's any doubt: de Soto did his homework," Milanich said.

Another visitor, Jesuit priest Juan Rogel, came in 1567 and wrote the Calusa had a devout belief in their religion.

The theology goes that each Calusa has three souls — one is the little pupil of the eye, one is a person's shadow, one is a person's reflection in water. When a Calusa dies, the third soul — the water reflection — enters into another animal. When that animal dies, the soul is transferred to a lesser animal. This repeats until the soul is nothing.

Jesuits and Franciscans periodically tried to convert the Calusa until about 1700. Each time, they were rebuffed.

Franciscans left from Cuba in 1697 and spent about five weeks with the Calusa, trying to convert them. Notes recovered about the trip said the Calusa "warned them that if they did not make preparations for withdrawing, they would have to take their lives because their gods were becoming irritated."

The Franciscans' evangelism fell flat. Nonetheless, in a matter of years, the Calusa would fall. Death and legacy



Paintings depicting the Calusa Indians by Theodore Morris. King Carlos of the Calusa tribe. In 1566 Pedro Menendez de Aviles arrived by ship at the Calusa's chief town near the present Fort Myers. He described a town of 4,000 men and women and the chief's house that held 2,000 people. Carlos controlled over fifty towns in southern Florida and many of these towns paid tribute to him.

When war broke out in the early 1700s between England and the allies of France and Spain, groups of Creek and Yamasee Indians retreated south, seeking slaves for the English colonies.

They found the Calusa and discovered they had a distinct advantage over the native southerners: guns.

Armed with muskets, the Creek and Yamasee chased the Calusa down to the Keys and Cuba. Already decimated by disease acquired from Europeans — their numbers were down to about 2,000 — the Calusa fled from Southwest Florida en masse.

"South Florida Indians were really sitting ducks," Milanich said. "Sure, you could fight back, but not against those weapons."

The Calusa leader tried taking about 270 people from the Keys to Cuba in 1711, but more than 200 died en route. More were lost in the Keys when the Creek raided the area in 1760, and the final Calusa left by boat for Cuba.

From there, the Florida lineage of Calusa dies out. Their once-expansive realm would lie dormant for decades until the Seminole migration of the mid-1800s.

That the Calusa lasted so long was itself a tribute to their resiliency.

"Ultimately, I admire their stubbornness," Marquardt said. "It was more important for them to continue to be who they were and be true to their own traditions than it was to live. They resisted until the very end."

Even after the Calusa faded, researchers have remained enthralled with their lives.

In 1896, a pioneering anthropologist, Frank Hamilton Cushing, led a landmark dig for Calusa remnants on present-day Marco Island, unearthing artifacts now held across the country.

In the 1970s and 1990s, archeologists dug on Marco Island, a rare occurrence now that development has rendered much of the land incapable of searching.

Archaeologist Randolph Widmer, a participant in five Marco Island excavations, said the Calusa could offer useful hints about building a government off the coastal land.

"One of the things you have to understand is the groups in Southwest Florida were unique on this planet because they developed a complex organization, but they aren't an agricultural people," Widmer said. "And despite that, these people defended themselves against the Spanish. Nobody else did that."

Scholars hold out hope that somewhere in Cuba, distant descendants of the Indians still carry Calusa blood.

For now, people such as Paeno harbor the Calusa lore, passing it down to Southwest Florida's residents and visitors.

"Everybody here knows everything about Mickey Mouse," Paeno said. "But we know nothing of the people who were the first ones here."

CHAPTER ONE: Colliers on Marco

William T. Collier's grave stone at a cemetery on Marco Island. Collier was one of the early developers of Marco Island.

Years before he arrived at Marco Island in 1871, before he became its founder and first permanent settler, William Thomas Collier found himself marooned on a Bahamian island and robbed of \$100, a fine watch and a gold pencil.

William Thomas Collier

While in Savannah, Ga., searching for replacement workers at his North Florida mill, unknown assailants knocked Collier unconscious and kidnapped him.

In the day's parlance, he'd been "shanghaied."

Stranded in the Bahamas, unaware of his whereabouts, Collier flagged down a ship bound for the coastal town of Veracruz in central Mexico. From there, he boarded a small schooner and sailed to Galveston, Texas. And from there, Collier made his way back to his family east of present-day Gainesville.

By the time Collier sailed from Florida's east coast and passed through the Keys, settling at Marco Island and starting a Southwest Florida lineage that still exists today, William T. Collier was prepared for his new home's primitive conditions.

"The whole family, not just W.T., were just some amazing people," said Helen Farrell, a great-great-granddaughter of William T. Collier and a Fort Myers resident. "The story is very fascinating."

William T. Collier bears no relation to the county's namesake family. Rather, this Collier clan arrived in search of a place where William T. Collier could shake a nagging cough.

At age 55, William, his wife Betty and their nine children left in their two-masted schooner, the Robert E. Lee, for the state's southwest coast from coastal northeast Florida. After briefly staying in the Fort Myers area, the family moved south, settling on Marco Island.

"They just weren't happy in Fort Myers, so they left their lumber there and sailed until they found Marco. And they loved it there," said Betsy Perdichizzi, a Marco Island-based history author. "They went back then and got the lumber and built their first home in Marco."

That home didn't last long. A fire burned it down.

William T. Collier's son, William D. Collier, recalled the fire.

"My father's family was left with one mattress, one pillow, some mosquito bar and 10 children," he said.

Two years later, after the house was rebuilt, it burned down again.

But after that, life improved.

They grew crops, especially cabbage sold in Key West. One haul went for \$10,000, another for \$12,000.

For three decades, William T. Collier survived his cough on the island. The couple had three more children, bringing the total to 12. He saw his sons build a 20-room hotel and a general store, which started attracting tourists.

He died in 1902 on the island at age 87. He was buried at the Marco Island Cemetery, where his body remains today.

An Iron Cross rests at the foot of Collier's grave, marking his service for the Confederacy in the Civil War. It's the southernmost such marker.

"When you talk about anybody from the family," Farrell said.

CHAPTER ONE: The Game Changers People whose influence made an impact on the area:

Juan Ponce de León

Spanish explorer who arrived on Southwest Florida coast in 1513, making the first contact between foreigners and the native Calusa tribe. Attacked off the coast when his ships tried to land in Calusa territory and mortally wounded by a Calusa arrow. Failed to enslave Calusas and retreated to Cuba, dying several months later.

Seminole chief who led much of the fighting during the Third Seminole War. Said to be responsible for war's first attack on U.S. military in 1855, when soldiers destroyed his deserted camp. Negotiated and accepted agreement between Seminoles and government officials that resulted in about half of remaining Florida Seminoles moving west, effectively ending the war.

Seminole spiritual leader and medicine man who refused to leave Florida at the end of the Third Seminole War, maintaining the tribe's Florida lineage. Believed to have lived to be about 90 years old, dying in the Big Cypress Swamp.

First permanent settler on Marco Island in 1871, often credited as its founder. Came to Marco Island at age 55 with his wife and nine children, starting Southwest Florida lineage that lasts to this day. Father to William D. Collier, known as "Capt. Bill." No relation to Barron Gift Collier.

William D. 'Capt. Bill' Collier

An early Marco Island pioneer and the guiding genius of Marco until the early 1920s.

Frank Hamilton Cushing

Archaeologist whose expedition to Marco Island uncovered the "Key Marco Cat," a statuette made by early American Indians. His discoveries led to a new understanding of the history of Southwest Florida.

CHAPTER TWO: 1873 - 1922

Sunshine and warm weather were always the driving factor. But not everyone who came to Southwest Florida was looking for fun in the sun. Some were looking to start a new life; others were on the lam. It was the first period of growth. Homes started popping up. So did trading posts and thatched-roof schoolhouses. And by the beginning of the 20th century, Naples was becoming a bona fide tourist town with a hotel and a pier to collect visitors. Naples — and much of Southwest Florida as we now know it — had been born.



CHAPTER TWO: Ft Myers



W. Stanley Hanson — considered a "white medicine man" — holds Lena Cypress, daughter of Johnny Cypress, near downtown Fort Myers.

Woody Hanson's family came first. Give the fifth-generation Fort Myers resident — and keeper of the Fort Myers-based Hanson Family Archives — a few minutes, and he may find the documents to prove it.



An unpublished photo of Thomas Edison that was taken by Robert Halgrim and given to Woody Hanson's grandfather, W. Stanley Hanson.

But the archives — a collection of more than 1,000 historic documents and images from 1884 to the mid-20th century — don't just tell the story of the Hanson family. They also paint a picture of Lee County's early days.

"This stuff is living and breathing," Hanson said. "It has a life of its own."

Hanson's maternal great-great grandfather was Manuel A. Gonzalez, Fort Myers' first permanent settler.

His paternal great-grandfather, Dr. William Hanson, was Thomas Edison's doctor. Woody Hanson's grandfather, W. Stanley Hanson, was an adviser to the Seminole-Miccosukee tribes until his death in 1945.

But there's more. Some family members were Koreshans, one was a sheriff. Julie Allen Hanson — Woody Hanson's paternal great grandmother — helped start churches, sat on the hospital board and was involved in the protection of plume birds.

Lighthouse Project: Chapter Two



"The stuff we found is astounding," Woody Hanson said. "Fort Myers attracted these incredible people those people who came here were all kind of unique."

And while Hanson said he's proud of all facets of his history, it's the connection to the Seminole-Miccosukee tribes that perhaps brings him the most joy.

His father grew up "on the floor playing with Indian babies." His grandfather was considered a white medicine man and worked closely with medicine men in the Seminole- Miccosukee community.

It was an encounter with one of those Indians that made Woody Hanson realize preserving his past was his birthright.



Tarpon fishing was then, and is now, a big draw to the area.

Hanson said he was one week away from starting school when his father asked him to stay home another year to help out around town. It was during that one-year sabbatical that an "old Indian" showed up at his father's downtown Fort Myers' office to see his father.

That man was Josie Billie, a well-known medicine man, and he came to say goodbye to the Hanson family.

"(My father) said I want you to meet your grandfather's very best friend," Hanson said. "Josie Billie is epic, I mean epic. This was supposed to happen."

Billie died the next week, and Hanson has been going about preserving his family's past ever since.

He's writing a book about the area and even donating things to the University of Florida. There's an exhibit of photographs taken by W. Stanley Hanson of Seminole-Miccosukee children on display at Southwest Florida International Airport.

"I'm just a caregiver," he said. "I don't own this (and) if you don't share it, it ain't worth nothing."

CHAPTER TWO: Naples Backyard History

The Haldeman House used to be the oldest house in Naples. The home, which is named after Walter Haldeman, the owner of the Louisville Courier Journal newspaper in Kentucky, was built in 1886.

Call Florida the new Italy. Everyone else did, and by 1886 the Italian craze came to Southwest Florida.

Walter Haldeman

The city of Naples, according to local legend, was named after the Italian city of the same name. And while the details of how Naples got its name vary, one thing is for sure: Naples can thank the world's fascination with Italy for its name.

The Italian craze began in the 1880s when a popular columnist with Scribner's Monthly began "writing a series of articles about Our American Italy," Naples historian Doris Reynolds said in her DVD "A Walk Down Memory

Lane with Doris Reynolds." And, by 1884, Col. F.C.M. Boggess wrote a book called "South Florida — Italy of America."

Two years later, a group of Tallahassee businessmen bought 4,275 acres of land on Florida's west coast and formed the Naples Town Improvement Co., and, according to the book "The Founding of Naples," "the stubborn preoccupation with Italy" created a lasting impression on the group.

"The fact that Prince Achille Murat, the exiled son of the late King of Naples, had once lived in Tallahassee, and the perception of Florida as the 'Italy of America' only made the logic of attaching the Italian name to the new enterprise more compelling," according to the book.

But the ties to the prince of Naples is only one part of the story: Reynolds said some people credit Civil War Gen. John S. Williams — who along with Walter Haldeman was the first developer of the area — "with giving the name to the wilderness that was to become Naples, Fla.," because he visited its Italian counterpart.

Local lore doesn't end there, though. Another popular theory, according to "The Founding of Naples," is the name can be attributed to "the fertile imagination" of a field agent who was "already hard at work on a Southwest Florida development of his own."

The field agent was responsible for a campaign in Fort Myers that touted the region as "The Italy of America — Only True Sanitarium of the Occidental Hemisphere." In one of those half-page newspaper ads, the book goes on to say, there was a "strong, therapeutic promise that the area equaled — indeed surpassed — the 'bay of Naples grandeur of view and health-giving properties.'"

However the name came about, it stuck, and in 1887 the first plat for the community was filed in Fort Myers under the name Naples.

CHAPTER TWO: Koreshan Unity

Cyrus R. Teed was a religious prophet who founded the Koreshan commune near Estero.

Cyrus Teed had a dream. He came to Estero looking to build Utopia: A city of 10 million along the coast of Southwest Florida.

The remaining Koreshans left property to the state. It became a park, and about a dozen structures, including Teed's home, remain.



The charismatic Cyrus Teed stands on the grounds of the Koreshan settlement. Teed considered himself a Christian prophet who would one day transform Estero into a utopian city of 10 million.

It seemed possible in 1894 when Teed and his followers first landed in Estero. They had land — more than 300 acres given to them by Gustave Damkoehler, Estero's first homesteader — and by the turn of the century the Koreshan settlement made up a large chunk of Lee County's population.

But a dozen years after first arriving in Estero the dream of a New Jerusalem would start to unravel and the Koreshan Unity would begin its slow descent into obscurity. Still, some experts say the Koreshans left a lasting impact on Southwest Florida.

Had the Koreshans not arrived, development could have been much slower, said Robert Brooks, park manager at Koreshan State Park in Estero.

"Their business supplied the materials needed to build the area ... they contributed significantly to the growth," he said. "But it wasn't all just work and religion. It was a balance of life."

The faith — based, in part, on the belief that life existed inside a hollow sphere and mankind lived inside the Earth — started after Teed had a vision in 1869 of God in the form of a woman. The woman, according to a paper about Teed by Peter Hicks, told Teed the secret of the universe and his place in it.



The arts were a big part of the Koreshan community. Koreshans put on theatrical performances and had a full band.

The vision sparked Teed's faith, and after bouncing around the United States for a couple of decades, the Koreshans — taken from the name Koresh, the Biblical equivalent of Cyrus — settled in Southwest Florida.

But Estero wasn't Teed's first choice. Instead, he came looking to buy a development on Pine Island. The price, however, was too steep and Teed and a handful of followers returned to Chicago, but not before leaving a copy of his newspaper at the train station.

Damkoehler found that paper and invited the Koreshans back to the area with a promise of land in Estero. That land — which at the time encompassed most of south Lee County and Fort Myers Beach — would become home base for a religion that was based on communal living, celibacy and equality.

Some of the key beliefs centered around women's rights, and Brooks said Teed put women in charge of most of his major businesses.

The women in the community's ruling class were considered part of the Planetary Court, and were often called the seven sisters of the Koreshan Planetary Court.





Scott Ritter's great-grandmother, Rose Gilbert, was one of those seven.

Gilbert arrived in Estero in 1896 with her mother. Ritter said there is no record of his great-great grandmother staying with the Koreshans, but Gilbert stayed — and believed in the tenets of the faith — until her death in 1953.

Not everyone in Gilbert's family was a supporter. Rose Gilbert had a son, Deane Gilbert, in New York in 1900. She returned to the settlement in 1901, and Deane Gilbert stayed there with his mother for about 16 years. But Ritter said when his grandfather was 16 or 17 years old, he "walked out and made his way to New York."

But by the time Deane Gilbert left the settlement, the faith was already in the midst of a downward spiral.

Teed died in 1908 following injuries suffered in a 1906 fight. Teed told followers he would be reincarnated and be back in six, although Brooks said it was never clear what that six signified. When Teed failed to come back after his death, followers began to question the beliefs. Questions also arose over who would take over the leadership of the community.



Scott Ritter poses for a portrait on the grounds of the Koreshan settlement. Ritter's great grandmother was Rose Gilbert, one of the members of the Planetary Court. Ritter said he feels like a part of him is a Koreshan.

But their self-sustaining lifestyle — the settlement had several businesses including a print works, bakery and a general store — is what kept the community going until the 1960s. There also was Hedwig Michel.

Michel fled Germany during World War II and took over the community. She tried to revive the faith and "wound up ruling the roost by the fact she was the youngest."

Her efforts didn't work, and in 1961 the remaining Koreshans deeded the land over to the state in an effort to preserve their community. That land is now Koreshan State Park.

But Brooks said the park isn't the only lasting impression the Koreshans left on the community. They were fond of the arts, and brought a full band with them when they arrived. They also cultivated gardens and created a mini-city — complete with electricity and dozens of buildings — when most people were living in thatched-roof houses or tents.

"It was a lifestyle," he said. "They wanted a city life."

And while there are no believers alive, Koreshan descendants still live in Estero and the legacy lives on through business — such as a printing company owned by a family who learned the trade on the Koreshan settlement — and charitable donations made through the College of Life Foundation.

The foundation is the remnant of the corporate arm of the Koreshan Unity, and Charles Dauray, chairman and CEO, said the foundation focuses on preservation with an emphasis on the Koreshans. The organization in 2011 donated \$60,000 to fund a program in museum studies at Florida Gulf Coast University.

Ritter said descendants aren't afraid to discuss their Koreshan history.

"I am proud," he said. "I think they were a ... very industrious, hardworking people with a Utopian mission who actually tried to live it."

CHAPTER TWO: Ted Smallwood Store

It is a museum filled with original artifacts from the days it served early settlers and Seminoles on the tip of Chokoloskee



Smallwood Museum.

It's the last stop before the water — at the end of a road on a remote island — where visitors can get a peek into Southwest Florida's past. But it wasn't always like that: The nearly 100-year-old building on the tip of Chokoloskee once played a critical role in commerce in Collier County. It was a trading post, a general store and a post office.



Lynn Smallwood-McMillin, executive director of the historic Ted Smallwood Store in Chokoloskee, stands behind the counter for a portrait.

And while the historic Ted Smallwood Store — now a museum run by Ted Smallwood's granddaughter Lynn Smallwood-McMillin — no longer operates in that capacity, supporters say the store still plays a pivotal role in the community.

The store opened in 1906 as a trading post in Smallwood's home — located about 300 yards up the street from its current location — and immediately became "an important gathering place for a few isolated settlers and Indians living in the area," according to documents from the Collier County Museum.

Families could buy items brought in from Key West or Tampa, while Seminoles living in the Ten Thousand Islands or Big Cypress Reservation could trade egret plumes and beeswax for household items such as coffee and rifles.



Ted Smallwood's Store was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and it remained open and active until 1982. Because 90 percent of the original goods remained in the store when the doors were shut, Ted's granddaughter reopened the store as a museum in 1989, and today it serves as a time capsule of Florida pioneer history.

Smallwood became friends with the Seminoles and even took care of them when they were sick.

But it wasn't just Ted Smallwood taking care of the community. Smallwood-McMillin said her grandmother, Mamie Smallwood, made clothes for Seminole children and made sure they had toys and goodies during the holidays.

The store moved to its current location at the water's edge in 1917 and was raised on pilings in 1924 after a storm caused significant damage. That decision, Smallwood-McMillin said, may have been the most important one her grandfather ever made.

"Had he not raised it, he would have lost it," she said.

Ted Smallwood retired in 1941 and his daughter, Thelma Smallwood, took over as both the postmistress and shopkeeper.

The post office remained open until 1972. Smallwood-McMillin said her aunt retired as postmistress and closed the post office in part because she didn't want to cut holes for mail slots in the walls.

It remained open as a general store until Thelma Smallwood's death in 1982.

The store closed for seven years while the remaining Smallwood descendants tried to decide what to do with it. Everything — from magazines to a pharmacy with old pharmaceutical drugs — was left in the small store when Thelma Smallwood died and ultimately made their way into the museum.



Shana Townsend, 4, of Naples, and granddaughter of Ramona and Darwin Lyon, plays in the water with her friend, Brandon Purvis, right, 6, of Chokoloskee, and grandson of Lynn Smallwood-McMillin, next to the historic Smallwood's Store in Chokoloskee on a Sunday morning. After six months of closure and legal battles over access to the Smallwood's Store, the historic landmark reopened after a court order prompted Florida-Georgia Grove LLP, the property owner of Mamie Street where the store and museum sits, to take down it's fence and allow access to the store that's catered to Chokoloskee residents for more than 100 years.

"She was a pack rat," Smallwood-McMillin said of her aunt.

"It is what Collier County is all about," said Collier County Commissioner Jim Coletta. "For our present and future to be successful, we need to know what happened in the past."

But knowing what happened in the past may not just help Collier County residents. It could also be crucial to determining the outcome of a legal battle involving the store.

Developers of a neighboring property in April 2011 bulldozed a portion of Mamie Street, effectively cutting off access to both the Ted Smallwood Store and several private residences.

A bevy of lawsuits followed and a Collier County judge in late 2011 ordered that the road be restored. The road was finally repaved in March.

But before the road was paved, visitors to the museum traveled down a narrow dirt road to get there, much like the early settlers.

"It's still remote," Smallwood-McMillin said.

CHAPTER TWO: They Came to Escape Winter



Call it the first building boom.

Maybe not boom, but certainly the loud thump that got things moving.



The charismatic Cyrus Teed stands on the grounds of the Koreshan settlement beside a tarpon he landed in 1906. Teed considered himself a Christian profit who would one day transform Estero into a utopian city of 10 million.

As the turn of the century approached, Southwest Florida began the slow transition from its wild unkempt roots to a developed paradise.

Towns sprouted along the coast. Homes slowly popped up. So did trading posts, thatched roof school houses and even a hotel or two. By 1920 — just three years before Collier County would be split off from Lee County — the population of Lee County would skyrocket to more than 3,600.

"People were coming for the same things they are coming for now," said Charlie Strader, a liaison for the Bonita Springs Historical Society. "It's darn cold in Michigan."

Substitute Kentucky for Michigan, and you have the story of how Naples was born.

"It didn't evolve as this mythical, quiet sleepy village," said Lodge McKee, a long-time Neapolitan and history buff. "(Walter) Haldeman and his cronies explored this area, and they had a mission in mind. They wanted to start a winter resort community."

The mission started in 1885 when Kentucky residents John S. Williams, a Civil War general, and Haldeman charted a schooner near present-day Tampa and headed south looking for their own tropical oasis. They paused briefly near Sarasota but when a land deal eked out with the help of "some of Kentucky's best" failed to turn in to anything, the pair continued south.

"Deer scampered through the thick piney woods that covered the site of the city-to-be in 1885 when founder Haldeman first sighted the place from the deck of a sloop," according to documents provided to the Daily News from the Collier County Museum.



Gulf Street ran from the Naples Pier south along Naples Beach. It was originally started in the late 1800s and this photograph is dated 1925. Haldeman House is the property on the corner.

"He knew exactly what he was looking for. He wanted the mainland, not an island, and it must have an attractive beach with high ground behind it, also a pass leading to the sheltered waters of a bay."

The pair found exactly that at sunset after days of travel off Naples coast near where the Naples Pier stands

"They anchored in the mouth where fish were plentiful, they enjoyed a gorgeous sunset and a couple of toddies and the General said to Mr. Haldeman: 'Walter, this is it. This is the ideal spot,'" wrote Williams grandson John S. Holloway in one account. "So Naples was found on that evening in 1885."

The perfect resort community may have been found, but it would prove difficult to obtain.

The Florida Land and Improvement Co. — owned by Hamilton Disston as part of a real estate deal with the state — was selling off property around the same time for \$1.50 an acre. The campaign caught the eye of a group of Florida businessmen, and in November 1886 — one year after some accounts say Haldeman and Williams happened upon Naples — they formed the Naples Town Improvement Co. of Tallahassee and bought up "4,376 acres of prime wilderness on Florida's west coast including the area around Gordon's Pass and Clam Pass for the bargain price of \$3 an acre."



Ted Smallwood's "Ole Indian Trading Post" Post Office of Chokoloskee, Fla., near Ten Thousand Islands.

The story of what happens next varies. A brief history of the area by Frank F. Tenney Jr. tells a story of how the Naples company was started by Williams in Louisville, Ky. But an exhibit at the Naples Depot states crews arrived in 1887 at the behest of the Tallahassee businessmen to "survey the company's land."

It's also the same year an exhibit at the Naples Depot says Haldeman and Williams first bought land.

Whatever the story, there's one thing everyone can agree on: On Aug. 26, 1887, the first plat of Naples was filed in Fort Myers and Naples was officially open for business.

But Naples wasn't the only place open for business

Surveyors with the Army Corps of Engineers first pitched camp along the Imperial River sometime in the 1870s.

They were likely surveying the entire area, and the spot along the Imperial River — known as Survey until 1912 when early developers changed the name to Bonita Springs to market the area — was a convenient place to pitch a tent with easy access to the areas to the north and south.



The next decade was a period of growth for Survey. Homesteaders moved into the area, and in 1887, a small thatched-roof public school was built, according to the Bonita Springs Historical Society.

But while Naples was meant to be a vacation destination from the get-go, the early days of Bonita Springs had little to do with fun in the sun.

"It's not like we developed because of the beach," Strader said. "It was the other way around."

Instead of a resort community, growth in Bonita Springs centered around the river as early settlers created as a working man's community based on agriculture and trade.

Bonita Springs Historical Society documents show Braxton B. Comer bought 6,000 acres of land around Survey in the late 1880s and in 1888 he moved 50 black families "from Alabama with mules and equipment to work his large plantation growing pineapples, bananas, coconuts and other kinds of fruit."

Living off the land was essential to early settlers and it wasn't just happening in Survey.

Lynn Smallwood-McMillin, granddaughter of early Chokoloskee settler and longtime postmaster Ted Smallwood, said her grandfather used Chokoloskee as his own private garden when he moved to the area in the late 1800s.

"There was a lot of farming then," she said.

It's hard to say who the first settler on the isolated island of Chokoloskee was, but by 1900, it was clear that two men who emerged as the largest landowners in the Ten Thousand Islands were Smallwood and Capt. George W. Storter Jr., one of the first landowners in the far-off town of Everglade.

Sorter moved to Everglade — now present-day Everglades City — 1881, and later "bought the town of Everglades for \$800," nephew Rob Sorter wrote in the book "Crackers in the Glade: Life and Times in the Old Everglades."

Sorter traded with the Seminoles when he opened his store in 1892. Smallwood opened his trading post in 1906.

"We traded with everyone," Smallwood-McMillin said. "My grandfather made friends with them and he got to be good friends with the chiefs."

They needed to trade with everyone. The two communities were only accessible by boat, and it sometimes took days to get there. The population was sparse, and Smallwood-McMillin said in those days the Ten Thousand Islands attracted a certain type of people.

"The people who came here were either here for their health," she said, "or they were running from the law."



Life in Bonita

Springs centers on the river, agriculture and trade.

Naples attracted a certain type of character from the beginning too: the well-to-do.

"Naples started up as someone wanting to sell real estate," said John Mayer, a Naples Historical Society board member. "Right away there were illustrious people coming."

Rose Cleveland, sister of then-President Grover Cleveland, bought two corner lots when property first went on the market in August 1887. The president's sister's name is also one of the first scrawled on the registry when the Naples Hotel opened to visitors by 1889.

By then Naples consisted of sandy beaches, a 600-foot-long pier that extended into the Gulf of Mexico and a 16-room hotel. There were a couple of cottages in the area, but no one homesteaded too far from the hotel. That was because residents took all of their meals there.

There were no phones or electricity in the early days; there were barely roads. But while Naples founders struggled at first to realize the potential, another man with a dream set up shop in south Lee County and within a few years had a full-fledged city in the making.

Cyrus Teed, founder of the Koreshan Unity movement, moved his followers to present-day Estero in 1894. He was building his New Jerusalem, but Robert Brooks, manager of Koreshan State Park, said his followers didn't want to rough it. Instead, followers moved to Estero with 23 railroad cars filled with their possessions and a full band. They built dozens of buildings — 11 of which are still standing — and had a "vision of what they were going to create was a major city."

"When you sit here and look at the grounds, it's not what people think of when they think of a pioneer community," Brooks said. "These were people of means looking to build something bigger."

The Koreshan community quickly grew, and by 1904 the community was fully established with more than 200 people living in it. That was considered a big chunk of Lee County at the time.

But something bigger never came. The community and belief system began to fizzle when Teed died in 1908.

And even though Haldeman's dream is mostly realized in modern Naples, it wasn't as if it was immediately successful.

The town faced a sheriff's sale in 1889, and Haldeman put up \$50,000 to buy the whole town. He owned the boat that got people to and from Fort Myers, the hotel where everyone stayed and 8,600 acres of undeveloped land.

A school popped up, and by 1913, the Naples Hotel had electricity. Then came the growth spurt. The hotel added 40 rooms and the community's first golf course. The pier was repaired after a hurricane destroyed much of the original structure. The first real grocery store — on Third Street South in the building Campiello's currently calls home — opened with a dance before the shelves were stocked.

But Haldeman never saw that happen. He died in 1902 after being hit by a trolley in Louisville.

"One of the interesting things is we were blessed with people who had vision," McKee said. "Haldeman was first ... They all had vision. They saw a mangrove forest and said we can make it into something."

CHAPTER TWO: The Game Changers People whose influence made an impact on the area:

Walter N. Haldeman

Founder of Naples. In the late 1800s, Naples was an isolated enclave for winter guests of Haldeman and his associates. The owner and publisher of the Louisville Courier-Journal bought out his partners in the Naples Co. in 1890, acquiring the Naples Hotel, the Pier, several boats, and almost all of what is now Old Naples. Haldeman was killed by a streetcar in Louisville in 1902.

Henry Watterson

Editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal who was an early promoter of Naples. While a guest of Walter Haldeman in Palm Cottage he wrote favorable pieces about Naples and put them on a boat to Fort Myers, where they were telegraphed to Louisville.

John Stuart Williams

Associate of Walter Haldeman and former Civil War general, builder of Naples' earliest home.

E.W. Crayton

In the early part of the century, he ran Naples. Crayton was a founder of the Naples Improvement Co., which bought out the Haldeman interests in 1914. The former Ohio real estate executive was a strict businessman who was involved with all development decisions in Naples. He served as chairman and president of the Town Council from 1923 until his death in 1938.

J. Harvey Doxsee

Mayor of Marco Island in the early part of the century. He also operated the clam cannery on the island, at the time one of the area's biggest commercial endeavors.

Thomas Edison

From his home in Fort Myers, the noted inventor visited Naples on a regular basis and introduced the area to friends such as Harvey Firestone and Henry Ford.

Charles G. McKinney

"The Sage of Chokoloskee" was a true pioneer in Southwest Florida, arriving in 1886 and remaining until his death in 1926. He was a merchant, postmaster, carpenter and shoemaker who filled in as a doctor and dentist. He also served as a midwife and many early birth certificates bear his signature. His humorous newspaper articles are some of the best records of what was happening at the time.

Dr. Henry Nehrling

Noted botanist and plant breeder who moved to Naples in 1919 following a freeze. His experimental growing site is now Caribbean Gardens, one of Naples' major tourist attractions.

J.H. Ragsdale

Director of the Bonita Land Co. In 1912 he platted and recorded the new subdivision of Bonita Springs, formerly called Survey.

John and Madison Weeks

First year-round settlers in what would become Naples.

Robert "Bob" Roberts

Immokalee rancher and pioneer. One of the most influential cattlemen in Florida. In 1999 the county commission gave approval to turn the Roberts Ranch site into a museum.

Charles S. 'Ted' Smallwood

Everglades area pioneer who operated a general store in Chokoloskee. The store is now a historic site.

Charles W. Stewart

Naples postmaster 1908-1949. He served on the first Town Council and helped build Naples' first schoolhouse.

George W. Storter Jr.

Founder of Everglades and "first citizen" there for over a quarter of a century; also first chairman of the County Commission.

Cyrus R. Teed

Religious prophet who founded the Koreshan commune near Estero.

CHAPTER THREE: 1923 - 1939

It was the Roaring '20s and the time of Prohibition. Florida was experiencing a land boom — and Florida's "last frontier" beckoned Barron Gift Collier, an advertising tycoon who had a vision to carve a new resort town out of wilderness. One of the richest men in the country, Collier bought more than 1.3 million acres in Southwest Florida and set out to develop it. He persuaded state leaders to create a new county in his name, breaking his piece of paradise off from Lee County. The Tamiami Trail opened, linking Collier County to the rest of Florida. The trains came. But trouble was lurking around the bend. Florida's land boom went bust and the Great Depression hit.

CHAPTER THREE: Barron Gift Collier was 'ahead of his time'

Where many people saw Southwest Florida as a swamp, Collier saw a paradise — and a big business opportunity



Barron Gift Collier.

Barron Gift Collier — Collier County's founder — had a gift for business. He made millions in the advertising business, then poured \$17 million of his own money in the 1920s into developing what he saw as Florida's last frontier





A persuasive and persistent man, he worked 12 hours a day in New York or on the road and built a real estate empire in Florida.

In Southwest Florida, he once owned hotels, bus lines, banks, utilities and newspapers including what is now the Naples Daily News. (He also owned the Fort Myers News-Press).

He owned a construction company and even printed his own money to pay his workers in the company-owned town he built from wilderness in Everglades City. He bought a steamship line and started a telephone company.

"He was definitely ahead of his time. He was introducing modern technology and modern conveniences and a way of life to Southwest Florida that was absolutely beyond understanding," said Ron Jamro, executive director of Collier County's museums.

As the Tamiami Trail — the much-anticipated road connecting Tampa to Miami — neared completion in 1928, Collier created the Southwest Mounted Police to patrol it night and day. The private patrol with six men grew into the Collier County Sheriff's Office.

A true pioneer, Collier helped found the Boy Scouts of America and Interpol, the world's largest police organization. He invented the white-and-yellow dividing lines on America's highways. He served as a special deputy commissioner for public safety in New York and campaigned against jaywalking.

"Getting hit by a car was a big problem in New York. There was nowhere to cross and people had to be wary," Jamro said.

One of Collier's less known enterprises was subway gum machines. For a time, he also owned Luna Park in Coney Island — one of the world's first amusement parks.

Barron Gift Collier never seemed to run out of ideas — or energy.

"He had at least three different secretaries to keep up with him a day," said Tim England, manager for the Everglades City Museum. "He would type a letter while dictating another to a secretary."

In an interview with Nation's Business, Collier once said that as a boy he'd decided "the man who had mental energy never to give up was the man who won," according to "The Collier Story" written by Anthony Weitzel, a Naples Daily News columnist, in 1976.

Collier was a man before his time, who had a vision that drove early development in Southwest Florida.

"He was a very creative, very energetic and very dynamic individual," said Lamar Gable, chairman of Barron Collier Cos. in Naples, one of two companies that evolved from Collier's pioneering land investments in Florida.

Collier's empire laid the foundation for future development in this region. He unlocked the area's potential to become a resort town, Jamro said.

"I think his greatest contribution was giving Collier County a head-start really, a good start, so it could be opened up and developed into what it has become," he said.

Barron Gift Collier's vision has been carried on by his heirs. In 1907, he married Juliet Gordon Carnes, described as a grand dame from Memphis, Tenn. They had three sons: Barron Gift Collier Jr., Samuel Carnes Collier and Cowles Miles Collier, who took over the family business when their father died suddenly in 1939.

Collier was one of the richest men in the country when he decided to carve a new resort town out of wilderness after buying up more than 1.3 million acres in Southwest Florida.

"He was going to turn it into the utopia of Florida," England said.

Although he was named after war heroes, Barron Collier figured out early on that his future wouldn't be in the military. His father, Col. Cowles M. Collier, resigned as a naval officer to fight for his native Virginia in the Confederate States Army.

Barron Gift Collier quit school when he was 16 to go to work. By 26, he was a millionaire — and he lived the millionaire lifestyle. He had three yachts and magnificent homes in Pocantico Hills, N.Y., and Baden-Baden, Germany. He built a stately mansion on Useppa Island, a favorite retreat near Fort Myers.

He once said "business and more business was the first stimulus to my vital spark."

At his first job, Collier sold cargo business for the Illinois Central Railroad, making good money. But he soon decided to strike out on his own.

With his first enterprise, Collier sold a new kind of gas-powered street lighting to the city government in his hometown of Memphis, Tenn. He kept the lamps working and even lit and snuffed them out himself, according to "The Collier Story."

The success from his street-light enterprise led to Collier's investment in a local printing plant, sealing his destiny to become an advertising tycoon. One of the printing plant's contracts was with a company that sold advertising displayed in horse-drawn street cars. That gave Collier an idea: Seeing more people moving from rural towns to big cities and figuring that electric cars would soon take over city streets, he created street car advertising, securing his first exclusive contract in Memphis.

"He sold the ads, printed the cards, put them in the cars, and paid the street car system a fee for the privilege," according to "The Collier Story."

Collier's street car advertising business grew almost overnight. He moved to New York to expand his enterprise, which he named the Consolidated Street Railway Advertising Co. Franchises sprang up in more than 70 cities and even reached as far as Cuba.

"If you could sum up Barron Collier, he understood customer service, even from when he was a little boy," England said.

When Collier moved to the Big Apple, he knew no one there. It was a shock, a drastic change from the polite Southern town he'd grown up in. But he had no problem making friends there or anywhere else.

In time, Collier befriended politicians and other influential big-wigs, including leading newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst, chewing gum magnate William Wrigley and industrialist Henry Ford, creator of the Model T Ford.

"There are stories about him walking down the street in Everglades and stopping to talk with workers so they could have a word with the head man," Jamro said.

Collier first visited Florida in 1911. It was love at first sight. John Roach, a Chicago street car magnate, had invited him to Useppa Island, off the coast of Fort Myers. Collier liked it so much he bought the island and its inn for \$100,000 — a huge sum. "For Collier, whose personal annual income at that point was reported at \$5 million a year, it was no great strain," Weitzel wrote. "For Southwest Florida, it was like finding a rich godfather."

Collier turned Useppa Island into a retreat for the wealthy, including Hollywood celebrities.

A decade later, Collier bought the Deep Lake grapefruit grove between Immokalee and Everglades and a railroad that linked Deep Lake to Everglades City. His buying spree continued until he became Florida's largest landowner.

Collier had a big dream — to open up his land to settlers through paved roads, railroads and steamships. He talked state leaders into creating a new county in his name in exchange for completing the Tamiami Trail.

Everglades City became the hub for his new real estate empire. Dredges were used to build up the developable land. He built a company town and owned and ran virtually everything.

"The tomorrow of Florida is dawning," he wrote in 1925. "In its soft light we see the forms of men literally hurling back the wilderness, draining large tracts, building homes, planting great gardens and orchards. Soon will come the blaze of the full midday. Picture, if you can, the scene as it will be then."

In 1928, the Atlantic Coast Line's railroad reached Everglades City and the Tamiami Trail was completed, opening Collier's town up to the world.

Barron Collier never quit, but by 1933 he found himself in financial turmoil, a victim of the Great Depression. He was still paying off debts when he died on March 13, 1939. It took years to sort out his finances, but as it turned out, he left a fortune behind.

His family is still capitalizing on his real estate empire.

"The things that he did — the things that he accomplished were amazing," England said. "Barron Collier did a lot for this town. He did a lot for this area."

CHAPTER THREE: David Copeland



Machines used to build the Tamiami Trail across the Everglades.

Barron Gift Collier made a promise. To convince state leaders to carve out a new county in his name, he promised to finish the long-awaited Tamiami Trail.



If he could do it all over, David Copeland said 'I would learn how to play.'

The job seemed impossible. But Collier chose the right man for the job: David Graham Copeland — an engineer who had carried out millions of dollars worth of construction jobs as a naval officer.

Copeland became the chief engineer for the highway that would link Tampa to Miami. He also laid out the town of Everglades, a wilderness that became Collier's county seat in the 1920s.

"What he faced was daunting. There was nothing here," said Ron Jamro, executive director of Collier County's museums.

He described Copeland as a superhuman when it came to organization.

"This whole army Collier had assembled here was under Copeland's control," Jamro said.

When Collier chose Everglades as the hub for development, only a few families lived there and most of the land was mangrove swamp. One of Copeland's first jobs was to set up a dredge to bring up muck from the Barron River to build up the developable land for the new town.



Copeland had been a Navy officer for 14 years. So it came as no surprise when Collier's company town "began to look like a Navy base, neatly landscaped and laid out in precise geometric lines," Anthony Weitzel wrote in "The Collier Story," published by the Naples Daily News in 1976.

Copeland ran the trail building project like a "military campaign," Weitzel wrote. Whistles blared to tell workers when to get to work and when to stop.

"Holidays went Navy style. Thanksgiving rated an extra hour for lunch. Christmas got a whole day off. After the Tamiami Trail was finished, Copeland relaxed and added the rest of Thanksgiving Day, New Year's and July Fourth as holidays," Weitzel wrote.

The Tamiami Trail — a project that opened Collier County up to tourism and development — wasn't the only important transportation project Copeland oversaw. He planned and built a railroad and a highway that linked Immokalee to Everglades City and he built a road connecting Royal Palm Hammock to Marco Island, according to Collier County museum records.

A graduate of the Citadel Military College of South Carolina, the U.S. Naval Academy and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York, Copeland came to town with plenty of building experience.

At a naval station in New Orleans, he oversaw \$1 million in construction projects. He drew up plans to expand his base for war and planned a training station in Gulfport, Miss., according to a biography in "Florida from Indian Trail to Space Age," written by Charlton W. Tebeau and Ruby Leach Carson.

After the U.S. entered World War I, Copeland was sent to Ireland, where he supervised the construction of five seaplane bases and several radio stations. In Bordeaux, France, he oversaw the building of eight, 840-foot radio towers, which at the time were among the "tallest structures in the world," his biography says. For that he received France's highest award in 1921, the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

Copeland worked for Barron Collier for more than 20 years, retiring in June 1947.

He left his mark on Collier County in many ways. He was a county commissioner for nearly 20 years and a state legislator, serving until his death in 1949. For a time, he was editor of the Collier County News.

Copeland helped create Everglades National Park and he's credited for his "untiring efforts" that led to the adoption of oil conservation laws in Florida, according to his biography.

The town of Copeland off State Road 29 north of U.S. 41 was named for him. It emerged as a logging town in the early 1940s and thrived until 1957, when the demand for cypress waned.

In a collection of stories about the Tamiami Trail by Maria Stone, the wife of Barron Collier's chauffeur recalled Copeland's generosity: "You know what Mr. Copeland did for us every Christmas? He would put up a huge Christmas tree. There were a lot of poor people down there and he saw that everybody got a present. Also, everybody that worked for him got a turkey or a ham. It's no wonder the town of Copeland was named after him."

Some, however, complained about Copeland's management style.

"Anyone who disobeyed his orders got fired," said Lillian Larkins Weaver, who lived at Monroe Station on the Tamiami Trail in the 1920s and 1930s. Her story was also shared by the late Maria Stone, a former Collier County schoolteacher.

Copeland once said he would change just one thing in life if he had it to do over again, Weitzel wrote.

"I would learn how to play," Copeland said. "I mean that. Start now...learn something to enjoy after your life's work."

CHAPTER THREE: Naples' first mayor remembered as colorful, controversial

Built for Speed: Naples had just been incorporated as a city and it needed a mayor



The first mayor of Naples, Speed Menefee, was also known as the "Fifteen Minute Mayor" but was actually in office for 16 months.

Naples' first mayor — remembered as a colorful and eccentric man who liked to tell tall tales — got the name Speed from his mother. Speed was his mother's maiden name — and it seemed all too fitting when at Naples' first town council meeting on April 13, 1925, he speedily resigned.

The long-held story goes that Speed Menefee served as Naples' mayor for about 15 minutes, earning him the title "Fifteen Minute Mayor." But some challenge that, saying it's a myth.

When the town of Naples was first incorporated in 1923, the five councilmen, including the mayor, were named, so Menefee actually held the job from Dec. 1, 1923, to April 13, 1925, said Lila Zuck, author of "Naples, A Second Paradise, The History of Naples," which will soon be published in collaboration with the Naples Historical Society.

One of the first items on the first meeting's agenda, she said, was to elect a new mayor and council, which happened in the first 15 minutes.

"Mayor Menefee, declining to be in the running for a second mayoral term, resigned, in order for the process of assigning new officers and tending to other items on the agenda to resume," Zuck writes in her book.

"He was mayor for 16 months. So it was a great injustice to him," she said.

Naples historian Doris Reynolds said there are different stories, myths and interpretations when it comes to Menefee. "At this point in time, I can't tell which story is correct," she said.

In her book, "When Peacocks were Roasted and Mullet was Fried," Reynolds calls Menefee the 15-minute mayor, saying he was willing to be sworn in and to serve for about 15 minutes. After an acceptance speech, he then resigned, she wrote.

An exhibit at the Naples Depot in downtown Naples tells part of his colorful story: Menefee — the son of a prominent family from Louisville, Ky. — moved to Naples after the Spanish-American War to "restore his health," with an old guitar and \$17 in his pocket. He charmed everyone with his Southern hospitality. He guided fishermen and taught painting classes.

Before he resigned as mayor, Menefee had time to create jobs for a town clerk, tax collector, treasurer, tax assessor and town marshal; to set meetings for the first Friday of every month; and to approve the pay for council members at \$1 for every meeting they attended. Menefee was succeeded by Edwards Gorham "Judge" Wilkinson, a retired accountant and surgical supplies dealer, according to museum records.

Reynolds met Menefee in 1952. "He was quite an old man then," she said, adding he was living in what she describes as an upscale shack on stilts off 17th Avenue South.

He didn't like to reveal his age. "In 1957, he confessed to being 75, but rumor had it that he was at least 80 and holding," Reynolds writes in her book. His birth date was reported as April 2, 1879, in the Collier County Daily News. He died Nov. 26, 1968.

"He was a real character. He was what we called a remittance baby," meaning his family paid him a stipend every month to stay away, Reynolds said.

Menefee liked to have cocktail parties in the afternoon. On her first visit to his home, he introduced Reynolds to "Grandma," a carved coconut on the bar. He then told her to toast "Grandma" by "kissin' Miss Betsy," a coconut shell with Kentucky bourbon in it, Reynolds recalls in her book.

He was a natural choice for mayor, as one of the town's most interesting characters. He arrived in Naples in the early 1900s and was considered the town's official greeter.

"I think he wanted to be mayor, without all the responsibility," Reynolds said.

He told tall tales to everybody. One of them — a favorite for Reynolds — was about a rattlesnake that attacked the tires on his Model T Ford. He told her that when the snake sunk its teeth in a tire, it inflated the snake with air and the snake "came right out of his skin."

Menefee never married, Reynolds writes in her book, and he "claimed to spend most of his time avoiding the advances of eager ladies who found his charms irresistible."

His legend lives on.

CHAPTER THREE: The Orange Blossom Special arrives in Naples

Great Train Race: Rail service inaugurated



Seaboard Air Line constructed a train station in Naples. The Depot served rail passengers on and off until train service was discontinued. Today, it is one of the Collier County museums. You can climb aboard a club car and the caboose to recapture the feel of those bygone days.

It has been called the great train race. In 1926 and 1927, two rival railroads reached Naples 11 days apart.

As thousands of new residents settled in Florida during the land boom, and the state Legislature created 13 new counties, including Collier, railroad executives took note. They were eager to capitalize on the growth at a time when railroads were in their heyday.

Two railroads aggressively expanded their lines, and there was a "frenzied race" to reach Naples first, recounts an exhibit at the Naples Depot Museum in downtown Naples. It didn't seem to matter that Naples was just a tiny, remote resort town.

"It was about bragging rights," said Lois Bolin, a historian of old Naples. "These are the big boys fighting."

The first train — owned by the Atlantic Coast Line — arrived at its station at Airport-Pulling and Radio roads in Naples with little fanfare on Dec. 27, 1926. Then, on Jan. 7, 1927, the Seaboard Air Line's now famous steam locomotive, the Orange Blossom Special, puffed into town from New York, carrying with it some of the nation's top businessmen and bankers, the president of the line and Florida's then-governor John Martin.

Naples' first trains carried passengers and freight.

In 1927, the Atlantic Coast line — more focused on freight — extended its line to Marco Island, where its biggest customer was the Doxsee Clam Co.

Before the trains came, the only way to get to Naples was by boat or by traveling along a bumpy road from Fort Myers.

"Transportation is huge, and that is really how communities grew. Railroads were a big part of opening things up inland," Bolin said.

The Orange Blossom — a winter-only Florida train catering to wealthy passengers — was the brainchild of S. Davies Warfield, Seaboard's president. It was such a sight to see that a song was written about it.

Bolin describes the Orange Blossom as a "traveler's treat," offering passengers everything from maid services to manicures. There were even personal writing desks for passengers with orange-blossom scented stationery, she said.

To celebrate his new line in the heart of Southwest Florida, Warfield "orchestrated one of the greatest public relations events in American railroad history," wrote Gregg Turner, a local historian and author, in a story for WFCU's Expressions magazine in 2009.

The day the Orange Blossom came to town, there were celebrations in Fort Myers, Estero, Bonita Springs and Naples. There were five trains in all, carrying nearly 600 passengers from 90 cities in 18 states.

When the trains reached the Naples Depot, hundreds gathered by the track. Flags waved, horns tooted and bands played.

"They brought the bands. When they landed in Naples, you never heard so much music in your life," said Merle Harris, who was 8 when she saw those first trains roll into town.

There was a big celebration at the Naples Hotel for Warfield's guests, with lunch and lemonade (it was the time of Prohibition, after all).

After lunch, there were boat rides on the Bay of Naples.

"Cameramen from the Pathe News Service captured the festivities, and the footage was shown in the nation's movie houses," Turner wrote.

The Orange Blossom Special, ironically, never returned to Naples. Florida's land boom was already heading for a bust as the first trains arrived in Southwest Florida. Then came the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression.

Seaboard's extravagant spending, Warfield's death in 1927 and the real estate collapse led the company into bankruptcy, and by the early 1940s, its service to Naples had been suspended.

Later, the Atlantic Coast Line acquired Seaboard's tracks into Naples and moved its operations to the Naples Depot, resuming passenger service in the mid-to-late '40s.

The Naples station Seaboard built at the end of Fifth Avenue South and 10th Street South still stands today as a museum, offering a glimpse into the past. The Atlantic Coast Line's original station is long gone.

Merle Harris, who saw the Orange Blossom arrive, rode the last train out of the Naples Depot in 1971, a trip that went to Lakeland and back.

"It was a very nostalgic trip, knowing that the train wouldn't run again," she said. "We saw the trains come all these years, and then no more."

CHAPTER THREE: The visionary Barron Gift Collier

If it weren't for this one man, Collier County might have gone by another name



On April 26, 1928, Tamiami Trail officially opened, linking Florida's coasts. It was considered "the greatest road built during the 20th century."

Merle Harris recalls the heydays of the 1920s in Everglades City, describing them as the "mosquito days."



Barron Gift Collier (1873-1939).

At the time, her father worked for tycoon Barron Gift Collier, hauling freight to the growing town by boat and barge. Back then, Everglades City — now a quiet fishing village — bustled as the hub for development in Collier County.

"We arrived just in time. Soon after we arrived in Everglades we were able to go to the big celebration of Collier becoming a county," Harris said.

She remembers the celebration was a big to-do; with a barbecue, music and games, including catching a greased pig. The Seminole Indians danced.

"There were no roads down there, so everybody had to come by boat and they came from all over," said Harris, who moved to Everglades City when she was 5.

In those days, one man's vision drove everything. From 1921 to 1923, Barron Gift Collier, originally from Memphis, Tenn., bought up more than 1.3 million acres in Lee County, making him the largest landowner in Florida seemingly overnight.

If it weren't for this one man, Collier County would have gone by another name. The county might have taken longer to develop and it might have looked much different.

"He had the vision, but more importantly he had the money. A lot of people have vision and no money," said Lamar Gable, chairman of Barron Collier Cos., one of two companies that evolved from the pioneering land-buy in the 1920s.

Generations later, Barron Gift Collier's family is still shaping the county through its development projects — both residential and commercial. More recent projects include the Mercato and the new town of Ave Maria east of Naples.

Barron Gift Collier first bought Useppa Island off the coast of Fort Myers in 1911. He invested millions more at the start of the Florida land boom in the early 1920s.

"I don't think anything much has changed since he first came here. We basically sell sun and sand. People come here for the weather," said Gable, whose stepfather was Barron Gift Collier Jr., the first of Barron Gift Collier's three sons.



Today, the Naples Depot is a museum, but when it was constructed it was the home of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad.

Barron Gift Collier was one of the richest men in the country when he decided to develop a new resort town from land that was described in state records as "swamp and overflowed."

"What I want is wild country nobody wants. I can make it into a place where people will enjoy life," he once said.

Collier made most of his fortune in the advertising business. He created street car advertising, the kind that's still seen inside trolleys and trains today. He saw a future in land development after first visiting Florida in 1911.

"Frankly, I was fascinated with Florida and swept off my feet by what I saw and felt. It was a wonderland with a magic climate, set in a frame of golden sunshine," he once said.



The Naples Hotel was the center of the community because of its location and was the core of the community's social activity.

He had a master plan for his vast real estate empire. He would need highways, steamships and railroads, as well as mail, telephone, electric, water and other services to attract visitors and residents. He argued his dream project would only be possible if state leaders carved out a new county at the southern end of Lee County. His idea didn't sit too well with some of the locals, who didn't want to see the largest county east of the Mississippi broken apart by a "Yankee."

With the help of the lobbying efforts of Tommie Barfield, an influential woman known as the "Queen of Marco," Collier made a convincing argument in Tallahassee. He promised to complete the Tamiami Trail if the state created a county in his name and so it did on May 8, 1923.

There were fewer than 1,200 people living in Collier when it was created, scattered over an area larger than Delaware.

A month before Collier became a county, a group of activists known as the Trail Blazers began their now-famous journey to push and float their Model T Fords across the Everglades to renew interest in completing the trail. Construction on the section south of Naples began in 1915, but it later stalled.

Collier County commissioners had their first meeting on July 7, 1923, issuing \$350,000 in bonds to build the Tamiami Trail. Collier backed those bonds and put his own company in charge of building it.



Merle Harris, 94, moved to Everglades City when she was 5 and her father worked alongside Barron Collier. She now lives in Naples.

The herculean construction effort on the trail began in October 1923. It was a key to future development, linking Everglades City and Naples to the larger cities of Tampa and Miami.

The trail — considered the "greatest road built during the 20th century" — officially opened to traffic in Everglades City on April 26, 1928. The celebration included a parade and a weeklong fair in the city.

Arita Parker, who now lives in Copeland, said her father helped build the Tamiami Trail.

"When I was growing up, I talked to so many men that worked on it. That was harsh. The mosquitoes, the snakes, the heat — all of it," she said.

Lucky for her father, he only worked on the trail for a few months. He was then hired by Collier to be a power plant operator and an electrician. He was responsible for the electrical lines that ran to houses in Everglades.

Everglades City was a company town, with Collier owning virtually everything — even a weekly newspaper that would later evolve into the Naples Daily News.

When it was founded, Collier County had fewer than 1,000 residents, including the Indians. Only about a dozen families lived in Everglades City. But Barron Collier saw the potential to create a paradise on Florida's last frontier.

Merle Harris recalls moving to Everglades City in 1923 and living in her father's barge because their house hadn't been built yet.

"Mr. Collier built a home for everyone to rent that worked and lived in Everglades," she said.

Her family moved from Fort Myers to Everglades City after a hurricane "drowned everything" out around Lake Okeechobee and put her father out of business. He was hauling freight for growers around the lake.

At first, Harris took a boat to school in Everglades because there were no roads to get there. After getting off the boat, she remembers taking her shoes off and walking on top of pipeline that was being used to raise and expand the developable land. She didn't want to wade in the muck.

"When we had a spring tide the water would just run over the river and down the street," she recalls.

Later, after tidal flooding from Hurricane Donna, government leaders moved the county seat to East Naples, and Everglades City would return to its roots as a small fishing village.

On January 8, 1925, Collier brought the electric trolley to Everglades. It didn't cost anything to ride it so sometimes Merle Harris took it to school.

"If they didn't charge up the batteries and it stalled on the way to school, I would walk to school on the track," she said.

At the time, Naples was even smaller than Everglades. In 1920, there were a handful of homes on the beach, a few hotels, a pier, a general store and not much else.

The Naples Hotel on the beach was the center of town, both physically and socially. Winter residents ate at the hotel, where a chef would cook up what they caught or killed that day. There were no grocery stores back then, said John Mayer, a board member of the Naples Historical Society.

The town of Naples was incorporated in 1923, but the first council meeting wasn't held until a year and a half later. At the first meeting, the first mayor, "Speed" Menefee, resigned.

Naples developed as a resort community for the wealthy, who came to hunt, fish and socialize. High season was from January to April and winter residents were a close-knit group, many of them coming from the Midwest as they do today. They liked to eat and they entertained in their homes, said Lodge McKee, a Naples historian and Realtor. "Every porch had a card table," he said.

He added, "You could always get a drink during Prohibition in Naples."

In the Roaring '20s, Naples saw a growth spurt. But it didn't last long, with the collapse of the land boom in Florida and the arrival of the Great Depression in 1929.

"The town took off so slow. People don't realize it," Mayer said. Electricity didn't arrive in Naples until 1926. Before that, the power was supplied by a generator that didn't run all the time, Mayer said.

Merle Harris moved from Everglades City to Naples in 1926. She went to the first school in Naples and remembers swimming in the Gulf, fishing off the Pier and watching movies at the community hall.

"We'd go to any dance that came along," she recalls.

By 1930, Naples had about 300 residents, many of whom lived in the town only in the winter months. That was up from a population of about 50 in 1919, Mayer said while giving a recent tour of the historic Palm Cottage, the oldest house in Naples, built in 1895.

In 1931, The Naples Golf and Beach Club arrived, built by Allen R. Joslin, a well-known sportsman. It had an 18-hole golf course and the club became a popular hangout, foreshadowing Naples' destiny as the "golf capital of the world." Today, the Naples area has nearly 100 world-renowned golf courses.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Naples attracted a few celebrities including Charles Lindbergh and Thomas Edison.

While Barron Gift Collier focused his energy on Everglades City, the opening of the Tamiami Trail had a huge impact on Naples, linking it to the rest of Florida. The media compared it to the building of the Panama Canal.

"While it wasn't a super highway, it certainly made access to Naples a lot simpler than it had been," Mayer said.

The trains brought more visitors to Naples. First to arrive was the Atlantic Coast Line on Dec. 27, 1926, with no hoopla. Eleven days later, the Seaboard Air Line's "Orange Blossom Special" steamed into town, carrying some of the nation's top businessmen, the president of the line and Florida's governor. The first locomotive reached Marco Island on June 27, 1927.

By the end of the 1920s, Collier had poured more than \$17 million into Southwest Florida. At the beginning of 1929, his annual income topped more than \$10 million.

The land boom brought tens of thousands of people to Florida. From 1923 to 1925, 300,000 people moved to Florida and 13 new counties were created, including Collier. During the boom, one lot might have sold two or more times in a day.

In 1925, the city of Bonita Springs incorporated, but after hard economic times hit it surrendered its charter in 1934. Two years later, the Piper brothers, Bill and Lester, built what would become the Everglades Wonder Gardens in the city, an attraction with wild animals and native plants that's still open today.

Even when the Florida land boom went bust, Barron Giff Collier didn't quit. But the Great Depression took its toll, grinding Collier's advertising business — which was financing his Florida dream — to a halt and leaving him on the verge of bankruptcy.

Even in his final days, Collier's confidence in his namesake county didn't waver. His investment in land has evolved into a diverse business portfolio today that includes farming, oil production and development led by two different Collier companies.

"If we brought him back today, I think he would be surprised by iPads and iPhones," said Gable, chairman of Barron Collier Cos.

"But I don't think he would be surprised at all at what Southwest Florida looks like."

CHAPTER THREE: The Tamiami Trail spans more than 274 miles

The road connecting Tampa and Miami linked the coasts while crossing seven counties



Parts of the roadway had to be blasted out of the limestone. More than 3 million sticks of dynamite were used.

The east met the west with the building of the Tamiami Trail. Opened up to traffic in Collier County on April 26, 1928, the long-anticipated highway was celebrated as the "greatest road built during the 20th century." Some have compared it to the building of the Panama Canal.



Construction workers faced deep water, poisonous snakes and alligators as they worked their way through the Everglades.

It was some feat — and one that looked like it might never happen until Barron Gift Collier came to town.

As early as 1895, Capt. J.F. Jaudon — one of Dade County's first tax assessors — dreamed of a highway linking the two coasts. He had large land holdings west of Miami in the Big Cypress and wanted to open them up to development.

In 1915, Jaudon worked with others to bring his dream to life in Tallahassee. The project began that year with various counties starting to build their sections, but it would be 13 years before the road was completed at an estimated cost of \$8 million.

Some on the east coast fought the trail, saying, "You will destroy Miami. It will flood the whole city," wrote the late Maria Stone, a former Collier County school teacher.

The trail spans more than 274 miles and goes through seven counties. Seventy-six miles of the road are in Collier County. That was the longest and toughest stretch to build.

The road could have gone by another name. It was a natural squeeze of the words, Tampa and Miami, the cities it would connect at both ends, but some didn't like it.

"For a time, the spelling Tamyami was discussed, adding the 'y' for Fort Myers," wrote Ron Jamro, executive director of Collier County's museums, in his book, "Tamiami Trail: Florida's Modern Appian Way."

Back then, including Naples in the road's name wouldn't have made much sense because it was so tiny.

Construction on a section of the road south of Naples began in 1916, then later stalled after the state ran out of money. That's when Barron Collier stepped in, and the stop-and-go project got started again in 1923.

Collier wasted no time putting together an army of engineers and road builders in Everglades City — the county seat. He backed a \$350,000 loan to get the project started and put his own construction company in charge of it.



On April 26, 1928, Tamiami Trail officially opened, linking Florida's coasts. It was considered "the greatest road built during the 20th century."

Clearing crews hacked their way through trees and dense brush, driving in stakes every 100 feet to mark the center of the road. They had to lay iron rails to support a massive drilling machine. Later came the blasting crews and the dredges.

An estimated 3 million sticks of dynamite were used for the road-building project. By 1927, Florida had become the third largest consumer of dynamite in the country, Jamro wrote.

Some question whether such a project could be built today because of the damage it did to the environment.

Road workers slogged through water waist deep, battling alligators and rattlesnakes 7 feet long as they made their way through the heart of the Everglades. They worked in the sweltering sun and had to deal with raging wildfires and hurricanes.

Everglades City toasts Tamiami Trail



"The mosquitoes swarmed in black clouds day and night," Stone wrote in an introduction to her collection of stories about the Tamiami Trail. "It was reported that panthers attacked the camp from time to time, drawn by the odor of fresh meat."

Walking and floating dredges dug drainage canals for the road. What came out of the canals was used to build up the roadbed. Dredges ran in 10-hour shifts and there were two shifts a day. One of the dredges can be found at the Collier Seminole State Park.

Workers who stood for too long in the water got foot rot.

"We would get what we called 'muck poison' in our feet," recalled the late Meece Ellis, who operated one of the dredges, in Stone's book. "Our shoes would get full of water and sand would get in there, too, and we were walking around irritating our feet, especially the boys that worked on the dynamite crew."

It took about two weeks to kill the poison after getting medicine from the clinic, he said.

Ellis recalled a few accidents with dynamite and remembered only one death when a man fell off the dredge and "split his head wide open." In his book about the Tamiami Trail, Jamro wrote nobody died on the project.

Tamiami Trail marks 80th anniversary



When the project got underway, workers weren't easy to get or keep. At the time, Florida was experiencing a land boom and a surge in construction. Many of the road workers — who made 20 cents an hour — came from Alabama and Georgia. Indians worked on the project, too, and so did prisoners.

Later, when the land boom collapsed, men who had lost their jobs joined the road-building effort by the dozens. An incentive program helped speed up construction from .7 to 1.1 miles a month, and the record was two miles built in a month, according to Jamro.

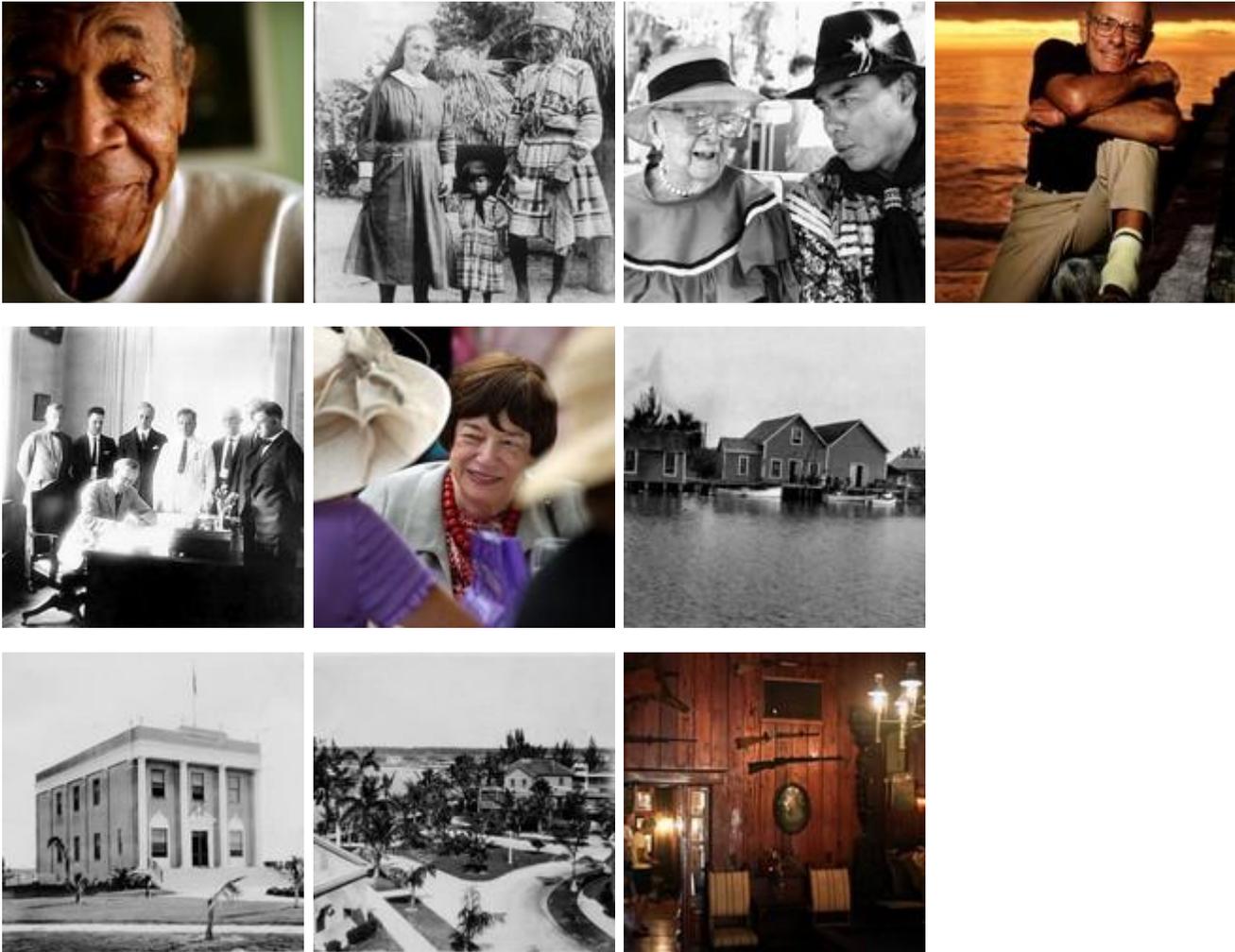
By 1926, Barron Collier had spent more than \$1 million of his own fortune on the road and there were still 31 miles to go to reach the Dade line. The state soon came to his rescue, taking over the project in Collier County. Then-Gov. John W. Martin had campaigned on the promise to get it finished and he did.

For the grand opening, a motorcade of 500 cars made its way down from Tampa and behind them came the "Trail Blazers," who had pushed their Model T Fords through the wilderness along a treacherous 40-mile path to revive the project in 1923.

In Everglades City, there was a parade and a weeklong fair to celebrate the new road.

The cost of the Tamiami Trail was estimated at about \$25,000 a mile. When it was completed, the Collier County News described the effort as valiant, saying: "The completion of the Tamiami Trail marks a new era in the progress of South Florida; opening a vast fertile section which is destined to become one of the most productive agriculturally in the whole United States."

CHAPTER THREE: The Game Changers People whose influence made an impact on the area:



Barron Gift Collier

Collier County's namesake carved the county's boundaries out of the wilds of Southwest Florida and pursued a dream of building a thriving community in the Florida subtropics. At one time he owned almost 90 percent of the land in the county. He completed the Tamiami Trail through the county, built the town of Everglades, established a bank, a bus line, a steamship company, telephone service and a weekly newspaper that is, today, the Naples Daily News.

David Graham Copeland

Mastermind behind the building of the Tamiami Trail and overlord of the company town of Everglades. Hired by Barron Collier to run his empire, Copeland was involved in virtually every facet of the county's early development.

Tommie Barfield

Marco pioneer and county's first school superintendent, businesswoman and female superstar. Known as "Queen of Marco," she lobbied Lee County commissioners for roads and the state Legislature for the creation of Collier County, serving as Barron Collier's agent.

Dr. Earl Baum

One of Naples' first doctors. Wrote of early Naples and created movies still used by the Historical Society. His rare stuffed wildlife collection is at the Collier County Museum.

Loren G. "Totch" Brown

Everglades fisherman and self-proclaimed outlaw, whose exploits in smuggling became legendary.

William Cambier

First town engineer of Naples; served 1926-49. Was in charge of implementing the Naples Plan. Cambier Park across from city hall bears his name.

Cory Osceola

Leader of the Seminole tribe in Southwest Florida.

Leila Canant

Naples' longest serving schoolteacher, who taught from 1928 until she retired in 1969.

Norman Herren

Came to the Everglades to work for the Collier interests in 1938. He went on to become president of the Collier Development Corp. He was also chairman of the Coastal Area Planning Commission.

Capt. J.F. Jaudon

Dade County tax assessor and promoter of the Tamiami Trail, the highway that put Naples on the map by linking Miami on the east coast to Tampa on the west coast. Served as Ochopee postmaster.

Allen Joslin

Original owner of the Beach Club hotel and developer of the area's first real golf course.

Speed Menefee

Naples' first mayor who resigned 15 minutes into the first official meeting of the city council, turning the reins over to Judge E.G. Wilkinson.

Lester Piper

Founder of Everglades Wonder Gardens in Bonita Springs, one of the first tourist attractions in Florida.

Ed Scott

Clerk of the Circuit Court from 1932-1959. The position included working as the unofficial county clerk, planner and financial officer. When he died in 1959 his wife Margaret took over the job and held it until 1976. Between them, they ran the county's business for 44 years, first from the county seat in Everglades, later from East Naples.

E.G. Wilkinson

Former Naples mayor and namesake of the Wilkinson House, a historic home on Naples' beach.

William Robert Wilson

Project engineer for the Tamiami Trail construction, who later founded W.R. Wilson and Associates in 1956.

Chapter Four: 1940 - 1959

Long before Southwest Florida had a comprehensive plan for growth and development, extraordinary people had the courage to identify a vision for this area. They conquered the mosquitoes. Built a water plant and a hospital. They developed prestigious waterfront communities. They paved the roads, brought businesses to the area and transformed the rural and rugged swampland into a paradise of comfort and stability. With miles of pristine beach and crystal clear water, the area was never destined to be small. Everyone wanted to see the community thrive. Naples was on the cusp of a boom.

CHAPTER FOUR: War years introduced SW Florida to hundreds of soldiers

On the cusp: Many of them returned to live here



In 1951, Naples mayor Roy W. Smith bought the county's two-thirds share of the Naples Airport for a little more than \$8,000.

First Lt. William "Bill" Savidge wears a white-collared shirt embroidered with an airplane logo where a left breast pocket would be. Sitting on a couch in his 10th Street North house in Naples, the 89-year-old's large hands rest steadily in his lap, except to show pictures of the fighter planes he flew during World War II — AT-6s and P-40s."He was very young, he was excited, and he loved to fly," said Betty Briggs, Bill Savidge's daughter.



Bill and Olivia Savidge, Naples 1944.

In January 1944, Bill Savidge was assigned to the then recently built army airfield base in Naples to train fighter pilots and bombers for the war.

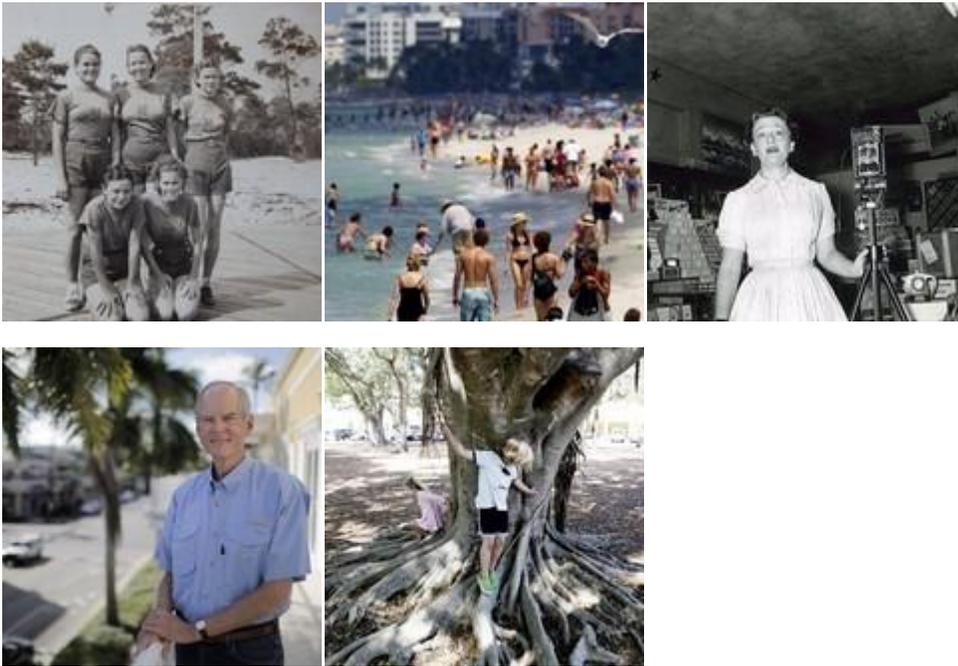
Along the way, he fell for a local girl.

It took six weeks for Savidge to fall in love with and marry Olivia of the Storter family, the family who founded Everglades City.

On their first date, he took the Naples-born-and-raised "goody girl" to a movie. To this day, neither of them remember the film's title.

At that time, the early 1940s, Southwest Florida was still largely untouched — Naples even more so.

In 19 years — by 1959 — Naples and Southwest Florida went from a barren, rural and rugged swampland to a place of vision, planning and stability.



In 1940, Everglades City was home to the county seat, school board, and the first and only bank until 1949. The first Naples water plant was in the works. Mosquitoes roamed free.

Olivia Savidge graduated from Naples High School in 1942. She said she could count on her fingers the number of people in her graduating class. Census data shows around 5,000 people lived in Collier County at that time.

"You could go all the way down the bay and not run into one boat," Savidge recalled. He and Olivia Savidge said they spent many weekends and afternoons boating and fishing for mullet, mackerel and snapper, depending on the season.

There was only one jail called the Paw Paw Patch. It had two cells and was in a papaya patch, an area that's now Naples City Hall.

The jail was built for \$381.68. People said it was a "mosquito hell" during the summer months.

The World War II airfield base brought hundreds of young men to Naples who otherwise never would have traveled to the remote, southwest corner of Florida. Seventy-eight soldiers trained at the base when it opened Dec. 23, 1943. At the height of the war, several hundred men and 75 aircraft were assigned there.



Man Of War Cove in foreground with Smuggler's Bay at left, Hidden Bay at right. Part of the more than seven miles of wide and deep ocean-going waterways in Port Royal.

"We were stationed along the shoreline," Bill Savidge said. "Bombers would go out over the Gulf. We would fly up the coast and we would attack them. That was our mission."

The men stationed at the Naples base simulated attacks against Buckingham Army Airfield pilots in Fort Myers to prepare them for real combat.

But Bill Savidge's training quickly turned into live combat in Japan. He is quiet about that time.

In 1945, he was sent to Iwo Jima to replace lost fighter pilots. He flew about a dozen missions over Japan. He also sent dozens of letters home to his new wife and firstborn child. He returned to Naples after the war.

They knew everybody, which was easy because Naples was so small.

"Maybe 200 homes," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

But Naples was on the cusp of a boom. War veterans returned seeking a peaceful, comfortable lifestyle. They had fallen in love with the untouched beaches, palm trees and local women.

Visionaries flocked to the area to cultivate dreams out of the swampland.

W. Roy Smith was one of those dreamers. His vision became the Naples Plan: the roads, parks, playgrounds and zoning that is still seen today.



W. Roy Smith

W. Roy Smith came to Naples in 1936 to audit the books for Standard Oil. Before he could finish his audit, he made the decision to move his family to Naples permanently.

"He couldn't even concentrate on the books," said his son Jim Smith.

He said his father remembers deer and flocks of turkey crossing the unpaved streets and the open lands spotted with unruly vegetation.

At that time, Naples was a sawmill town, a fishing village and a place for eccentric adventurers.

The city budget was around \$10,000.

The only stable landmark was the "old beach hotel" or Naples Hotel that was eventually torn down in the 1960s.

There was no water, no city hall, and no hospital.

W. Roy Smith was elected the first official mayor when Naples became a city in 1949. Speed Menefee was the first mayor of the town of Naples in 1925.

W. Roy Smith and local town engineer, William Cambier, questioned: "What does this fishing village need?"



Jim Smith, son of Roy W. Smith. Roy W. Smith was the City of Naples' first mayor.

From that discussion, the Naples Plan was born. The budget was \$300,000. The town council approved the plan in 1947 with a tax exempt fund so people could make charitable donations. It paid for parks, a police and fire department, 3.5 miles of road and civic improvements to beautify the city. One thing still needed to be controlled: the mosquitoes.

"It was easier to wipe them off than to smack them," Jim Smith said.

That changed in 1950 when the city developed its own mosquito control district. It covered six square miles.

Jim Smith remembers running with his friends behind jeeps with big turbine engines spraying a fog of malathion through the streets.

"You heard the buzzing, you knew they were coming down the street," he said of the jeeps, quipping that "everybody my age should be dead or have cancer" because of the chemicals. Controlling the mosquito population made Naples a "livable" city, he said.

A year later, W. Roy Smith made a pivotal decision to buy the county's two-thirds share of the then abandoned Naples airport for \$8,311.18 — the original amount paid by the county in 1941.

"City officials saw the benefit of having an expanded air service," said Ryan Frost, director of airport operations at Naples Municipal Airport. "They kept it alive."

Frost said the only reason Naples and Collier County are so successful today is because of the easy access the Naples Municipal Airport provides to the beaches, unlike Southwest Florida International Airport in Fort Myers.

By the 1950s, the water system developed by Joseph Schlitz Brewing Co. President W.B. Uihlein, was well under way. Bill Savidge got his first job out of the war working as one of two city employees for the water department.

MILITARY MULTIMEDIA

- Medals of Memory
- Invasion of Our Lifetime
- Vietnam Wall Memorial
- Purging Demons

"My first job was digging ditches," he joked. But Bill Savidge played an important role in making Naples modern and prosperous.

"Mr. Uihlein took him under his wing," said Briggs of her father. In 1948, Bill Savidge was named superintendent of the city water department.

In 1952, the water plant officially opened. The population in Naples was around 1,700.

As the town grew, residents realized the urgency for a comprehensive medical system. The lack of doctors in the area forced people to go north to Lee County for medical emergencies.

Naples Memorial Hospital opened its doors to patients in March 7, 1956, with 50 beds. A 1956 aerial photo shows the hospital bordering an empty U.S. 41. The hospital was considered to be among the most modern in Florida. Its name was later changed to Naples Community Hospital.

The comprehensive water system, parks, roads and hospital transformed the Naples wilderness into a sophisticated and comfortable city.

Local historian Doris Reynolds said even though Naples started out as a small town, it was inevitable it would change. The rugged, rural and oft-beloved pioneer lifestyle had to eventually transform as people discovered the white, pristine beaches.

"We were never destined to be that small," she said, "when you have seven miles of sand and the Gulf lapping onto the beach."

She said it was planned by the very wealthy in a "farsighted way," referring to the visionaries of the time like W. Roy Smith, Glen Sample, who developed Port Royal, and Uihlein.

But those individuals, like Bill Savidge, who stumbled upon Naples because of the war or through word-of-mouth, were no less important to its growth and vitality.

Reynolds said the difference between rich and poor was hardly noticeable in the 1950s. Rather, everyone wanted to see the close-knit community succeed.

"This town had everything I wanted in life," Reynolds said. "It was a small town but I instinctively knew it had a great future. There was so much energy and vitality that other places didn't have. There was a lot of promise."

As for Bill Savidge, he retired from the city in 1985 after 38 years of service. He rarely flew planes again.

Briggs, 66, said her dad saw the best and worst of it during the war.

"He put that part of his life to rest," she said.

"I've had a wonderful life," her father said. "Overseas and here."

CHAPTER FOUR: Naples played big role training pilots during war



Naples Municipal Airport got its start here during World War II.

On Jan. 22, 1944, an AT-6 fighter plane collided with a B-17 bomber over the Gulf of Mexico near Marco Island during a training mission. Ten members of the crew, trapped inside the bomber, drowned.



Some members of the Naples Army Airbase included (kneeling, left to right) Pvt. Jones, Pvt. Medlin, Pvt. Cook; first row, standing left to right Sgt. Humes, Capt. Hunt, Pvt. Schell; back row, left to right Pvt. Ray Knapp, Pvt. Johnnie Johnson, Pvt. Tom Thompson.

The pilot of the AT-6, Lt. Joseph O'Flaherty, jumped out of his plane and survived, only to die two months later in yet another practice attack mission 10 miles north of Naples.

This crash was the first of many fatal training accidents at the Naples Army Airfield during World War II.

The airfield was at the present site of Naples Municipal Airport.

Many historians attribute the number of fatal accidents in Naples and in training bases across Florida to the need for speed in turning out trained pilots and aircrews for combat.

There were 54 military bases in Florida during the war.

"We had green pilots and planes coming off the assembly line fast," Collier County Museums Director Ron Jamro said. "It was a formula for disaster." Log entries note a total of 14 aircraft accidents while the Naples air base was active during the war. But January 1944, the month the AT-6 collided with the B-17, was a particularly bad month for the Army Air Forces. There were 231 fatal accidents during that month alone. That year, there were 1,949 fatal accidents. Estimates show the Army Air Forces suffered nearly 40 accidents a day during the war. "They just put farm boys behind the wheel of the airplane," Jamro said. "That's what the war demanded to keep that pace up."



William Savidge, father of World War II author Betty Briggs, flew fighter planes during the war. He was one of many who trained at the Naples Army Airbase.

Jamro said the second commanding officer at the Naples air base, Lt. Col. Harrison Thyng, was a strong and highly respected leader.

"He anticipated a lot of problems and knew how to deal with them," Jamro said. "He kept the rate of accidents really low" compared to other bases.

World War II author Betty Briggs said Florida probably trained more bomber crews than any other state because of the opportunity for year-round flying. Briggs' father, William Savidge, flew fighter planes during World War II and trained at the Naples air base.

"There were planes in the air all the time," she said. "In Tampa Bay, they'd have one crash a day."

By the end of the war, 40,000 American airmen were killed in combat and more than 18,000 were wounded.

From 1942 on, the U.S. averaged 170 planes lost each day because of combat and accidents.

At the Naples air base, other fatal accidents occurred when:

- Two pilots flying a training mission north of Naples crashed.
- A pilot was forced down over swampy terrain in July 1944. It took ground crews in amphibious vehicles three days to recover the body.
- An airman's plane landed just short of the Naples airstrip on October 1944.
- A flier tried to evacuate his plane to Fort Myers during a hurricane.

CHAPTER FOUR: Tourism driving force behind SW Florida development

The economy of Southwest Florida has always been centered around visitors, but the need to diversify is in the future.



Postcard of the Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club.

The first Naples pioneers never intended to stay — they came as visitors. Since then, tourism has been the driving force behind Southwest Florida's development and the largest private sector industry.



Neapolitans on the beach.

More than 1.4 million tourists visit Collier County annually. And after a glimpse of paradise, repeat visitors often buy property and become permanent residents.

"We certainly would not have the number of restaurants, cultural activities and shopping that we have today," Collier County tourism director Jack Wert said. "This is a fairly small community; without tourism we could not sustain or support the number of businesses we have."

When early visitors came to Naples in the 1900s, their social life centered around one place: The Naples Hotel. It was built in 1889 and remained the only hotel in the area until the 1930s.

News of Naples beaches and year-round sunshine traveled mostly by word-of-mouth.

"It was the natural part of the area that was attracting people down here — the natural beauty and sport," Historic Palm Cottage Board Member John Mayer said.

It took little effort to convince people of the beauty of Naples. "People often bought property sight unseen," Wert said.

In the 1930s and 1940s, competing hotels emerged in downtown Naples and around the Pier. Restaurants started to open.

"This place just popped up and grew almost simultaneously," said Mike Reagan, president of the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce. "It's all been based on people coming here. Occupations have grown to support that."

In 1946, the Naples Hotel and other holdings of the Naples Improvement Company were sold to Henry Watkins and his partners. Watkins renovated and redecorated the hotel, and by 1949, the 135-room hotel, called the Naples Beach Hotel, opened year-round. The hotel was later renamed The Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club.

Today, Henry Watkins' grandson, Michael, runs the resort on Gulf Shore Boulevard North.

In the 1980s, other beachfront resorts opened along the coast, like the Ritz Carlton, Edgewater Beach Hotel, and La Playa Beach and Golf Resort.



Thousands headed to the beach for the annual fireworks show on July 4, 2011, at Naples Pier.

Reagan said the service businesses, such as the hotels, restaurants and hospitals, provide a livelihood for the residents here. But he said tourism is just one element that should fuel the economy.

"Our economy is sparked by tourism, but for the future, we need to diversify the economy," Reagan said.

This year, areas such as Mercato and Fifth Avenue are "bursting at the seams," Reagan said.

He anticipates this trend to continue but recommends growing the market in areas like medical tourism — encouraging people to have surgery here, so they can recover in a warmer and more private environment than in the North.

"They have a certain kind of surgery, they recreate here and rest up," he said. "The issue is, how many people, how frequent and how much money are they going to come with?"

For tourism to continue to drive this area's economy, he said, residents need to embrace it as an important facet of the community.

"We have to prime the pump," he said. "We have to be happy with what we have, proud of what we have, and we need to tell the world about it."

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CHAPTER FOUR: The potential of Port Royal



Glen Sample 'thought it was beautiful. He thought people ought to see it. He thought people would consider it paradise'



Aerial view of Port Royal before construction.

Naples wasn't always synonymous with luxury communities and multimillion-dollar homes. It took Glen Sample, an advertising genius from Chicago, to visualize the first development of this scale and extravagance: Port Royal.



Glen Sample and his wife, Helen.

"He did it because he thought it was beautiful. He thought people ought to see it. He thought people would consider it paradise," said Lodge McKee, a longtime Naples Realtor.

Sample transformed the small, quiet resort town that was Naples into a city of waterfront, luxury-style homes. Port Royal paved the way for future multimillion-dollar communities such as the Moorings and Park Shore.

Many called Sample a perfectionist for his grandiose and calculated plans.

"When he first came in 1938 — believe me Naples was not paradise," historian Doris Reynolds said. "For someone to see the potential of this really desolate end of Naples ... he had to have a lot of foresight and confidence."

Sample's dream began when he and his wife vacationed in Palm Beach in 1938. The couple wanted someplace to unwind. To relax. To be at peace. They ventured to the west coast and found Naples.

For \$54,000, Sample bought two square miles of land that would become Port Royal.

Sample spent \$3.5 million of his own money before the first lot was sold. He removed mangroves, something that would have been met with fierce opposition today. He dredged, filled and paved the land.

But lots hardly sold when they first went on the market in the 1950s.

That didn't deter Sample.

"I'm going to almost double the price and then they'll sell," Reynolds remembers him saying.

Slowly, properties started to move.

"He wanted people who were solid and conservative. He wanted people who would appreciate his taste," McKee said. "He wasn't impressed with bigness."

Many early buyers were from Midwestern cities such as Cincinnati or Pittsburgh.

"It was like having part of your life in black and white and part of your life in color," McKee said of the stark differences between the Midwest and the Port Royal community.

"Sample, himself, was his own best salesman," McKee said.



Kim Mejia waters topiaries outside the home of Nancy and Bryant Yunker Jr. in Port Royal as workers prepare for the Naples Winter Wine Festival.

He cruised potential buyers up and down the waterways of Port Royal on his yacht. He drove them through the streets in his Rolls-Royce.

Sample placed ads in national magazines that exclaimed, "Money alone won't buy a lot in Port Royal."

In 1959, with a million dollars, Sample started the Port Royal Beach Club.

Port Royal property owners became automatic members. Now, those who own property in certain elite communities surrounding Port Royal also may apply and pay to be a part of the club.

McKee said a definitive economic line always divided the winter residents, tourists and annual residents or "townies" in Naples.

"The existence of Port Royal created service jobs that didn't exist before for those people who lived here year round," he said. "From an economic perspective, Port Royal was beneficial. From a social standpoint there would probably never be a social parity between service people and those residents."

In 1960, lots went for about \$12,000. In the 1970s and 1980s, they would sell for around \$225,000.

Lavern Gaynor, the daughter of Dellora and Lester Norris, bought her Port Royal property in 1968 for \$100,000.

"Port Royal was not that beautiful when I first saw it — it was nothing but sand. Just sand, with roads running through it. The advantage of it: Every home had a boat dock," Gaynor said.

She had 2.5 acres and a view of Gordon Pass as it fed into the Gulf. She remembers watching the sky change colors from her dock at sunset.

Gaynor had already spent much of her life entertaining family and friends overseas. She didn't want a large house, so she built a house with one bedroom.

"(Sample) was sort of horrified," Gaynor said. "He said, 'Well that's such a small house.' "

Later, Sample put a minimum size requirement on all houses in the development — they had to be at least 2,500 square feet.

"Something that size would be a guest house now," McKee said. "(Sample) could not foresee that someone would take one of those lots and put 7,000 square feet on the house."

As the popularity of the elite community grew over the decades, striking changes began to take place.

The same lot that sold for \$12,000 in 1960 had a selling price of \$3.5 million in the early 2000s. "Property values went up in such an extraordinary way in the last couple of decades," McKee said. "The size of the investment dictated that large homes — mansions — would be built."

Gaynor sold her property in 2004. Soon after, her house was knocked down to make way for a mansion. She remembers only three houses on her Port Royal street when she lived there in the 1970s. Today, more than 500 properties make up the community.

Sample never lived to see the grandiose scale of the multimillion-dollar houses that pack the Port Royal peninsulas. He died in 1971.

McKee speculates that Sample would be proud of the community.

"He would be stupefied at the change in scale," McKee said. "But he would be excited to know that his vision had lasted and prospered for so long, even if he didn't particularly care for what he saw today."

CHAPTER FOUR: 1940 -1959 Game Changers

Lester Norris

He and his wife, Dellora, were the area's leading philanthropists. Their efforts helped establish Naples Community Hospital, the Big Cypress Nature Center, Lowdermilk Park, Delnor-Wiggins State Park, Rookery Bay Sanctuary and the Cambier Park community center. They saved Keewaydin Island from development for many years when they purchased it in 1945, and a 1963 meeting on the porch of the lodge there led to the founding of the Conservancy. In the 1970s, they helped with the restoration of the Naples Depot. A donation from the couple helped rebuild the Naples Pier after Hurricane Donna in 1960.

W.B. Uihlein

President of Schlitz Brewing Co. who is responsible for construction of Naples' first water system.

Henry B. Watkins

Owner of the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club. Along with two partners he purchased the Naples Company from the estate of John S. Jones in 1946, including the old Naples Hotel and the Beach Club. Watkins played an important role in the Naples Plan, which helped modernize Naples in the late 1940s.

Ed Frank

The Naples businessman who is credited with inventing the swamp buggy in the 1940s. The Swamp Buggy Races and the parade have brought international fame to Naples. Goodlette-Frank Road is named in his honor.

Milton H. Link

Developer of the Moorings, one of Naples' early developments, beginning in 1957. He was a former superintendent of parks for Miami Beach and Fort Lauderdale city manager.

Don Wynn

Owner of Sunshine Superex Market, Wynn introduced grocery carts and self-service shopping to Naples. Served on Naples City Council from 1950-54.

Addison Miller

Realtor who developed the first condominium in Southwest Florida. Along with Henry Watkins, Miller donated land for Naples Community Hospital. Miller came to Naples in 1947 after being hired by Watkins to promote the town.

Glen Sample

Developer of Port Royal, the luxury community that is virtually synonymous with Naples.

Claus 'Snooky' Senghaas

Manager of the Rod & Gun Club in Everglades City. The club was often visited by the rich and famous, including Presidents Eisenhower and Truman.

Doris Reynolds

Author, magazine owner, chamber executive and columnist who has helped document the history of Naples.

W. Roy Smith

Longtime mayor of Naples whose administration is responsible for much of the ambience that is now Naples. In 1947 he formulated what was known as the Naples Plan. This project solicited \$300,000 in tax-exempt donations from residents for much-needed improvements, including street paving, Cambier Park, a mosquito control program, and T-groins along the beach. He also oversaw construction of a new jail, fire station and city hall. He served from 1946 to 1960.

Mrs. S.F. Briggs

Philanthropist who was instrumental in the creation and growth of Naples Community Hospital. Her husband, Stephen, was a founder of Briggs and Straton Motor Co. and the Outboard Marine Corp., which had a testing facility here. The Briggs' home on Gordon Drive was for many years an unofficial center of community activities, with white elephant sales for charities held on their front lawn.

Maria Stone

Former schoolteacher with a love for history. Author of more than a dozen books containing transcripts of interviews she conducted with longtime county residents.

Mamie Tooke

Naples premier businesswoman as Naples grew into a city during the 1950s and 1960s. She ran the town's only bank after her husband died and supported numerous community organizations such as Naples Community Hospital, the Chamber of Commerce, the Community Concert Association, the Woman's Club, the Cancer Society and many others.

Julius K. Fleischmann

He came to Naples after World War II from Cincinnati, where his family established Fleischmann Yeast, which eventually became Standard Brands. He owned hotels, was president of the Ballet Russe in Monte Carlo and some called him the most renowned yachtsman in the world. In the early 1950s, he started buying property and constructing buildings, creating the Third Street shopping district. In 1952, he revived and established Caribbean Gardens, one of the city's major attractions. The city's largest park bears his name.

CHAPTER FIVE: Naples Pier

Stroll the Naples Pier on a Sunday afternoon and you'll find grandfathers teaching their grandchildren how to properly cast a line, or if they're lucky, reel in a fish. A few hours later, you'll see couples, young and old, standing arm-in-arm watching the sky fade from blue to orange as the sun dips below the horizon on the Gulf of Mexico.



The pier is the center of the Naples universe, from sunset gathering spot, to fishing spot, or for a time as a demonstration protest and memorial. For several years the display known as "Arlington South" would take place to commemorate the anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq — an effort by veterans and volunteers from Veterans for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, Broward for Peace, Social Action Committee of Fort Myers, Pax Christi Naples, Naples for Peace, Environmental & Peace Education Center, as well as students from Naples and St. John Neumann high schools and Florida Gulf Coast University.

"I love it in the summertime, when nobody's there, it's ghostly quiet," Naples City Councilman and former Mayor Bill Barnett said. "You go down at sunset and a thunderstorm is rolling in and the sky lights up over Marco."

"You can't capture that in a photograph, you have to see it yourself."

Since 1888, the Pier has been a permanent fixture at the end of 12th Avenue South, even after hurricane winds have battered the wooden structure. It has been rebuilt at least half a dozen times. It now stands as an iconic symbol of the Naples coastline.

It was first built as a 600-foot freight and passenger dock. A post office was at the foot of the Pier, where it stayed until 1922 when an accidental cigarette fire destroyed the building.

"For so many years, it was the only way in or out of Naples," said Lavern Gaynor, daughter of Lester and Dellora Norris, who contributed to the Pier's reconstruction twice.

In 1924, the Pier was lengthened to 1,000 feet. Fishermen could then catch kingfish, mackerel and red fish.

But no one foresaw the destruction that Hurricane Donna would cause when it hit Naples on Sept. 10, 1960. A 9 ½-foot storm surge collapsed the Pier into the Gulf of Mexico.

At that time, the Pier was valued at \$64,500. The city had paid \$21,000 for an insurance policy on the Pier but had only collected \$4,000 in damages. Four months before the devastating hurricane hit, the Naples City Council unanimously voted to terminate the insurance on the Pier.



A resident egret gets a small scrap of pompano on the Naples Pier. While it's tempting and not technically illegal to feed some Florida wildlife, officials urge people not to feed wild animals so they do not lose their fear of people and become dependent on humans for food, or abandon their natural diet and habitat.

Fortunately, Gaynor's parents paid to rebuild the Pier.

Residents considered tearing it down and rebuilding it at the end of the busier Fifth Avenue South. But with the Norris' donation, the Pier reopened 10 months later in its original location.



Yes, that's a submarine at the Naples Pier. Daily News files and longtime residents recall two visits to the pier by U.S. subs, one for certain in 1959 and another in the early to middle 1960s. This photo, bought at an estate sale by Daily News reader Jerry Sapir, is thought to be from 1959, though the name on the sub, Mackerel, does not match up with the sub known to have come that year, Marlin. Whatever the year, the photo shows the sub's visit caused quite a stir. Note the car, perhaps from the former flagship radio station, WNOG, on the pier, at left. News clippings from the 1959 visit tell of city officials going down the hatch to tour the sub — which was greeted by the Naples High School marching band — and the crew coming ashore for a bowling match with city officials.

"They felt it meant so much to the people," Gaynor said, "for morale purposes."

Ten years later, her parents paid again to replace the Pier. Worms had eaten away at the structure.

The city at the time was considering charging people 25 cents to walk or fish on the Pier, but Naples voters rejected that plan.

"My parents said they would redo the Pier if it remained free to the people," she said. "And that's what they did."

Since then, the Pier has gone through many redesigns and repairs. It now extends 1,000 feet into the Gulf. A concession stand and small bait-house are located at the Pier's halfway point.

The city of Naples purchased a bulk fishing license so that even those without fishing licenses could cast their lines from the Pier.

Barnett said he wanted anyone to be able to fish there.

"The emotions that you see on a daily basis ... For some it's better than any kind of medication that you could possibly take," he said. "It's therapeutic."

And even though the Pier never moved to the end of Fifth Avenue South — an area some consider to be the heart of downtown — Gaynor said the Pier will always have a "sturdy influence."

"Even years ago, it was a gathering place for the people," Gaynor said. "People always said, 'I'll meet you at the Pier.'"

If another hurricane ever tears down the symbolic structure, Barnett said, it will no doubt be rebuilt again.

"We'll fix it," he said. "Like generations before us and generations after us."

CHAPTER FIVE: NEARBY CITIES



Today, the town of Jerome can easily be passed as it is only a handful of homes on State Road 29 near Everglades City.

In the 1920s a string of tiny villages sprouted up in Collier County. These little hamlets went by such names as Miles City, Carnestown, Tuckerton

"It's an interesting story, the little forgotten towns of Collier County. But most of them were almost forgotten the day they were established," said Ron Jamro, executive director of Collier County's museums.

Port DuPont — a new part of town — became an industrial hub that supported Barron Gift Collier's many construction projects, including the building of the Tamiami Trail that began in 1923.

"It was an industrial suburb of Everglades City. A lot of the lumber yards and machine shops and repair shops were located there," Jamro said.

The community is believed to have been named for General T. Coleman DuPont. DuPont — a prominent businessman and politician — was just one of Collier's many influential friends.

The Port DuPont area was first settled by a black man, August Swycover and his wife, in 1882 and they planted sugar cane there, wrote Charlton W. Tebeau in his book, "Florida's Last Frontier."

Port DuPont was on the west bank of the Barron River. It eventually evolved into a community for the county's black residents, with its own school and church for them at a time of segregation.

Port DuPont was ravaged by a hurricane in September 1926. It was rebuilt, only to burn to the ground in 1928. That was the end of the suburb, though there is still a road by the name of Dupont in Everglades City.

A handful of other villages cropped up in the 1920s, many of them named after Barron Gift Collier's friends or relatives including Miles City and Carnestown. His youngest son's name was Cowles Miles Collier and his wife's maiden name was Carnes, which was also his second son's middle name.

Miles City — once a stop for the Atlantic Coast Railroad — popped up where Alligator Alley meets State Road 29. Once in a while, Jamro will hear a meteorologist on TV quote the weather in Miles City and he'll get a laugh out of it. "In 30 years, I've never found it," he said with a chuckle.

Carnestown — a dot on the map about 30 miles south of Naples — was born as a staging area for construction of the Tamiami Trail. It was really "nothing more than a big warehouse," where they put spare parts for the road project, Jamro said.

After everything in the town vanished, it appeared in an article by Robert Ripley, founder of Ripley's Believe It or Not!, who described it as "the town without a building." The area is now home to the Everglades Area Chamber of Commerce near the intersection of U.S. 41 and State Road 29.

Bonana sprang up in 1927 after the Atlantic Coast Line expanded its track from Deep Lake, a town about 12 miles north of Everglades City, to Immokalee.

Many of the small towns developed around the packing industry. Tuckerton and Matmon — centers for packing and crate-making — shared the same spot on a county map until they disappeared in the 1940s.

Other small settlements included Rock Island and Jerome, which began in the 1920s as a logging town with a sawmill.

"They are kind of deceiving in a way. None of them were large in the sense of big populations," Jamro said.

In the early 1930s, two men — Captain James F. Jaudon and H. W. Bird — built a tomato packing house in an area they named Birdon, combining their last names. At one time, the town had more than 340 residents. It too vanished in the 1940s.

Copeland — along the western border of the Big Cypress National Preserve — was named for David Graham Copeland, an engineer who oversaw the construction of the Tamiami Trail. It did well as a logging town until the demand for cypress dropped off in 1957.

From Copeland, workers had to travel 40 miles by rail to get to the cutting sites. They left Monday and did not return until Friday night.

"When the employment dried up and there was no more cutting of cypress some stayed. Most left," Jamro said.

That was the story of the small towns and villages. The population moved with the jobs.

The opening of the Tamiami Trail brought development to Ochopee off U.S. 41 east of State Road 29, but now the town is mostly known for its tiny post office — the nation's smallest.

"There is not a great concentration of people living there," Jamro said. "But it's fun to see."

CHAPTER FIVE: Architecture of Naples



Days usually begin early with a walk to a local site. Palm Cottage, background, is a historical landmark which has appeared in many of Arsenault's works. The cottage represents old Naples to Arsenault.

The houses were small at first, but as Southwest Florida grew so did the square footage.



View of the historic Haldeman House, constructed in 1886 as a cottage on 12th Avenue South

More than a century after homes first started popping up throughout the Florida wilderness, some experts say there may be a movement afoot to return to the cottage-style homes of yesteryear.

Old Florida homes were tiny compared to today. There was always a front porch and every room had windows to let in the cool Gulf of Mexico breeze.

"The original look of the buildings down here were Florida Caribbean style. They weren't very ornate. They were very simple with some small decorative details," said Matthew Kragh, a Naples architect who has experience restoring historic homes. "Back then less was more."

Lodge McKee, a longtime Neapolitan and history buff, said the homes were originally built with the expectation that owners would be in town for a couple of months during the summer.

That meant the houses were relatively compact and sparsely decorated. The bedrooms often had small closets — big enough, McKee said, to hold a suitcase full of clothing — and often times the only thing in the living room was a fireplace to keep homeowners warm on a chilly winter night.

As for the dining room, McKee said that was often combined with the most important room of the house: the front porch.

The porch — screened in to keep the mosquitoes out — always faced the street, and McKee said homeowners would spend their days out there watching their neighbors pass by.

"It was a real clique of people here," said John Mayer, a Naples Historical Society board member. "They got together twice a day."

The historic Palm Cottage is one of the few remaining historic cottages left in downtown Naples. The house was built in 1895 and features several small, enclosed rooms upstairs — bedrooms were big enough for a bed and a suitcase — and a living room, dining room and library downstairs.

And much like homes of that period, woodwork throughout of the house was crafted using Dade County pine, a hard wood typically used to make furniture. Dade County pine — which is sometimes referred, Mayer said, as Lee County mahogany — is no longer readily available because almost all of the trees have been cut down.

Palm Cottage isn't the only piece of early architecture that survives. One other home from Naples early days is still standing, just not where its owner built it more than 125 years ago.



Haldeman House in Bonita Springs. 2008. Light painting photo column.

Constructed in 1886 as a cottage on 12th Avenue South, the Haldeman House sat in Old Naples near the Naples Pier until April 2006. The home was originally built by Confederate Gen. John S. Williams, but was later given to Walter Haldeman, one of Naples' early developers.

The home stayed in the Haldeman family for more than a century, but in 2004 the family trust put it on the market. A Naples resident bought the home and said he'd pay anyone who wanted to move it and preserve it.

After a failed attempt by Naples preservationists — including the Naples Historical Society — to preserve the house at its original location, a Bonita Springs landscape architect said he would move the house to Pennsylvania Avenue in Bonita Springs. Chris Busk, the architect, restored several historic Bonita Springs homes, such as the 1915 Williams-Packard home and a 1913 fishing cottage.

Southwest Florida's love affair with cottages continued through World War II, but after the war Southwest Florida's neighborhoods — as well as neighborhoods throughout the country — saw a shift in the types of homes that were being built.



The Historic Haldeman House begins its move from Naples to Bonita Springs Tuesday morning at 1:30 a.m. and arriving at its new home at 4:40 a.m.

That shift ushered in the birth of the ranch-style house. These homes — usually long, close to the ground with a flat pitched roof — were first built in the 1920s, but grew in popularity following the war.

Ranch-style homes were popular, McKee said, in newer subdivisions such as Aqualane Shores and Coquina Sands.

"(Developers) built standard models of those homes and they were very active in Florida," McKee said. "So much of the development that took place (in that era) was of that sort."

The ranch-style area continued on through the 1980s, but long-low homes weren't the only thing popping up. There also was a move afoot to turn a fledgling island community into a Polynesian oasis.

Herb Savage, a longtime Marco Island resident, began designing homes on Marco Island with the Mackle brothers in 1976. Savage said in a 2009 Marco Magazine interview that the planners "wanted to follow a Polynesian theme."

Savage at the time said his vision for Marco Island was full of influences from his travels, and his architectural designs remained constant.

But the ranch and Polynesian phase didn't last forever. By the 1990s people started looking toward Mediterranean design when it came to designing their homes, Kragh said. The Mediterranean-style started on Florida's east coast, and Kragh said he thinks tourists "started to identify that with what Florida feels like."

"I think it just spreads like a virus and it was everywhere," Kragh said. "It's frustrating as an architect."

But the push to build bigger homes didn't just come from a desire for more space, it also had to do with getting the biggest bang for a buyer's buck.

"The driving force between the changes in the size of house and the style of houses has been the steadily increasing value of land beneath the house," McKee said. "We're still in that mode today where you might have to pay \$1.5 million for (the land) and if I'm going to do that, I'm not going to be happy with a 1,700-square-foot house."

That's troubling for a preservationist like McKee. The desire to build bigger homes means buyers are tearing down smaller cottages to make way for new homes, leaving about 60 structures that make Naples' historic district historic.

And while there's no way to bring old houses back once they've been torn down, Kragh said there's an increased interest in either restoring old homes or recreating the old Florida experience.

"The trend has changed; (people) want the old Florida house again," Kragh said.

CHAPTER FIVE: FIFTH AVE AND THIRD STREET



Fifth Avenue

South hosts numerous events throughout the year, from the St. Patrick's Day parade to art shows and more. Here, runners sprint off the starting line down Fifth Avenue South during the Naples Daily News Half Marathon in 2009, an annual event that draws hundreds of competitive and amateur runners.

It wasn't long ago that Fifth Avenue South, now a bustling, upscale shopping and dining district, was a collection of quiet mom-and-pop shops owned by longtime residents who knew everyone who came in the door. As late as the mid-1990s, they sold staples like hardware, fishing equipment and medicine alongside a handful of long-standing book and clothing stores. Many storefronts were vacant.



By 1954, Third Street South was already one of the most desirable business addresses in Naples. The Seminole Market and the popular Beach Store, which had a soda fountain and served up famous hamburgers, lined the road on the right. This view looks to the north, with Broad Avenue South not far ahead

Fast forward just five years and many had disappeared, their buildings razed or renovated, giving way to the three-story, Mediterranean-influenced structures that line the avenue today. Heeding the advice of Miami architect **Andres Duany**, the city changed more than 50 percent of the existing buildings, Naples historian Lois Bolin said.

Meanwhile, Third Street South — home to the city's two oldest buildings, and, at one time, the legendary Naples Hotel — has remained for the most part unchanged.

Duany was summoned by Fifth Avenue property owners and the city in 1993 to help spur growth on what was then a fading Fifth Avenue South, where 40 percent of first-floor properties stood vacant, plywood nailed over their windows. Almost 90 percent of the avenue's properties did not conform to building codes.

Nearly 50 years after the first business opened on the avenue — Ed Frank's Garage, once near the intersection of 11th Avenue — business was going elsewhere, like to the new Coastland Center mall. People were moving farther north.

The community connectedness was lost, Bolin said, after anchors like the Wynn grocery store moved in the 1980s.

"Fifth Avenue South was the heart of Naples," said **Bill Barnett**, who served two terms as mayor of Naples, including from 1996 to 2000. "And it was it was definitely diseased."

To spur redevelopment, the City Council set up a Community Redevelopment Area. More than \$40 million was pumped into the area in the late 1990s.

The Naples Players Community Theater, the Inn on Fifth and the area's first parking garage emerged alongside sidewalk bistros and art galleries. Down came the older trees, replaced with the palm trees that line the avenue today.

And business returned, although it was challenged with the 2007 opening of the Mercato, which again drew people north.



It wasn't that many years ago that Fifth Avenue South was home to hardware stores, tackle shops and grocery stores. All that changed in the late 1990s

But the avenue is booming again, with crowded sidewalks and a vacancy rate below 5 percent, said **Lou Vlasho** of the Fifth Avenue South Business Improvement District.

Its purpose has changed, too. In transforming the area, the city embraced many of Duany's suggestions, including allowing outdoor dining and residential use, and easing parking rules along the avenue. Duany's planning style encouraged a kind of return to a small-town America, where people would could walk to the corner store.

But some believe the revitalization achieved the opposite.



Kassie Perkins, 4, reaches for "snow" as it floats down onto Third Street while she sits on the shoulder of her father, John, during the Third Street Festival of Lights in Naples in 2009. The annual downtown event draws thousands to Old Naples for live music, performances and the lighting of the Naples Christmas Tree.

"When Duany came in here, he told us not to change a thing," John O'Fallon told a Daily News reporter as the changes were under way. "It's ironic, the very reason this (CRA) started was to preserve something that's now being lost through the very methods of preservation."

Almost 15 years later, O'Fallon, who owned local bookstore the Song and Story — Naples' first bookstore, which closed in the midst of the renovations — says he has hardly been on Fifth Avenue since. "I try not to walk down it now because I have — in the back of my mind, I have the way I liked it," he said.

Whether the Fifth Avenue South he remembers could or should have been preserved is up for debate.

Other downtown districts have remained largely the same. Nearby Tin City was repurposed from a boating service area to a shopping and dining district in 1978. On neighboring Third Street South, where the majority of the properties have long been owned by three families whose ties to Naples go back decades, many of the original buildings have been preserved as their purposes shifted. In 1988, the area was designated a historic district.

Property and business owners say they have tried to retain the area's feel and preserve its history.

"I'm not a fool — I know you can't stop the clock," said Joan Fleishmann Tobin, who now oversees her family's properties, which include Naples' oldest building, the Mercantile Building.

"But you can try to pull the good things forward, and you can try to make sure that there's a happy, coherent atmosphere."

But Fifth Avenue South is different, Vlasho says, with many owners and different types of shops, and he believes it would have changed anyway. People's lifestyles changed.

CHAPTER FIVE: Everglades City



Chuck Malloy passes by the decorated walls of the historic Rod and Gun Club in Everglades City. The hotel and restaurant was built in 1864 and was then purchased by Barron Collier in 1922. He catered to many famous, notable guests and operated the club as a private establishment. Now it is open to the public and operated by the Bowen family.

In Everglades City, there's no front-door delivery of mail. Instead, letters and bills and coupons for the city's residents arrive at the post office off Collier Avenue. There, the townspeople stop each day, swapping hellos and stories about their children and tales of yesteryear.



Everglades City

"That makes it quite nice because you're always going to bump into somebody at the mailbox and have a chat," said Marya Repko, president of the Everglades Society for Historic Preservation.

These little Everglades City touches have helped the region retain a slice of Old Florida, a place where all the city's schoolchildren are taught under one roof, where buildings are no more than a couple stories high, where the earliest settlers still have descendants living near the water's edge.

The history of this tiny town of 400 is rooted in its tenacity and local pride, harking back to the days when the city's workers helped build the Tamiami Trail. While Marco Island and Naples have seen cultural and technological revolutions, with towering condominium complexes and hospitals and strip malls, Everglades City has been slower to change.

In many ways, it's a delight to residents and visitors.

"It is just a small town, but I don't mean that at all derogatory," said Maureen Sullivan-Hartung, author of "Hidden History of Everglades City."



Everglades City

"I think it's just kind of precious and special. You wouldn't think it would be so different from a 45-minute trip away (in Naples), but every time I go over that Barron Bridge into the city, it's like I'm entering a whole different world."

Originally settled by a few farmers and fishermen in the late 1800s, the area came under ownership of the Storter family through 1921, when county founder Barron Gift Collier bought out the Storters. Following the Tamiami Trail's completion in 1928, the city fell victim to the Great Depression. While Collier Corp. continued to hum and the area remained the county seat, economic development slowed.



The Rod and Gun Club

The city charter was ratified in 1953, and with that came newfound independence from the Collier Corp., which once owned all the city's houses. At that time, word about Everglades City's novelty began reaching the masses, launching the tourism business that sustains much of the city today. In his 1993 book, "Totch: A Life in the Everglades," longtime resident Loren "Totch" Brown describes the early tourism boom, which attracted the likes of presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon, baseball legend Ted Williams and dozens of congressional leaders.



Everglades City

"By the '40s and '50s, Baron (sic) Collier's Rod and Gun Club in Everglades City was doing a business like you wouldn't believe," he wrote in the book, published three years before his death.

"Maybe it was the perfect hideaway: a nice hotel on the banks of the Barron River deep in the Everglades, where no one was apt to bump into anybody they knew."

But trouble soon hit the city. A 1959 referendum moved the county seat north to Naples, and Hurricane Donna wiped out the city in September 1960. Collier Corp. would then relocate to Naples, too.



Everglades City

Yet the city's residents were undeterred. Homes and businesses were rebuilt. Fishing and tourism became the bedrocks of the economy, supported by the stone crab season and the annual seafood festival started in 1970. Drug busts in the early 1980s stalled much of the redevelopment, with most of the city's men arrested on smuggling charges. Accounts vary on the number of arrests, but it's widely known that millions of dollars in drugs were trafficked through the city.



Everglades City

Still, the families stayed. The men got out of prison. Tourists continued to visit. Now, life moves along, however slowly, in Everglades City.

"They're like the old saying: they take a lickin' and keep on tickin'," Sullivan-Hartung said. "Some of those families have been there forever, and they're not going anywhere."

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CHAPTER FIVE: Bonita Springs



Bonita Cash Grocery

The city on the Imperial River wasn't always Bonita Springs. It started as a surveyor's camp, and as homesteaders began settling there in the late 1800s, the description morphed into its name.



Hub Johnson and mullet

For the next 25 years the growing community was known as Survey. It had a post office, a school and even a hotel. But when Tennessean investors came to town in 1912 looking to develop the area, all that changed.

"Some investors, developers from Fort Myers, saw the potential here," said Charlie Strader, a community liaison for the Bonita Springs Historical Society.

"They saw a way to make money. They started buying up land and developing it and in that process the name Bonita Springs got in there and stuck."

That name change, though, wouldn't be the last time the Lee County city would reinvent itself. By 1912 about 70 students from 20 families were enrolled in the community's public school. That same year marked the beginning of its first growth spurt when investors bought 2,400 acres around Survey

J.H. Ragsdale, one of the investors, decided to rename the community "after his daughter Bonita and the springs behind the Heitman Hotel," according to a historical society exhibit at the Liles Hotel.

Ragsdale and his team started laying out streets and avenues, and within five years the first road between Fort Myers and Bonita Springs was completed.

That road was key to the community's growth. So was the railroad. And the completion of the Tamiami Trail led to another land boom.

"In many ways, people came (to Bonita Springs) for the same reasons we come today: The rich natural resources and the good weather," Strader said. "They came here for that, and as (the community grew) you started to have small hotels pop up as the road came in."



Bonita Springs post office

Rhonda Lyles Lawhon's great grandfather built one of those early hotels.

J. Wallace Liles built the Liles Hotel in 1926 on the Imperial River with tourists in mind. But with the Great Depression looming — the stock market crash occurred three years after the Liles built the hotel — the Liles Hotel was short lived.

"The Liles Hotel actually failed because of the Depression," Lyles Lawhon said. "It was kind of built expecting a boom in the area. There was a boom of sorts, but it didn't last long, not for Bonita Springs."

The Great Depression — combined with a handful of damaging hurricanes in the 1920s — slowed development, and within 20 years development was at a standstill, said lifelong Bonita resident Byron Liles.



Main

"By the 1940s, it was a stalemated area, with a lot of vacant property, unsold property and a lot of subdivisions that never got further than sidewalks and curbs," he said.

The Depression didn't just slow development, it's also the reason Bonita Springs wasn't a city until the end of the 20th century.

Bonita Springs incorporated in 1925, but in 1932 the city gave up its charter because of a delinquent light bill. County officials at the time told city officials that if they gave up the charter the county would help pay the bill. The community would remain a part of unincorporated Lee County until 1999 when Bonita Springs residents approved a measure to once again become a city.

But the lull wouldn't last long. Strader said increased access over the years — through the development of I-75 and Southwest Florida International Airport — once again prompted development. And while Strader said the beaches weren't what drew people to Bonita Springs, it ultimately was part of what brought people to the area during the most recent wave of growth. "It's our evolution," Strader said. "But it's a common evolution story in Florida."

CHAPTER FIVE: Marco



Aerial photo of the south end of Marco Island in the late 1960s.

When Kathy Callahan first heard about plans for a historical museum on Marco Island, she wondered why the island needed one.



Aerial photo of Marco Island dated 1969

After all, she thought, Marco didn't seem to have much of a history. "I thought nothing happened before the 1960s. I didn't know about the early settlers," Callahan said.

Now, she does — and she helps share the story as a museum volunteer. It was in the 1960s that the famed Mackle Brothers came to Marco with a master plan for development that shaped the island into what it is today — from its roads and waterways to its buildings. But many don't realize the island has a history that goes back to the ancient tribes.

Betsy Perdichizzi, a member of the Marco Island Historical Society, said the island's history is like an American quilt, made up of many pieces. "We have lots of deep history, with golden threads to follow," she said.

Marco's first settlers were the Calusa, who date back to at least 500 A.D. Their artifacts were discovered by the pioneers who followed hundreds of years later.

The island's name didn't come from the Calusa, but the roving Spanish explorers who came after them. **The Spaniards called the island La Isla de San Marco after St. Mark, who wrote the second gospel in the New Testament of the Bible. Later, it became known as San Marco Island, then just Marco Island.**

While the Calusas and Spaniards came long before him, William Thomas "W.T." Collier is considered the founder of Marco Island. He arrived by schooner at the north end of the island in 1871, with his wife and nine children.

Over the next 50 years, the Colliers would help shape growth and development on Marco, beginning its transformation into a resort island. They built what's now known as the Marco Inn. They were involved in the creation of Marco's first "tourist park," which in the Depression was used by "tin canners," seasonal residents who brought their own food in cans and didn't stay at hotels because they couldn't afford it.

The locals would say: "They came in the winter with a \$2 bill and a blue shirt and wouldn't change either until they went back home in the spring," wrote Michael Coleman in his book "Marco Island, Culture & History." The Colliers who pioneered Marco Island were in no way related to Barron Gift Collier, the advertising tycoon who founded Collier County in 1923.



This photo, from Marco Islander magazine, Spring/Summer 1974 edition, shows construction of the Jolley Bridge. It was accompanied by an article called, "A Decade of Progress."

Capt. Bill Collier, who came to the island as a teenager, became one of Marco Island's most famous entrepreneurs. Besides opening the first inn and first store on the waterfront, he invented a motorized clam dredging machine that helped convince J. Harvey Doxsee of New York to open a second cannery on the island.

At one time, clamming was big business on Marco. It brought Marco's first economic boom, and it was a leading industry on the island for more than 40 years, according to Ron Jamro, executive director of Collier County's museums.

The E.S. Burnham packing company from New York opened the island's first clam cannery at Caxambas in 1903. "The drab, clapboard factory shipped 34 dozen cans of chowder on the first day's shift and was soon processing 75 bushels of clams an hour," Jamro wrote in a column for the Naples Daily News. In 1911, Doxsee built a larger cannery at old Marco, hiring "almost half of Marco's population," Jamro wrote.

In 1929, Burnham's dredge sank after a bad storm. The cannery closed, but Doxsee took it over with hopes of keeping its workers employed during the Great Depression.



Caxambas, the southwest part of Marco Island in the 1920s

"They canned shark or anything they could do," Perdichizzi said.

In 1932, a hurricane demolished the Burnham factory and that was the end of it. "They said nothing was left but the cement," Perdichizzi said.

Clam beds stretched for miles through the Ten Thousand Islands. It seemed the clams would never run out. But there wasn't an endless supply. The Doxsee Cannery operated until the clams had virtually disappeared. The cannery was sold in 1947. It never reopened.

Other pioneers followed the Colliers in the 1800s. It was a handful of families who would shape its future. The Barfields — James and his wife, Tommie — were one of those families, leading development of Caxambas, the south side of the island.

Known as the "Queen of Marco," Tommie Barfield lobbied Lee County commissioners for roads and schools, and helped convince the state Legislature to create Collier County, working as an agent for Barron Gift Collier.

James Barfield, an entrepreneur, opened a general store on the waterfront and a post office in Caxambas, becoming its first postmaster. He's credited with luring the E.S. Burnham clam cannery to his end of the island.

In 1927, Marco Island was incorporated as Collier City in honor of W.T. Collier, who became a state legislator. That same year, James Harvey Doxsee Sr. became the only mayor of the city. The city was abolished in 1957 and Marco incorporated again 40 years later.

Marco Island once had a missile tracking station. It was built by the U.S. Air Force to track test missiles shot over the Gulf of Mexico from Eglin Air Force Base near Pensacola. Later, the station watched for missiles from Cuba.

In the 1960s, Marco's modern development began with the Mackle brothers, who had built homes in Miami, West Palm Beach, Coral Gables, Key Biscayne and other parts of Florida. Barron Gift Collier's heirs first tried to sell what they owned of Marco Island to the state of Florida as a nature preserve for about \$1 million, but the state turned down the offer because of the cost, Coleman wrote.

Unable to strike a deal with the state, the Colliers sought out the Mackles to develop Marco. By March 1964, the Marco Island Development Corp. had been formed and its ambitious plans to develop Marco island were announced.

The Deltona Corp., owned by the Mackles, was a 50 percent owner of the corporation. Other investors included Carron Collier Jr. and his sister-in-law Isabel Collier Reed. Eventually, Deltona became the sole owner of Marco Development. The Mackles purchased most of the island for \$7 million.

Deltona's plan included 125 miles of paved roads and more than 90 miles of navigable waterways, which would be created through dredging and bulkheads. The developers set aside land for more than 12,000 homes, plus resort hotels, apartments, schools, hospitals and clinics, beach and yacht clubs, golf, marinas, and even a public park.

The Mackles predicted that within 10 years, Marco would have a population of 35,000.

After an aggressive marketing campaign that reached across the country and as far as western Europe and the Far East, more than 25,000 people came to the island when the Mackles officially opened up the new Marco to sales Jan. 31, 1965. Many of those people left with contracts.

One of Deltona's first models was a one-bedroom, one-bath house. The Mackles wanted to open the island up to anyone who wanted a home, not just the wealthy, said Herb Savage, one of Deltona's architects.

In 1965, one of the first condo high-rises, Emerald Beach, was built on the island. It had 48 one- and two-bedroom apartments, priced from \$19,900 to \$49,500. In the heydays, the Mackle brothers sponsored flights to Marco on their own airline, Marco Island Airways, which they founded in 1972. Its planes, carrying 15 passengers, made five round trips almost daily from Miami.

The Mackles built the Marco Beach Hotel, now the Marco Island Marriott.

In 1969, a concrete and steel bridge was built over the Marco River that an advertisement said connected "Marco Island to America." By 1973, the island had about 5,000 year-round and part-time residents. Deltona had built more than 700 single-family homes and 1,500 condominium units.

But then came the legal battles over permits for the final two phases of Deltona's development. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denied previously approved permits because of new federal regulations designed to protect environmentally sensitive areas. The Mackles fought the denial all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court and lost that battle in 1982.

The Mackles were forced to cancel thousands of contracts for homes on land that could no longer be developed. They offered refunds or property exchanges for developable land in other parts of the island or in other company developments. They had to sell off assets to pay back customers. All of this cost Deltona an estimated \$100 million.

"They did not declare bankruptcy. They paid everybody back." said Marion Nicolay, a Marco Island historian and a founding member of the island's historical society.

Today, the island's year-round population is less than 16,550. The population peaks at about 45,000 in the winter when part-time residents flock to the island.

The island continues to draw many retirees. Callahan said she likes that it's a quiet place, "You know we here have a saying, 'Marco midnight.' It's 9 p.m."

"It's a small town," she said. "It's a cozy small town with beautiful weather."

CHAPTER FIVE: Immokalee



Liesa Priddy stands in an old cowboy bunkhouse on her ranch, JB Ranch in Immokalee. The ranch has been operating since the 1940s when Priddy's grandparents started it. Priddy owns 9,300 acres in Eastern Collier County that she and her ranch use for cattle, agriculture, and other farming ventures.



Bobby Roberts with a horse on Robert's Ranch circa 1937

IMMOKALEE started as an agricultural community.

Ranchers started coming to the eastern edge of Collier County in the late 1800s. Farmers came next. Both were looking for the same thing: high, dry land on which to start a life.

Things may have changed — such as better technology, more diverse crops and fewer ranchers — over the past century, but one thing remains constant: Agriculture is still a priority in Immokalee.

Immokalee had fewer than 100 residents when it was founded and local historians believe the Roberts family was among those first settlers.

Robert Roberts Jr. — affectionately called "Uncle Bob" by community members — homesteaded on 60 acres in 1901. Roberts brought 300 head of cattle, along with his family, by oxcart to Immokalee, but the trip from his DeSoto County home was rife with problems.

It took two teams of oxen to move all of the family's household goods, and, according to "At the End of the Oxcart Trail: The Robert Roberts Family Saga," the family was met by "a band of outlaws ... demanding he pay them for safe crossing" at the Caloosahatchee River. Roberts refused to pay and instead pushed his herd across the river with his rifle in his lap and continued to Immokalee.

"They were one of the first cattle ranchers after F.A. Hendry," said Lee Mitchell, manager of the Immokalee Pioneer Museum, where Roberts' ranch once stood.

"The thing was, after the Civil War, this area, Collier County, was the last undeveloped frontier in the United States and in Florida."

The Roberts family may have been the first, but they weren't the last ranchers to find themselves in Immokalee.

Liesa Priddy's grandfather first came to Immokalee in the 1940s to hunt, but that isn't what ultimately kept her grandfather there.



The business district in downtown Immokalee on Main Street in 1928

"He made friends and got into a lease with another guy, and the hunting and fishing turned into ranching," she said.

Priddy's grandfather eventually would buy out his partner and JB Ranch was born. "Right now, when you see (Immokalee), you see it as a rural area," Priddy said. "But back when the country was young, and in the 1940s and 1950s, there was a lot more ranching because there was a lot of open pasture area. It was kind of a pioneer area where people wanted to explore."

Ranchers, though, weren't the only people looking to take advantage of Immokalee's unique topography. Immokalee attracted farmers to the area from the very beginning because of the soil. Much like ranchers, farmers were attracted to the high ground.

But farmers also liked the area because the sandy soil was easier to work with and had better drainage. Farmers also liked that the soil stayed warm throughout the winter months.



Lucas Benitez, founder of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, is featured in the new book of photos and stories, "Hope and Heroes: Portraits of Integrity." Among others included in the book are Martin Sheen, Nelson Mandela and Maya Angelou .

Vegetable farming primarily occurred around the Ochopee marl flats near Everglades City. Tomato farming was popular in that area, and Reggie Brown, manager of the Florida Tomato Committee, said tomatoes "were being shipped out probably at the same time by boat."

Transportation improvements in the 1920s, though, unlocked the potential for the agriculture industry to grow. The Atlantic Coast Line Railway Co. extended its line from LaBelle to Immokalee in 1921, and in 1928 the Tamiami Trail further opened the area to farming and ranching opportunities.

"You've got four factors that made Southwest Florida an important agricultural production area," Brown said. "One was transportation. Two was land, availability of land. Third was the pioneers that took the challenge and four was the science that allowed them to be very productive in that area over an extended time."

The vegetable industry expanded in Immokalee in the 1940s and early 1950s. Packing houses opened and growers started diversifying their crops.

"After the war started, the demand for vegetables skyrocketed," said Dallas Townsend, a Collier County livestock agent from 1965 to 1979. "A lot of people went into the vegetable growing business."



Contestants line up to watch the rodeo during Immokalee's 50th Harvest Festival on Saturday at the Seminole Rodeo Grounds. The event began with a parade down main street and ended with the Family Ranch Rodeo

That business, Townsend said, was lucrative until the passage of North American Free Trade Agreement. After the passage of NAFTA, Mexico overwhelmed the market and prices fell so low that some companies went out of business.

But farming in Immokalee didn't just focus on tomatoes, watermelons and squash. Bad freezes in the late 1980s prompted a shift in citrus production from Central Florida to Southwest Florida.

Ron Hamel, executive director of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, said that's when citrus growing really started taking off in the area, even though it had been growing there for about 100 years.

"Cattle is OK," Hamel said. "But citrus is intensive and it's more profitable."

The number of cattle in Immokalee has dwindled over the years — from 40,000 brood cows in 1979 to about 6,000 today — but that doesn't mean agriculture is on its way out.



Seven-year-old Elias Mendoza walks down Main Street in Immokalee carrying a sign along with hundreds of other residents during the Children's March on Main, a event to raise awareness about domestic violence and its effect on kids. The event, part of domestic violence awareness month, was open to the entire community, and began at the Immokalee Outreach Office with activities for kids and educational material for parents.

"Things have changed," said Mitchell. "There are still some pretty big cattle operations around here ... but a lot of them have diversified. They grow tomatoes and citrus (too)."

More than half of the land in Immokalee's residential and commercial area — about 9,440 acres — is zoned and actively used for agriculture, and most of the residents work in the industry.

But who those farm workers are has changed over the years.

"When I was very young, Mexican labor wasn't here," said Townsend.

Instead, he said, kids would pick vegetables after school or on the weekends. He said he even remembers a time when an Immokalee farmer had a lot of cucumbers with no one to pick. The farmer, Townsend said, came to his school assembly in LaBelle and offered to pay \$7 a day to pick them.

"Buddy, we all jumped on that," Townsend said. "I remember going down there, going to that field south of Lake Trafford. Seven dollars a day was a lot of money."



Gary Elvis Britt, who legally changed his first name, performs as Elvis Presley for the crowd during Elvis Fest 3 at Seminole Casino Immokalee on Sunday. "If you're going to perform as Elvis, you might as well add Elvis to your first name," said Britt. The two day event included an Elvis Tribute Artist contest where 16 men competed, the "American Trilogy Concert," a recreation of the many chapters of Elvis Presley's life, and a bike run.

Townsend said, though, that as fields got bigger the doors opened for migrant workers to work the fields. And as the number of migrant workers increased, an Immokalee-based group emerged to protect the rights of those workers.

The Coalition of Immokalee Farm workers was started in 1993 with a group of workers meeting to discuss how to better the community. Since its inception, the organization has fought for fair wages. In 2010 the organization signed an agreement with the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange to extend its fair food principles to more than 90 percent of the state's tomato industry.

Migrant workers weren't the only industry game changers.

Advancements in irrigation technology, land drainage and land management have also allowed the farming community to grow, while better record keeping and health care for cattle has made ranching more efficient.

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CHAPTER FIVE: Where Do We Work?



Waitress Lolly Audet takes a moment to visit with some of her neighbors, Vivian and Ed Oswald, during lunch on Wednesday at the International House of Pancakes on US 41 in Bonita Springs. Like most servers and other tipped employees who rely mainly on gratuity, Audet's hourly wage was raised from \$3.35 to \$3.65 on Jan.1 while the minimum wage of non-tipped employees went from \$6.40 to \$6.67.

The focus of Collier County's industries and businesses has shifted over the years to keep pace with its ever-growing population.



Gerardo Reyes Chavez, 24, unloads another one of the endless buckets of peppers he has picked at the Harvest for Humanity Farm. Immokalee is roughly 2,200 miles from Chavez's hometown of San Antonio de Cipres, Zacatecas, Mexico, but for migrants like Chavez, the journey is worth the dream of becoming part owner of a farm.

The county's roots in agriculture are not as deep today as in the past, and health care — an industry that didn't exist in Naples' early days — has recently mushroomed.

Coming off a momentous housing boom and bust, the local economy is at a crossroads. Those with an eye on the future are looking for ways to diversify the area's dependency on tourism and real estate development.

Recreational and resort tourism — and even real estate development — in Naples can be traced back to at least the late 1800s, when the remote wilderness along the Gulf of Mexico in Southwest Florida proved to be ideal for fishing and hunting.

Of course, the Calusa Indians had been familiar with the area's superb hunting and fishing for centuries. Mounds of shells they left behind can still be seen today in some areas where development has yet to touch.

The fishing and boating industries have been a part of the local economy from the beginning. Although today's commercial fishing operations are less visible than the flourishing fish camps, clam canneries and oyster houses of the region's early days, making a living from the sea still exists.

The local marine industry is growing again after experiencing an economic slump with most businesses for a couple of years, said Frank Perrucci, president of the Marine Industries Association of Collier County. About five years ago, the marine industry in Collier County was generating more than \$200 million a year, which equated to about 2,200 to 2,300 jobs in the county, Perrucci said.

More than 2,900 commercial fishing trips last year in Collier County harvested more than 530,000 pounds of stone crab claws during its seven-month season. In 2011, Collier's commercial fishing industry also landed more than 290,000 pounds of king mackerel, 87,000 pounds of black mullet, 80,000 pounds of blue crab, and 46,000 pounds of red grouper.

Agriculture continues to be important to the economic mix, but its slice of the pie has decreased over the years as development has bulldozed many tomato fields and citrus groves. Gargiulo Inc., a produce distributor headquartered here, employs more than 1,000 people, making it one of the county's top employers. The company's tomatoes, strawberries and other fruits and vegetables are packed and shipped worldwide.

Development and tourism have been the lifeblood of the community since Naples was "discovered" in 1885. Shortly after, the Naples Town Improvement Co. charted land for the town, carving out streets and property lots.



Machine operator Basil Spaulding makes a quality control inspection of a part he made using a CNC machine during the production of a medical device at Arthrex on Tuesday. The Naples-based company is creating a four year apprenticeship program for a machine operator 3 position, with two high school graduate external positions from the area and two internal from the company.

In the 1880s, the region's first real estate boom was on with the state's incredible promotion and development. In 1923, Naples' first privately owned real estate office, N.P. Sloan Real Estate, was opened by Norman Prentice Sloan Sr. on the corner of Gordon Drive and 12th Avenue South.

Naples' growth explosion was postponed by two world wars and a Great Depression, but post-war, the new city made a concerted effort to promote itself.

Naples' first bank, the Bank of Naples, opened Feb. 14, 1949, the same year the town became a city. This began a financial services industry that remains important to the local economy. Today, Fifth Third Bank is one of the county's top private sector employers.

Naples really did not gain true national prominence until the 1950s. That's when Doris Reynolds was hired by the Naples Chamber to get out the word — as well as images — about the piece of paradise on the Gulf. Reynolds' job was to attract tourism, new residents and investors to Naples.

"When I came to Naples in the '50s it was really the very beginning of Naples being promoted," said Reynolds, former Chamber director.



Captain Jack Hail, left, and Keith Ellis, right, dump the first haul of stone crab into a vat of boiling water behind Kelly's Fish House Dining Room in Naples on the first day of stone crab season, Oct. 15, 2007. The restaurant has become a local favorite for serving stone crab soon after being carried off of the boat. The first batch of claws brought by Hail's crew weighed more than 340-pounds.

At that time, the young city had only a few restaurants, no country club, and the 1,200 year-round residents entertained in their homes. The only place in town with air conditioning was the movie theater, where folks could escape the heat and everyday life from the Friday night show to the Sunday matinee, Reynolds said.

"It was a totally different town and an entirely different environment," she said. "Anyone who came here after 1970 has lived in a very different town. We never heard the word condominium until the '70s."

The opening of a Naples hospital was important in shaping the local economy and starting what eventually would be a flourishing health-care industry. When the Naples Community Hospital, then called Naples Memorial Hospital, opened its doors in 1956, it was a magnet for more wealthy people to move or visit here. These affluent newcomers were responsible for the city's fresh growth, Reynolds said.

The growing health care industry in Naples is helping to diversify the local landscape. As real estate, development and construction came to a screeching halt within the last few years, local investments made by health care providers and associated industries have helped stabilize the economy.

NCH Healthcare System Inc., with nearly 4,000 employees, has been one of the county's top employers for years. NCH has two sprawling hospital campuses and many other associated outpatient businesses.

Physicians Regional Medical Center's 550 employees in two local hospitals also ranks it in the top 10 private-sector employers.

Health Management Associates, the operator of more than 60 acute care hospitals nationwide, is headquartered in Naples. So is Arthrex Inc., which focuses on sports medicine and orthopaedic surgical device innovation in the global market.

Arthrex, which employs nearly 1,200 at its corporate headquarters in Southwest Florida, is expected to grow significantly and double its current employment by the year 2017 to meet new product demand and growth investments, the company reports. The company opened a new warehouse this year near the Southwest Florida International Airport, and is planning to build a new manufacturing plant near Ave Maria.

"Arthrex represents a significant economic diversification impact to the Southwest Florida community with non-seasonal, high-wage, high-tech job growth for our local workforce," said Reinhold Schmieding, founder and president of Arthrex. "We will continue to lead health-care innovation, medical tourism and economic diversification with our global expansion in the future. We look forward to enriching the quality of life for all residents of Southwest Florida with active contributions back to our community through medical innovation, charitable giving and a rapidly growing local economic impact of over \$500 million a year."

Retail services also claim top spots on the county's private-sector employers' list. Publix Super Markets Inc. and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. employ more than 2,200 and 1,550, respectively, at their numerous area locations.

Several resort hotel companies are among the county's top employers. Naples' two Ritz-Carlton resorts employ about 1,400 total, while its sister company employs another more than 830 at its Marriott properties. Waldorf Astoria Naples, formerly the Registry and Naples Grand resorts, employs more than 600, and the 65-year-old Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club has 390 employees.

Collier County's workforce today relies heavily on health care, retail trade, and food and hospitality services. Despite some larger employers, most Collier County businesses are small companies employing 20 people or less.

The 2010 Census shows Collier County with a labor force of 144,557 people, about 45 percent of the county's population. A 12 percent unemployment rate then meant more than 17,000 were out of work.

Local businesses and industries have dramatically grown to an adolescent stage with an historic dependency on development, but diversifying the economy is critical for the area's future, said the president of the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce.

"Business needs to organize itself a little better than in the past," said Michael Reagen, CEO and president of the Naples Chamber. "Business has grown to adolescence and now needs to mature. It's in everyone's interest to diversify the economy."

Plans for diversification look to clean industries in fields such as information technology. ASG Software Solutions, which has its international headquarters in Naples, is such a company. ASG employs 1,300 people worldwide.

Another growing industry expected to play a bigger role in Collier's future is medical tourism, attracting individuals to travel here for a health procedure and stay a few weeks for rehabilitation. It's a concept expected to bring together multiple businesses in a cooperative effort.

No matter what the future holds for the local economy, expect a growing work force and additional business opportunities.

"I think people will continue to come here and bring their treasure," Reagen said.

CHAPTER FIVE: Living Legacies



OB Osceola Sr., a Seminole Native American, stands underneath a large chickee hut at a waterfront park in Naples on Thursday, Nov. 11, 2004.

The history of Southwest Florida is the story of determined and farsighted men and women who shaped the communities we live in today. While some have come and gone, others have created legacies that are more than brick and mortar and names on street signs and parks: They are living legacies, the children and grandchildren of pioneers who still contribute to our way of life. There are many such families. Here are a few:

The Colliers

It is, without a doubt, the best-known name in the county.



Judy Sproul is congratulated in 2003 as she was honored with the Naples Daily News Outstanding Citizen of the Year award.

In the early 1920s, advertising magnate Barron Gift Collier bought up 1.3 million acres in Southwest Florida, starting 90-plus years of dominance in the area. In the years after his purchase, Collier oversaw the construction of the Tamiami Trail, founded the present-day Barron Collier Cos., built up what's now Everglades City and brought business to the largely undeveloped region for the first time.

Since its founding, Barron Collier Cos. and Collier Enterprises have diversified, digging into commercial real estate, agriculture, minerals and the financial industry, among other interests.

Today, the company's leadership stretches into its fourth generation. In recent decades, several family members — Barron Collier III, Jennifer Sullivan, Judy Sproul and others — have served on the Barron Collier Cos. Board of Directors and worked as executives at the company.

Beyond work, Collier's descendants have populated local advocacy and governmental groups, ranging from the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce to the Florida Gulf Coast University Foundation to the Naples Botanical Garden.

When accepting the Hodges University Humanitarian of the Year award in 2010, Sproul, daughter of Barron Collier Jr., summed up the family's charity work. "Education, children and the environment," she said. "It's a way of life."



Raymond Lutgert, center, celebrated his winning bid of \$2 million for a Rolls Royce during the 2007 Naples Wine Festival Auction at the Ritz- Carlton Golf Resort in Naples in 2007. Lutgert died in 2010.

The Lutgerts

From Park Shore to the Mercato to the Promenade in Bonita Springs, the Lutgert family's stamp can be seen across Southwest Florida. Founded in 1964 by the late Raymond L. Lutgert and currently chaired by his son, Scott, Lutgert Cos. has been responsible for the development of more than 25 housing communities and several of the region's most prominent commercial centers.

Anchored by the building of Park Shore on 760 acres of beachfront land nearly 50 years ago, Lutgert Cos. has grown and diversified into one of the region's top real estate companies. The roll call of current and former holdings includes the Estuary at Grey Oaks, The Village on Venetian Bay and Neapolitan Way.



Scott and his wife, Simone Lutgert.

In addition, the cancer center at NCH Downtown Naples Hospital and Florida Gulf Coast University's business college both bear the Lutgert name. The family also has contributed time and money to the Philharmonic Center for the Arts, the Boys and Girls Club of Collier County and the Naples Winter Wine Festival, among other organizations.

Three years before his death in 2010, Raymond Lutgert spoke about his theory on philanthropy while accepting the LIFE Award, given by the Edison College Foundation.

"The more you can give and share of your talents, whatever they may be, to make this a better community than it even is now, please, please do it," he said.

The Fleischmanns

Tired of nightly black-tie events, Julius & Dorette Fleischmann searched for a casual paradise after World War II.



Julius and Dorette Fleischmann, left, with actress Heddy Lamar, right.

They found Third Street South, the birthplace of Old Naples. Decades later, the charming downtown street is still in the Fleischmann family, its revitalization led by their daughter Joan Fleischmann Tobin. She has carried on the legacy of her world-traveling parents, who started with one small shop — The Antique Attic.

"What I've tried to do is take forward the sort of 1930s and 1940s point of view about service and hosting and make it feel as if you're some place where somebody actually care about you having a good time," Fleischmann Tobin said.

In addition to Third Street, the Fleischmanns founded the Caribbean Gardens, later to become the present-day Naples Zoo. The couple spread the gospel of Naples to friends in the arts community, business leaders and political power players, bringing a glamorous crowd to Southwest Florida.

Today, the Fleischmanns still own about 40 percent of the buildings on Third Street, which is marked by upscale dining, trendy boutiques and chic clothing shops — all tinged with a touch of Old Naples.

"We really do try to blend the styles that were there in the beginning with moving it forward for today," Fleischmann Tobin said.

The Watkins'

Henry Watkins Sr. had quite the second career.



The Watkins family started the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club. Mary Watkins, the daughter of hotel founder Henry B. Watkins, with her children, Henry, left, and Mike.

Watkins, then a 56-year-old retired toy manufacturer making cap guns and explosives, left his Columbus, Ohio, home in 1946 and bought the beachfront Naples Hotel, later adding the neighboring Beach Club and golf course.

For the next 3 1/2-half decades, Watkins continued adding accommodations, handing the hotel and club off to his son, Henry Watkins Jr., before his death at age 91.

Today, the resort remains in the Watkins family, a pillar of the Naples hospitality community.

The family's reach extended beyond the hotel. Henry Watkins Jr. served on the Collier County commission and school board, as well as the Naples Chamber of Commerce, among other civic organizations. His wife, Mary Watkins, helped develop several Collier County women's organizations since their Naples arrival in 1949.

Michael Watkins' brother, Henry Watkins III, also continues to operate the resort and has collaborated with several local economic and education groups.

All the while, the Watkins' have weathered an economic decline and competition from chain hoteliers, maintaining one of the nation's oldest family-run resorts.

"I've tried to keep it as much like it used to be, in terms of its nature," Michael Watkins said. "We improve the resort all the time. We try to do it in ways in the same quality that it always had."

The Anthonys

Willie Anthony speaks in plain terms about how his family has lived in Southwest Florida for more than 50 years. "We've tried live a decent life on the straight and narrow, so to speak," Anthony said. "We stay out of trouble and do what we can in terms of supporting community causes."

Looking for a change from the sharecropping life in southeastern Alabama, the Anthony family settled in Naples in 1953. Here, L.C. and Daisy Mae Anthony raised eight children.



Willie Anthony

Since then, most clans have come and gone, and the times have also drastically changed from the days of the McDonald's Quarters shantytown.

Today, two of L.C. and Daisy Mae's daughters, both retired teachers, still call the area home, as does one of their sons, a retired firefighter.

Willie, a longtime advocate in the River Park community, has served on several community boards, including the River Park Neighborhood Association, Fun Time Early Childhood Academy Inc. and the Naples Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board.

"I personally wouldn't want to live anywhere else, so I made a decision long ago that I would stay in the black community here," Anthony said. "I love my community and I love the people. We're not perfect, but neither is any other community."

The Osceolas

It's a name that has always been among the most revered among Seminoles.



Saturday, January 1, 2000 - Seminole leaders William McKinley and Cory Osceola gave a patchwork shirt to President Harry Truman at the Everglades National Park dedication in 1947. Truman was followed by a succession of political leaders in Washington and Florida in signing restoration and preservation legislation.

In the mid-1800s, a chief named Osceola was there for the start of the seven-year-long Second Seminole War, leading attacks against the American military and resisting the tribe's movement west.

Later, Cory Osceola, known to Seminoles statewide as "Chief," served as a tribal leader and primary English translator for Mikasuki-speaking Seminoles, helping them start businesses and navigate American laws. His son, O.B. Osceola Sr., has been a resident of Naples for about five decades, maintaining a chickee-building business in town.

O.B.'s son, O.B. Jr., continues the family legacy, diversifying its interests into commercial construction, insurance, gaming and even stock car racing. In August, O.B. Jr. became the first Native American team owner in NASCAR. The high-profile move will help lay the groundwork for more entrepreneurship among Seminole tribe members, O.B. Jr. told the Daily News in August. "I have a big vision for our tribes," Osceola said. "I wanted to be somewhat of a pioneer."

The Norris-Gaynors

After spending more than 20 years living in Belgium and Italy, Lavern Norris Gaynor and her husband George had a choice. Would they move to George's native New York? Or to back to Lavern's home state of Illinois? Instead, they chose to settle in Naples, where Lavern's parents originally came in 1945.



Lester and Dellora Norris.

Three-and-a-half decades later, Norris Gaynor still resides in Naples. She remains committed to children's and educational charities, as well as preserving local history with the Naples Backyard History group.

"Perhaps it's because I lived 20 years overseas and raised children overseas, but I think it's important for people, particularly children, to really know the history of their hometown," Norris Gaynor said.

Norris Gaynor's parents, Dellora and Lester, were key leaders in the conservation movement in Naples, helping to create Lowdermilk Park and Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park. They also paid for the rebuilding of the Naples Pier after Hurricane Donna in 1960.

After their arrival in the mid-1970s, Norris Gaynor and her husband became involved in several youth causes. Now, Norris Gaynor's two children both live in Chicago, but she, a niece and a nephew all remain in Naples. "I never really thought I would settle in Naples," Norris Gaynor said. "But we came back from overseas and never left."

The Wynns

In every arm of the Wynn family's local reach — groceries, hardware, catering and real estate — there's a descendant behind the operation.



Anne Wynn, wife of the late Don Wynn, poses for a photo with her children, Larry, left, Jerry, Linda Wynn Smith, Tim and Tom. The family is celebrating 80 years of business in Naples.

The family's six hardware stores are run by Michael Wynn, part of the third generation of Wynns in Naples. Larry Wynn helms Wynn Properties, a commercial and residential real estate company with several office buildings and strip malls. There's Tim Wynn, president of Wynn's Catering and Wynn's Market on Ninth Street North. And the list goes on with Jerry, Jeff, Katie and more.

More than 70 years since Peter Parley Wynn and his wife, Vida, migrated to Naples, opening a small food store in the Bayview Inn and Grocery, no part of the business has left the family. It's made the Wynns one of the region's most entrenched families.

"I'd say we've stayed here for so long because of the community, the people of Naples and the quality of life," Michael Wynn said. "It's a beautiful place to live and we've been fortunate that the majority of the family, for a number of generations, remains here."

Started in 1938 with the original store, the Wynn family added Sunshine Super Market in 1948. In the late 1950s, the Wynns opened their first Sunshine Hardware, which would soon relocate to U.S. 41 between 1st Avenue North and 2nd Avenue North, site of the current Wynn's Market and Sunshine Ace Hardware.

Now, the Wynns run hardware stores stretching from San Carlos Park to Marco Island, in addition to their food and real estate endeavors. Family members also have served on the Naples City Council, the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce and several boards of local charities.

"Wherever the passion or need has struck in the community, a family member has been given the freedom to use our resources to help with that organization and mission," Michael Wynn said.

CHAPTER FIVE: Women

The history of Southwest Florida is filled with accounts of strong and determined women who contributed to the progress of the region. "This was a pioneer town," said Doris Reynolds, local historian. "It's like in the Western movies. There were always strong women around when a town needed ingenuity."

They were women such as Myra Janco Daniels, who built the Naples Philharmonic Center for the Arts; Mary Ellen Hawkins, who was Collier County's first female state representative and sponsored legislation creating the Big Cypress Basin District and designating Rookery Bay a state aquatic preserve; Lelia Canant, a longtime Collier County schoolteacher; and Casey Miller, the first woman on the Naples City Council, the first female president of the Naples Area Board of Realtors and the first woman to join the Naples Rotary Club.

The women profiled here are some of Collier's most important pioneers.

Tommie Barfield

Education in Collier County would not be the same without Tommie Barfield. The county's first public school superintendent, Barfield had only a third-grade education.



"She knew what she wanted for schools and worked toward setting high standards and goals for future schools in the new county," wrote Elizabeth Perdichizzi and Katherine Kirk in their book "A Girl Called Tommie: Queen of Marco Island."

Although she was elected to a second year as superintendent, Barfield resigned to take a position on the Collier County School Board, where she would serve for 20 years. She resigned her position in 1949 for health reasons, and her daughter Elva Griffis took her seat, according to the book.

But schools weren't the only thing Barfield fought for. In 1910, Barfield began attending commission meetings in Fort Myers to lobby for things needed on Marco, including roads, ferries and schools. Seeing that Barron Gift Collier had more of an interest in the land, she helped him acquire most of the property that is Marco, Caxambas and Goodland.

Deaconess Harriet M. Bedell

Deaconess Harriet Bedell first came to Florida during a lecture tour in the 1930s, which she was doing to raise money for her mission. During her visit, Bedell visited a Seminole Indian village and became excited about the prospect of Christianizing the Indians.



Bedell convinced the executive board of the Episcopal Church Service League to give her \$50 a month for her mission, and rented a house for \$20 a month from the Collier Corp., whose headquarters were in Everglades City.

She soon turned the new home into a church, which she called Glade Cross Mission. But the Indians did not come. In fact, it would take almost three years for Bedell to win the acceptance of a few Indians. But once she made headway, the mission began showing results.

“Nobody stopped the Deaconess,” Doris Reynolds said with a laugh. “Those Indians became Christian or felt her wrath. She was the bossiest woman God ever created.”

In addition to her missionary duties, Bedell would hold five church services a week, including ones at Marco Island, Caxambas and Goodland; she would visit families and the sick; and she would sell the handicrafts made by the Seminoles to tourists and the townspeople, turning the proceeds over to the Indians.

Bedell also convinced a benefactor in Washington, D.C., to donate a \$300 Model A Ford, which she would drive around the county. “I always knew the Deaconess was coming before she arrived,” said Reynolds, who was the executive director of the Chamber of Commerce. “People would come into the chamber and say, ‘I was just behind some crazy woman who was driving 18 miles an hour on the Tamiami Trail.’ She would always come to the chamber office with a bundle of stuff made by the Seminole Indians.”

Hurricane Donna, which blew through when Bedell was 85, destroyed the Glades Cross Mission and the Goodland Mission House. Bedell, who evacuated to Ochopee during the 1960 storm, survived and, although she was willing to start over, the church urged her to retire. Although Bedell would leave the area to live at the Bishop Gray Inn in Davenport, she did not stop working, caring for the sick and lecturing until her death in 1969 at age 94.

Mother Perry

There are more than 500 babies in Collier County whose first glimpse of the world included the face of Mother Perry.



Mother Perry

As a midwife for 25 years, Annie Mae Perry helped in hundreds of childbirths. Before her death at 98, she also worked days picking tomatoes, driving a school bus, fixing food in a school lunchroom and taking care of little ones at a downtown day care.

“I would come 32 miles from Copeland to Naples to deliver a baby,” she said in Maria Stone’s book, “We Also Came — Black People of Collier County.” “They seemed to run into some emergency.”

But delivering babies was in her blood. Perry, born in 1910 in Monticello, was delivered by her grandmother, a midwife who taught her grandchild to deliver babies, too.

“It felt like they was mine,” she said, remembering all of the children in a February 2008 Daily News interview. “Felt just like my children.”

Perry was paid for her services depending on what the families could afford. Sometimes, she said, it was nothing. One time, she said, she was given \$100.

Perry kept birth records on every baby she delivered. But Hurricane Donna washed some of them away.

“I had all my birth records in a book under my bed and the wind blew the door open and destroyed them, along with everything else,” she said in “We Also Came,” referring to her home in McDonald’s Quarters.

“During the Donna hurricane, I waited for the babies to be born. I was in Immokalee High School with all of the pregnant women. No babies were born durin’ that storm, but I was ready; but them babies wasn’t,” she said.

Perry said she never bothered with medicine or herbs, just “natural childbirth.”

“When a man would come to me and say, ‘Mother Perry, I want you to deliver my wife’s baby,’ I put their names in my book. From that time on until that baby was born, I’d get on my knees and pray every night. I’d pray for the Lord to give me a safe delivery for the baby and not let me have no trouble.”

Leila Canant



Leila Canant, circa 1940s.

One of the region’s first teachers, Canant came to Naples in 1928 after earning her teaching degree at Georgia State Teacher’s College and taught in Naples until retiring in 1969. She was a conveyor of knowledge and took caring for children to an important, next level; she made sure that they learned.

Canant died in 2006, at age 100. The Professional Development Center, which is located next to Gulfview Middle School and is used primarily by the Collier County Sheriff’s Office for training, is named for her.

Mamie Tooke

When the Bank of Naples opened in 1949, Mamie Tooke became one of three employees and the bank's assistant cashier. Her husband, Clarence, was the head cashier and executive vice president, though he would eventually take over after former Naples Mayor Roy Smith stepped down from the presidency.



Although Tooke had, like many women of the day, wrapped up her ambitions in her husband's career, she was forced to step into the spotlight when Clarence Cooke became ill and incapacitated after a stroke. Tooke took over and would eventually become the president of the Bank of Naples..

"She was an extraordinary woman," said Doris Reynolds, who called Tooke "her best friend." "She had never been to college, she had never had a course in banking," Reynolds said. "But she did it."

Before the Bank of Naples came to the community, residents would have to travel to the Bank of the Everglades in Everglades City or go to Fort Myers. Reynolds said many of the businesses that came to Naples when Tooke was around owe their success to her.

"She had a great gift of perception. She could look at people who came in for a loan and she would know if they were honest," she said.

Tooke also was involved in the community. She was the first woman to serve as the director of the Chamber of Commerce and was named the Naples Daily News' Outstanding Citizen of the Year in 1964.

Mary Ellen Hawkins



Mary Ellen Hawkins

Hawkins was the first female representative elected to the Florida House from Naples. She served for 10 terms from 1974 to 1994 and played a leading role on legislative committees with jurisdiction over growth management, the environment, transportation, education, tourism and appropriations. In 1976, she worked for legislation to create the Big Cypress Basin as a local water management funding and administrative unit within the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Bonnie McKenzie Loveday



Bonnie McKenzie, Naples' first elected female mayor.

MacKenzie became Naples first female mayor in 2000, serving until 2004 when she left because of term limits. She moved to Naples in 1984 and was first elected to the Naples City Council in 1996.

After she left the mayor's office, MacKenzie was honored by then-Gov. Jeb Bush for acting as a stabilizing force when residents from the city's historically black neighborhood River Park protested about the April 2001 shooting of a young black man by a Naples police officer.

MacKenzie died of breast cancer at age 54 in 2005.

Myra Janco Daniels



Myra Daniels

The First Lady of the Naples arts scene, Daniels created the Naples Philharmonic Center for the Arts to be a lasting jewel in the community

Initially, her efforts were a fundraising campaign to support the Naples/Marco Philharmonic Orchestra. That eventually led to the construction of the Philharmonic Center of the Arts, which offers everything from concerts to programs for children. The building, which opened in 1989, opened before much of Pelican Bay was built. In 2000, the art museum opened in the building. Daniels retired as CEO in September 2011.

CHAPTER FIVE: The Gladesmen



Loren G. "Totch" Brown was a crabber, commercial fisherman, alligator and plume hunter, bootlegger's helper, self-proclaimed outlaw, pot smuggler, songwriter, writer and environmental activist. One of the area's most colorful characters, Brown's notoriety surged far outside the realms of his quaint Chokoloskee Island home, where he lived until his death in 1996. Brown was never officially charged with smuggling but met up with the law when he attempted to pay taxes on his drug-running earnings from the late '70s.

The only times Loren "Totch" Brown left the Everglades was to fight in World War II and to go to prison for tax evasion.



Collier County native Wayne Jenkins, president of the Collier Sportsmen and Conservation Club and one of the Gladesmen, is one of the sportsmen who had an integral role in creating the Big Cypress National Preserve. Court fights with environmental groups over swamp buggy access to federal lands has left him frustrated and other Gladesmen frustrated, although they continue to fight for the unfettered access they once had to the area..

"Having lived a life in the Everglades, at times from no more than what the Glades had to offer, the Everglades never really let me down," Brown once wrote. He was a breed that would come to be known as the Gladesmen.

Brown's great-grandfather settled in the Chokoloskee Bay country of the Ten Thousand Islands in 1880; Brown was born in 1920. He was 3 years old when Collier County was founded. His family scratched out a simple living amid the seemingly endless maze of mangroves where the Everglades slip into the Gulf of Mexico.

They fished, hunted alligators, trapped raccoons, farmed tomatoes. They made their own rules and made their own moonshine. Life would change, though, and modern-day swamp rats are still fighting to keep what's left of their way of life.

As jobs became more plentiful, living off the land became less important. Subsistence shifted toward recreation. Poling a handmade wooden skiff through the marsh gave way to riding motorized swamp buggies and airboats powered by airplane engines. No change was more dramatic than 1947.

The creation of Everglades National Park that year meant Gladesmen could not do what they used to do or go where they used to go inside the park's boundaries. The Big Cypress swamp, west of the Everglades in eastern Collier County, however, remained a Gladesman's playground — and much more.

"It's not just a place we go to hunt and recreate," said longtime Collier County resident Franklin Adams. "It's a part of who we are."

Adams' family, living in Miami at the time, drove to a camp off the Loop Road each Thanksgiving for a reverent celebration in the woods. They ate roasted wild turkey and venison, pie made from Seminole pumpkin and sweet potato casserole. Adams remembers the smell of the smoke and the cool fresh air as the family talked around the fire after dinner.

Like most Americans of a certain age, Adams remembers where he was when President Kennedy was shot: He and his brother were on a two-week swamp buggy trek through the Big Cypress. They missed the cataclysmic event by two days.

"We'd gone out to escape, and we sure had," Adams said. They walked into a convenience store off Immokalee Road for a cold Pepsi at the end of their trip, and the clerk behind the counter handed them a newspaper with the news that would change a nation.

In 1968, Adams was attending Miami-Dade Community College when he hit it off with a visiting lecturer, pioneer Everglades conservationist Marjory Stoneman Douglas. Two years later, their paths crossed again. He had moved to Naples with his young family, and Douglas needed someone to head up a Collier County chapter of Friends of the Everglades, which she had formed to fight plans for a massive jetport in the Big Cypress. Adams agreed.



Franklin Adams, a conservationist and Gladesman, worked with Everglades champion Marjory Stoneman Douglas to defeat a proposed jetport in what would become the Big Cypress National Preserve. Sportsmen pushed for the preserve's creation, but now they are frustrated by ongoing court fights with environmental groups over traditional swamp buggy access to federal lands he and other Gladesmen helped protect.

The two spent countless hours strategizing over the phone. She made frequent trips to Naples to make speeches, Adams said. The drive took Douglas past a big sign on U.S. 41 that offered plots of the Big Cypress for \$10 down and \$10 a month: "Buy Land, Get Rich," the sign said.

Some saw the swamp as a land of opportunity and the jetport as progress, Adams said. "There were lots of people with lots of plans," he said. Opponents would sometimes heckle Douglas at her stops, Adams said. "Once she started speaking, they shut up," he said.

When President Nixon pulled the plug on the jetport, Gladesmen celebrated. They had played a central role and turned their attention to lobbying for permanent protection for the Big Cypress.

Thanks to their pushing, the Big Cypress took a different path than what had happened across the neighboring Everglades 30 years earlier. Rather than push Gladesmen out, the law that set up the preserve allowed them to continue their traditional recreation. It fell to the National Park Service to balance traditional uses of the Big Cypress with protecting it from what conservation groups see as environmentally damaging overuse of the preserve.

By the 1990s, aerial photos of miles off-road vehicles trails carving up the preserve's wet prairies had ignited a movement to curtail their access to the Big Cypress. Sportsmen, who prided themselves on their conservation bent, ended up fighting other-minded conservationists in federal court over access plans. They lost. Areas were closed. Trails were built to control where they could go. The two sides continue to fight to this day.



Bill Clark, 73, a vice president of the Big Cypress Sportsmen's Alliance and a Gladesman, has been going to the Big Cypress since before it became a preserve in 1974.

In 1996, Totch Brown died on a mangrove island where he spent his last years writing about his life in the Everglades. He suffered a heart attack while he was building a home on the island that he refused to concede to the national park.

"And by the way, I have one of the most beautiful and precious backyards on the face of the earth," Brown wrote a few months before his death. For Adams, his backyard has been the Big Cypress. As a teenager in Miami, he and his friends often would be sitting at a car hop on Friday night and decide right then to head to the woods.

They pooled their money for gas, stocked up on candy bars, soda and canned meat and drove west on U.S. 41 to the spot where Adams kept his swamp buggy. Sometimes they wouldn't get to the camp until after midnight — long after the swamp buggy curfew now imposed by preserve managers.

"Once you have that kind of freedom, it's hard to give it up," Adams said. "We never really thought it would change."

CHAPTER FIVE: Murderers



An aerial shot of 13002 White Violet Drive in 1985, taken shortly after the bomb blasts that killed Margaret and Scott Benson. A plastic sheet covers the Bensons' Chevrolet Suburban, reduced to a heap of charred, twisted metal. It would later be determined that two strategically placed car bombs triggered the blasts.

Parts of the Chevrolet Suburban were flung all over the front yard and littered the street when former Collier County sheriff's Capt. Tom Storrar pulled up to the home in an affluent North Naples neighborhood.



The only survivor of the blast, Steven Benson's sister, Carol Lynn Benson Kendall, testifies about the explosion and injuries she sustained. Collier Judge Hugh Hayes presided over the trial.

"We figured we were going to see a pretty messy scene up there and it was," Storrar said, recalling the 1985 crime. "It was just a horrendous event."

Steven Wayne Benson, then 34, was convicted of using two pipe bombs to blow up the truck in a Quail Creek driveway, killing his mother, Margaret, and his adopted brother and nephew, Scott, to keep his piece of the family's tobacco company fortune. His sister, Carol, was badly burned but survived.

The Benson trial put quiet Collier County at the center of a national media circus. When the jury reached its guilty verdict, the Naples Daily News rushed the news to readers with an extra edition that afternoon. The bespectacled Benson is serving a life sentence at a state prison in Hardee County.

Benson occupies a prominent spot in a rogues' gallery of murderers, moonshiners, drug smugglers and swindlers that crime fighters have been pursuing across Southwest Florida since its frontier days.

One of the region's earliest crime sprees was against nature. At the turn of the 19th century, illegal plume hunting was big business in the Everglades and stopping it was the job of Monroe County sheriff deputy Guy Bradley, a former Audubon Society game warden living in Flamingo. In 1905, Bradley was shot dead as he tried

to arrest a teenage boy for shooting up a bird rookery near his home. The boy's father fired the shot at Bradley as he approached in his skiff.

The first Collier sheriff's deputies were the Southwest Mounted Police that patrolled the Tamiami Trail on motorcycles when it opened in 1928. Husband-and-wife teams were based out of way stations built at 10-mile intervals along the new road. While the men were on patrol — once every hour and once at night — the women stayed behind to tend to travelers. It could be dangerous business with fugitives and Prohibition-era liquor smugglers lurking along the desolate highway through the Everglades.

When then-Collier Sheriff Doug Hendry hired sheriff-to-be [Aubrey Rogers](#) in 1957 to work at the Everglades City jail, the department had five deputies. The sheriff and the Naples police chief knew everybody, and crime was low.



Charles Jason Graves

"Everything was resolved with the sheriff or the chief working it out with the community," Collier Sheriff Kevin Rambosk said.

Hendry resigned in 1975, struggling with alcoholism and in poor health. Less than a month before he resigned, Hendry pleaded no contest to accidentally shooting his son in the back after the teenager was arrested in connection with a break-in at a Naples restaurant.

Then-Gov. Reuben Askew appointed Rogers to succeed Hendry. Rogers — running as a Democrat in a Republican county — held the post until he retired in 1989. Rogers is credited with big leaps in crimefighting. He brought the 911 system to Collier County, CB radios to the communications center, laser technology to analyze fingerprints and the blood alcohol testing van, known as the BAT Mobile.



Convicted killer Brandy Jennings ponders a question in an interview room at Florida State Prison in Starke last month. Jennings, who was sentenced to die for the murders of three former co-workers during a pre-dawn holdup, insists he didn't commit the killings. "I can't know what it's like to feel the pain they have," he said, referring to the families of the three victims. "All I can say is I'm sorry for their suffering."

By the 1970s, crime was taking a turn in Collier County. South American pot smugglers were using Everglades City as ground zero for operations that investigators said reached throughout the southeastern United States. One bust seized more than 33 tons of marijuana, about 100,000 bales, from two semi-trailer trucks parked in Everglades City, said Storrar, by then the head of the sheriff's narcotics unit.

"That was a wild era," said Rambosk, who as a Naples police officer routinely responded to bales of marijuana washing up on the beach.

Smugglers would kick bales of pot out of low-flying planes or land on the vast grid of rural roads in Golden Gate Estates. Crews would take less than 10 minutes to load the pot into fleets of waiting moving trucks and then disappear into the night. Offshore, fishing boats would pick up bales from freighters and deliver them to smaller boats to bring ashore, sometimes stashing them in the remote mangrove islands to retrieve later. "We were getting killed," Storrar said.

He and Rogers convinced the federal Drug Enforcement Administration to step in. They launched Operation Everglades in 1981, an undercover intelligence gathering operation that infiltrated the Everglades City smuggling scene. Two years later, armed with arrest warrants, they agents made their move in a dawn raid on the fishing village.

"We basically surrounded the town," Storrar said. Two more raids in 1984 and 1987 rounded up dozens of smugglers.



Convicted killer Harold Gene Lucas is pictured during a sentencing hearing in Lee County Circuit Court on Tuesday. Four previous death sentences imposed on Lucas have been overturned because of legal errors. Public Defender Robert Jacobs, in the foreground, sits with Lucas..

The raids rattled Everglades City, but a decade later, Collier County was shocked by a grisly robbery-turned-triple murder, the likes of which the community had never seen.

On an early November morning, employees of the Cracker Barrel restaurant on Collier Boulevard arrived for work but couldn't get inside. They called the Sheriff's Office. Detectives broke in and found store manager Dorothy Siddle, 38, cook Vicki Smith, 27, and night maintenance man Jason Wiggins, 21, lying on the blood-covered floor of the walk-in freezer. Their hands were bound with black tape, and their throats were slit.

Former Cracker Barrel workers Brandy Bain Jennings, 26, and Charles Jason Graves, 18, fled to Las Vegas, where a police officer spotted the two five minutes after hearing a national police bulletin. A high-speed chase through the desert ended with their capture.

Jennings was sentenced to death; he's still on Florida's death row, the only man convicted of a Collier County crime to be sent there. Graves was sentenced to life in prison.

Sometimes the cops were the criminals. After indictments in 2000, two sheriff's deputies were convicted in the biggest police corruption scandal in the county's history. Former road patrol boss Jim Sanders admitted to taking money from Immokalee gaming houses in return for not making arrests or shutting them down. A jury convicted his co-defendant, former sheriff's Sgt. Glendell "Pee Wee" Edison of extortion and distributing \$500,000 worth of cocaine.



Mug of Anthia Jill Piper murder by Harold Gene Lucas in August 1976

As crime continued in the streets, Naples' growing population of wealthy residents and the real estate boom attracted a new kind of criminal — ones that work with smiles and handshakes. In the 1990s, racketeers in Naples' real estate and investment worlds were brought down one after another. For financial fraudsters, Naples teemed with targets.

"I feel for those people," Naples resident Audrey Ray told the Naples Daily News in 2000. Ray was bitten twice, 13 years apart, once by investment adviser Phillip Elliott and then by investment manager David Mobley. She watched from the parking lot at Mobley's offices as FBI agents loaded boxes of evidence into a moving truck.

A crime is still unfinished business for the Piper family, the founders of Everglades Wonder Gardens in Bonita Springs. Jill Piper was 16 when a jilted ex-boyfriend, Gene Lucas, 24, gunned her down in the family's front yard, wounding two others.

Terror stalked Bonita Springs for five days while Lucas was on the run. Volunteers on horseback with shotguns searched the woods. Armed deputies guarded the girl's grave. Lucas finally turned himself in at a McDonald's in Naples. He's now one of Florida's longest-serving death row inmates.



Steven Wayne Benson, defendant, in court during his 1986 murder trial in Fort Myers. The trial was moved from Naples due to pre-trial publicity.

Cynthia Piper, Jill's sister-in-law, has written to then-Gov. Charlie Crist and to Gov. Rick Scott with a question: Why is Lucas still alive?

"Here he's still sitting pretty and we've been feeding him for a zillion years," Cynthia Piper said. "That's all I really want to know is why."

As the community weathered the recession, the crime scene changed again. Besides the upswing in thefts and burglaries, Rambosk said, the Sheriff's Office has had to deal with more mental health issues.

"Unfortunately the jail becomes the largest mental health facility in the county," Rambosk said.

He expects scam artists will increase their efforts to get financial information or money in telephone and email scams. As the housing market improves and more of the community's 10,000 foreclosed and empty homes go up for sale, he expects to find more burglaries in which scavengers stole air conditioners, appliances and pool pumps. More people moving back to town also will mean more calls for service, he said.

Today, the Sheriff's Office has 568 sworn law enforcement deputies and a \$120 million budget, \$20 million less than it was in 2008 as property tax revenues crashed along with the housing market. Cops alone won't be enough to stop crime, Rambosk said. High fuel costs and low tax revenue will continue to squeeze his budgets, and that means more reliance on residents to take steps to prevent crime and keep an eye out.

"That's what's going to keep us the safe community we are," Rambosk said.

CHAPTER FIVE: Rum Runners & Prohibition

In the early 20th century, Dr. Earl Baum — a surgeon from Milwaukee — made a movie he called "Naples on the Gulp." The title of his home movie, shot with his 16mm camera, fit the times. Despite Prohibition, Naples in the Roaring '20s had plenty of liquor to go around.

"There was never a shortage of booze in Naples, Fla.," said John Mayer, a board member of the Naples Historical Society.

Naples was anything but "dry." Early residents enjoyed "strong spirits," including Canadian whiskey and rum from Bimini. Much of the liquor came from the Bahamas or Cuba.

Historical photos show finely dressed women in elegant hats sipping spirits near the Naples Pier from tea cups.

These were the days of bootlegging and rum runs — long before high-rises and hotels dotted the Naples shoreline.

These days, with Prohibition long forgotten, there's no shortage of places to find liquor in the Naples area, from neighborhood bars and pubs to glitzy restaurants and clubs. With its oversized drinks, Blue Martini at the Mercato in North Naples, is just one of the popular night-time hangouts today — for locals and tourists.

In 2010, a travel story in the New York Times fittingly described cocktails as "sacred in these parts." The beach-front Sand Bar at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, aptly serves up a tropical cocktail with rum in it, called the Naples Sunset. Naples is now home to the most successful charity wine auction in the world.

Today, there are more than 850 restaurants in Collier County with more than 96,000 seats, many of them with full liquor licenses, according to the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. There are more than 630 businesses with a Naples address that have a retail license to sell alcohol, including liquor stores.

"During Prohibition, the only place people would have gone out here would have been the Naples Hotel and I don't know whether they would have served alcohol there or not. That was a pretty public place. I've never heard that they did," Mayer said.

Early pioneers in Naples enjoyed their cocktail and dinner parties and they were in an ideal place to get all the liquor they wanted.

In an article looking back at Collier County's history, Ron Jamro, executive director of Collier County's museums, described the county — with its miles of deserted beaches and hundreds of hidden islands and inlets — as "made to order" for rumrunners and bootleggers.

"It was a pretty simple task to bring in boat loads of this stuff," he said. "There are stories about crates washing up on Naples beach around the Pier and shipments that didn't quite make it that were intercepted by the locals and quietly hidden."

In 1919, the Volstead Act was passed to enforce the 18th Amendment, which outlawed the making and sale of alcohol in the U.S., unless it was for medicinal or scientific reasons. The amendment wasn't repealed until 1933.

In his book, "Early Naples and Collier County," the late Dr. Baum recalls one of his own bootlegging experiences with a man he called "Mr. H." Late one night, the two men, joined by a few others, took a small boat to Chokoloskee Island, where they picked up a few cases of Canadian Club. When Baum returned to his room at the Naples Hotel the next morning "was my good wife ever happy to see me, as she was sure I was headed for trouble," he wrote.

On Chokoloskee Island, Dan House Sr. — an entrepreneurial man — brought much of the illegal liquor into these parts of Florida and though there were many other rumrunners, "none was as proficient at avoiding the revenue agents," says Doris Reynolds in her history book, "When Peacocks were Roasted and Mullet was Fried."

"Stories abound about his exploits outsmarting revenue agents, who descended on the island," she wrote.

The late Doris House Orick, House's daughter, shared what she remembered about her father's exploits as a rum-runner in an article for the Collier County Historical Society. She remembered her dad backing up a large truck at their house and then unloading case after case of gin, rum and whiskey, with the help of her mother and her older brother and sister. Sometimes, they'd move 200 cases in one night, which were hidden and stored in the attic. "...I lay in bed — my heart in my throat — afraid that the revenue officers would come," she recalled.

In his book, Dr. Baum recalled that he was always well-stocked with whiskey in what he called the good old days. "Naples was an easy place to run liquor into. It all came by boat from Bimini. They would either come under the bridge in the Keys, or sometimes they would go clear around Key West. The minute they got into the Islands, there was not a chance on earth the revenue men would catch them," he wrote.

Once Baum swapped fishing stories with a man, who told him that day's fishing was "out of this world." Turns out, the man had reeled in a gunny sack with six bottles of Canadian Club in it. Sometimes, bootleggers spotted by the Coast Guard or chased by revenuers would throw their sacks of liquor overboard to avoid getting caught. Every once in a while, an unsuspecting fishermen would snag one.

Visitors heading back north found a way to ship their illegal liquor back home from Naples without getting caught. They would stash it in a travel trunk, then put a 10-cent bag of marbles in an empty drawer inside of it. With the marbles rolling around, the porter wouldn't hear the "gurgle" of liquor in the trunk and it would "always go through," Baum remembered.

There were other creative ways to hide liquor back in those days.

At Palm Cottage, the oldest house in Naples, built in 1895, there's a hollowed-out wooden table in the front room that was used in the days of Prohibition to stash liquor bottles. Lift the top, and there's a hole in the middle of it.

"There was a lot of partying going on down here," said Mayer, of the Naples Historical Society as he showed off the table during a tour.

There was a much more deadly and dangerous side to Prohibition, however. There were killings over it.

With the opening of the Tamiami Trail on April 26, 1928, bootleggers from Miami quickly discovered it was a great way to move alcohol north to Tampa — and beyond. That led to dangerous battles on the trail between the bootleggers and the Southwest Mounted Police, motorcycle riders who helped stranded motorists and enforced the laws along the new roadway, Jamro said.

"It was a pretty small force and ill-equipped to handle these hardened criminals," he said.

Bootleggers weren't the only problem for local authorities.

There were moonshiners, too, making their own brews deep in the Everglades — an easy place to hide out because it was mostly wilderness. Collier County Sheriff Louis Thorp — often seen carrying a bullwhip and chomping a cigar — waged a war on them, declaring that "he was going to put an end to it," said Jamro.

By 1929, local deputies intercepted a truck load or two of spirits a month along the Tamiami Trail. Thorp would smash up the bottles of alcohol the deputies confiscated in public showings in Everglades City — then the county seat.

In 1931, bootleggers killed Bill Hutto, a chief deputy and jailer and the chief of police for Everglades City.

In a published story about life living along the Tamiami Trail, Lillian Larkins Weaver recalled that Hutto was taking the bootleggers to jail when one of them pulled the officer's gun from his holster and shot him. After that, Bill Weaver, Lillian's husband — part of the mounted motorcycle patrol along the trail — was told to stop and search all the cars that passed the Monroe Station at Loop Road east of Ochopee, where he was based.

"I'd lie down until I heard a car coming, then I'd get ready to shoot if they shot at Bill," she recalled. "But none did, although one car refused to stop and Bill let go a blast from his shotgun, aimed at the back of the car. But the car was going too fast and wasn't hit."

Hutto was 36 when he died after delivering Christmas gifts to children on Christmas Eve. He left a family behind, including his four children.

On Marco Island, bootlegging was going strong in the 1920s.

"People on Marco really didn't like Prohibition," said Betsy Perdichizzi, a member of the Marco Island Historical Society who has written several books on the island's history.

Mary Samuel, a school teacher on Marco who boarded with a local family on the island, shared a story about how she and another teacher were taken by boat one night to see 800 cases of liquor hidden in the woods that had come from Cuba. Big loads went to Chicago and to eastern cities for distribution, Perdichizzi said.

On Chokoloskee, "Totch" Brown made moonshine on a remote key. He created high ground by building up a mound of shells in the middle of the key.

"It was a secret and I guess they didn't find it," Perdichizzi said of authorities.

In a skit she performed at Estero High School in February, Perdichizzi, playing the role of Tommie Barfield, one of Collier County's most influential women at the time of Prohibition, explained that Brown found it difficult to

store his moonshine. He put it in wooden barrels and buried them in the ground. The worms ate right through the barrels.

They eventually found the moonshine was safe from the worms only when the barrels were coated inside and out with plaster," Perdichizzi said.

The pioneers, she said, invented the term 100 proof. It meant the moonshine had 50 percent alcohol and to prove it gun powder was soaked with the moonshine and set on fire.

"If it burned," she said, "it was 100 percent proof positive that the moonshine was 50 percent alcohol."

CHAPTER FIVE: Mr Watson



Rick Vorell, left, who plays the part of Edgar J. Watson, falls down dead in a scene where he is shot during the 2010 re-enactment of Watson's killing at the Smallwood Store and Museum in Chokoloskee. Several books have been written about Watson, who is believed to have killed his employees instead of paying them. Suspicious of the man, townspeople took up arms and shot him in 1910.

More than a century later, the question of what happened on Chatham Bend still lingers. Edgar J. Watson — referred to as "the desperado of Chatham Bend" in a 1954 Collier County News article — was killed in 1910 when 33 bullets riddled his body.



An old photo shows the residence of Edgar J. Watson, Oct. 20, 1910, on Chatham Bend River, Ten Thousand Islands, Florida

Little is known about the circumstances that led to his death, but one thing is for sure: Watson died at the hands of Chokoloskee residents who feared there was a killer on the loose.

"There's a lot of versions about what happened," said Lynn Smallwood-McMillin, a Chokoloskee resident and executive director of the historic Ted Smallwood Store.

Watson settled with his wife and children at Chatham Bend — a small island in Monroe County about halfway between Chokoloskee and Flamingo — in the early 1890s and, according to a 1967 article in the Miami Herald, bought a plantation and grew sugarcane.

News reports over the years said Watson often hired "outlanders" to work the plantation, and the 1954 Collier County News reported that "people who worked for Watson disappeared soon after asking for their pay."

It was four of those disappearances that started the string of events that would result in Watson's demise.

Townfolk began to hear rumblings of the disappearances, and, in a 1975 interview, George Milton Storter said people found the body of Hannah Smith in the water while mullet fishing.

Around the same time, a hurricane was brewing, and Storter said Watson hired Storter's father to go to Fort Myers to report the killing, but Lee County authorities wouldn't investigate the murders because Chatham Bend was in Monroe County.

Storter's 1975 account said "a mob started gathering with guns" and Watson went back to Chatham Bend and said he would bring his foreman, Leslie Cox, back with him. But Smallwood-McMillin said when he returned a few days later, Cox was nowhere in sight and Watson said he took care of it.



"They held him responsible," Smallwood-McMillin said. "They were questioning his word."

Watson fired the first shot, or tried to at least. His bullets, purchased at the Smallwood Store, were wet from the storm and misfired. Soon after, more than a dozen townspeople started firing on Watson.

Ted Smallwood was not among those who fired on Watson, but Smallwood-McMillin said her mother's family was likely involved.

The inquiry into the deaths at Chatham Bend stopped after Watson's death and Cox — dead or alive — was never found.

And while many believed Watson was responsible for a handful of murders in his time — including the death of Belle Starr, a famous female outlaw — Smallwood-McMillin said she doesn't think he was responsible for the Chatham Bend deaths.

"There had just been a hurricane, and everyone's nerves were on edge," she said. "I don't think it was Watson."

But that doesn't stop people from retelling Watson's story. Author Peter Matthiessen in 1990 published "Killing Mr. Watson," a fictional account of the crime, and Watson's death is frequently re-enacted in Chokoloskee by residents and history buffs.

CHAPTER FIVE: Stadium



Rendering of what Stadium Naples would have looked like.

ESPN founder Bill Rasmussen unveiled plans for a first-of-its-kind golf stadium in 1996, an ambitious, \$100 million project to be located northeast of the city of Naples. The facility, to include luxury skyboxes and 12,000 seats surrounding the course's 18th hole, would be called Stadium Naples. But the stadium was never built. Plans fell apart under controversy and public outrage when a Naples Daily News investigation revealed in 1997 that an elected official, then Collier County Commissioner John Norris, had negotiated for a stake in Stadium Naples estimated at \$7.5 million before casting votes to benefit his developer partners and the stadium.



Former Collier County Commissioner John Norris is fingerprinted in January 2004 in court at the Sarasota County Judicial Center. Norris reached a deal with the prosecution, pleading guilty to racketeering conspiracy and unlawful compensation for his involvement in the Stadium Naples corruption case.

The controversy would only grow from there. Following the urging of residents and the local Republican Party, then Gov. Jeb Bush ordered a detailed investigation into the matter, as well as the assignment of a special prosecutor.

What resulted was the largest corruption case in Collier's history, netting charges against 10 people: four public officials, five business leaders and an attorney. For more than six years, investigations into the project, which was attempted a second time with now defunct Naples-based brokerage company A.S. Goldman & Co., continued.

The case was sprawling and complicated. Eventually, the public would learn that A.S. Goldman & Co. had manipulated a number of small company stocks, including Stadium Naples partner Millennium Sports Management, in what state and federal securities regulators dubbed one of the nation's most notorious boiler rooms. It would learn that David Mobley, the financier whose Maricopa Investments backed Stadium Naples and The Strand, was cheating investors of millions, pumping their money into his posh lifestyle and failed businesses and charities.

"People were closing their eyes; the whole society was rupturing with corruption," Mike Carr, a Collier County judge who was then a Republican state committeeman and leading voice in calls for an outside investigation, said of the time.

"Roads weren't being built. Developments that shouldn't have been built were being built. Zoning decisions were not based on merit but who was being paid off; taxes weren't being collected on fancy golf clubs. The saying around here was, 'To get along, you go along.' It was a cesspool."

"We've been amazed at the institutionalized corruption we've been seeing," special prosecutor Michael Von Zamft said in October 2001, when prosecutors unveiled sweeping new corruption charges and the last five arrests.



Then Commissioner Tim Constantine, the public learned in 2000, received a discount on his wedding reception at a country club and a \$100,000 business loan from the Stadium Naples developer. The loan wasn't repaid.

Prosecutors charged the 10 Stadium Naples co-defendants with conspiring to deprive the citizens of Collier County of the honest services of public officials by swapping financial incentives for votes and influence favorable to their projects.

Although initially only Norris was in the spotlight for wrongful dealings with developers, it was later revealed that other county officials had also accepted gifts and favors from them.

"Crooks are like cockroaches and the sunlight makes them run," Carr said. Once the first hints of corruption began coming out, he said, the rest followed.

Then Commissioner Tim Constantine, the public learned in 2000, received a discount on his wedding reception at a country club and a \$100,000 business loan from the Stadium Naples developer. The loan wasn't repaid.

It learned Neil Dorrill handed out pay raises to key county employees days before leaving his job as county manager in 1997 to become president of the first Stadium Naples development partnership.



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Tim Hancock, another county commissioner at the time, admitted to taking more than 40 free golf games from lobbyists while in office.

Several years would pass before the case ended in January 2004 with the last remaining defendant, Norris, striking a deal with prosecutors.

The defendants were dealt varying sentences, ranging from community service to house arrest and thousands of dollars in fines.



David Mobley, the financier whose Maricopa Investments backed Stadium Naples and The Strand, was cheating investors of millions, pumping their money into his posh lifestyle and failed businesses and charities. Mobley was sentenced to five years in prison for his role in the Stadium Naples public corruption case.

The case led to changes at the state and local level. Ethics ordinances were passed by both city and county government. And the Florida Legislature amended state law, stiffening penalties for public corruption.

Commissioner Fred Coyle, who was a city council member when the city's ordinance was adopted, said the new rules help sensitize elected officials to how the public perceives their interaction with developers. The ordinances closed the loopholes and prohibit officials from engaging in activities that could even be viewed as unethical.

"We probably overreact in some cases," Coyle said. "We are probably overly cautious and that's not bad."

Carr said although "there's more money here (and) you're going to get more crooks gravitating toward money," he believes the area's elected officials to be honest and he is proud of that. The county, Carr said, has to continue to maintain integrity and take the stance that corruption is unacceptable.

"If we keep in mind what's happened before, we can make new mistakes," he said. "We don't have to make the old ones."

CHAPTER FIVE: Swamp Buggies



Swamp Buggy races from the mid-1960's.

The grudge match officially started November 12, 1949. On that day, Naples held its first Swamp Buggy Races.



Four hunters pose beside an early swamp buggy on the first day of hunting season in the late 1940's. From left to right are Paul Frank, Henry Espenlaub, swamp buggy inventor Ed Frank and Mayor W. Roy Smith.

It was an event born from necessity — crossing the marshy, muddy terrain that was Southwest Florida in the 1940s. The race evolved into a full day event that culminated with ultimate bragging rights.

"There's nobody in the world that builds buggies like that," said Swamp Buggy Races spokesman Chris Dupree.

Now, the swamp buggy race season lasts from October to March, with three weekends of races, a parade, and a swamp buggy queen. The buggies are more sophisticated, sleek and high-powered. The races attract locals, tourists and seasonal residents alike.

Some say the sport is still a hobby, but those who race in it think of it as a professional motor sport.

But the original races didn't start that way.

In the 1940s, a man named Ed Frank started informal races in a potato patch, off what would become Radio Road.

Frank brought his family to Naples in the 1920s. He was an avid hunter, but he needed a special vehicle to traverse the soggy terrain.

Frank developed the swamp buggy, an old Model T Ford with an extra transmission, tire chains and dual rear wheels.

"The tires are what do it ... they're like airplane tires; bald, oversized tires with chains," Dupree said.

Before hunting season, local men would gather to prepare their buggies for hunting trips. One day, the gathering turned into an informal competition — a muddy, country drag race.

After a few years of informal races, Naples was home to the official Swamp Buggy Races.



The speed of the buggies has definitely increased over the years. Tyler Johns struggles to keep his swamp buggy, The Patriot, from flipping on a corner of the track during the semi-final in 2005, during the final race day of the Winter Classic Swamp Buggy Races..

The early racers were tough, rugged men.

"Hunting back then was a way of life — you had to be able to live off the land," Dupree said. "Be a jack of all trades ... There was no Publix."

He said little has changed about the type of people who race today.

On a recent February evening, a dozen men wearing T-shirts and flannels haphazardly tucked into worn bluejeans gathered around foldaway card tables in the Florida Sports Park meeting room. They came for the last board meeting before the third and final swamp buggy race of the season.

Board member Norman Tester, who's been involved with the races since 1965, said Naples is all about hunting, buggies, bragging and "tipping elbows."



Arm raised, Swamp Buggy Queen Courtney Jolly is helped into the murky waters of the Mile-O-Mud by Big Feature winner Eddie Chesser at the end of the Winter Classic in 2004 at the Florida Sports Park in Naples. The dunking is a swamp buggy race tradition..

"We still want to beat each other," he said. "Everybody loves a little carnage."

More than 60 years later, the race has evolved into a nationally recognized motor sport.

"It went from a regular junkyard motor to even better," Tester said.

The swamp buggy season comprises three races: one in October, January and March. The October race starts the season with a parade and a Swamp Buggy Queen pageant.

Local girls vie for a \$2,500 scholarship and the honor of being dumped into the Sippy Hole, the deepest and muckiest part of the famous "Mile O' Mud" race track.

One thing has changed: Women are now allowed to participate in the races.

"Our wives remind us of that," board member "Barefoot" Bobby Williams said.

Men joked that many women got divorced over swamp buggy races in the past.

"(The men) were so focused on the buggy, they started neglecting the women," he said.



Troy Ortega in his pro-modified swamp buggy, races ahead of Eddie Chesser, during the Winter Classic Swamp Buggy races at the Florida Sports Park in Naples on Jan. 29, 2012.

And it's no wonder. A swamp buggy takes a year and a lot of money to build.

Today, a motor alone can cost upward of \$60,000. The vehicles require custom-made, precision parts.

Dupree also said the prizes have changed dramatically over the years. The first winner in 1949, Johnny Jones, of Miami, walked away with a prize shotgun and \$100 in cash.

Now, drivers compete for thousands of dollars.

But those who race say they don't do it for the money.

"It gets you a natural high," Williams said " ... Gets your adrenaline up."

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CHAPTER FIVE: Sports



Robert R. Fohl Jr. tees off, framed by the construction of the new clubhouse at the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club, May 10, 1931. The Beach Club had had the first 18-hole golf course in Naples.

In the beginning — even in the very beginning — there was a golf course in Naples.



This Naples fisherman's name is unknown, as is the date of his catch. But the catch is Tarpon.

Town founder Ed Crayton built the nine-hole course in 1919 at the southeast corner of Fifth Avenue South and Third Street South. Golfers teed off from mounded lumps of wet sand, and the desolate sandy fairways made it difficult to keep track of the little white ball.

Eventually the course became the town's first airplane landing strip, but Naples was on its way to becoming a golf mecca with some 90 courses and, it has often been said, more golf holes per capita than any other place in the United States.

From its early days, Southwest Florida has been hailed far and wide as a place for fun in the sun, whether in the driver's seat of a swamp buggy heading out for a day in the woods or in a box seat watching a Major League Baseball spring training game.

Naples' first salesmen used recreation to entice visitors. An 1889 newspaper ad for the Naples Hotel boasted in capital letters: "A beautiful Beach, delightful Surf Bathing IN WINTER, unlimited Boating, Fishing and Hunting facilities, an abundance of Game, Fish and oysters, and especially the Tarpon Fishing,"

As if to make good on the hype, the Fort Myers newspaper reported that April that a fishing party with Naples settler Walter Haldeman caught 94 fish of 10 different varieties weighing a total of 300 pounds in five hours.

"The visitors at Naples are all in the greatest enjoyment of the delights to be found there," the newspaper reported.



Greg Norman hugs Scott McCarron after playing the final hole at the Franklin Templeton Shootout in 2005. Norman brought the team event to the Naples area in 2001. He also designed the course at Tiburon Golf Club.

Fishing, boating and sunbathing on the beach still are a big draw for the Paradise Coast, as its modern-day marketers have labeled Collier County. Some outdoor pursuits, though, have morphed into homegrown events.

A swamp buggy trek to a family picnic or favorite hunting spot had been a popular pastime long before the first official Swamp Buggy Races christened a new motor sport in a muddy East Naples field in 1949.

Restaurateur Vin DePasquale turned to canoes to celebrate the first successful tourist season at the Dock on Crayton Cove. The Great Dock Canoe Race's mix of serious competition and wacky costumes has kicked off from the City Dock on Naples Bay every year since 1977.

The professionals came to play in Southwest Florida with the arrival of spring training baseball in Fort Myers in 1925. The Philadelphia Athletics started a long tradition of spring ball in Lee County. The Cleveland Indians, Pittsburgh Pirates and the Kansas City Royals all followed.



Boston Red Sox outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury at the team's spring training facility on Feb. 24, 2010. The team has now moved to its new Citrus League home in Ft. Myers, JetBlue Park at Fenway South. The dimensions of the ballpark's field are identical to its Boston namesake.

Today, the Minnesota Twins and the Boston Red Sox continue to attract fans from around the nation. It's not just about fun and games; it's big business. A 2009 study estimated that spring training fans pumped \$47 million into the local economy that year.

Collier County has struck out with its efforts to attract spring training baseball. Talks with the Cleveland Indians, Baltimore Orioles and the Chicago Cubs have all ended with no deal.

Professional sports went indoors in 1998 when the East Coast Hockey League expansion team Florida Everblades skated onto the ice in an arena the team's owners built in a cow pasture in Estero.

Off the ice, Southwest Florida's first professional home team has spurred a youth hockey movement and has been a boon to children's charities and school reading programs.



Steve Saviano of the Florida Everblades, top, celebrates with teammate Paul Cabana after scoring the winning goal at 15 seconds into overtime in Game 2 of the ECHL American Conference semi-finals against the Greenville Grrrowl at Germain Arena Monday night. The Everblades won 4-3.

"People see that and that's what really ties (the team) to the community," said Doug Byington, a season-ticket holder since the second season.

No sport, though, has been more synonymous with Collier County than golf. As Collier grew, the lure of year-round golf became one of its biggest selling points and elegant golf courses proliferated. When professional tour events found homes in Collier County, it became one of golf's centers of gravity.

"You get a chance to see some of the world's big names in golf," said Joe Klimas, who has watched from the first tee as the longtime announcer for the Ace Group Classic and Franklin Templeton Shootout.

Before those tournaments teed off, Marco Island developers Deltona Corp. sponsored the Tony Lema Memorial Tournament that attracted a parade of VIPs to Marco for a two-day golfing party at what is now the Island Country Club. The tournament, from 1967 to 1980, honored Lema, a British Open winner who was the club's pro when he died at 32 in a plane crash.



Leslie Barreto-Wilkinson, center, exits her canoe as her sister Lynda Barreto, left, hugs their mother, San, after they all finished the Ambitious Amateur race during the 34th Annual Great Dock Canoe Race at Crayton Cove in Naples on May 8, 2010. Dozens of canoes hit the water for the annual event while hundreds of spectators lined the dock to watch..

Golf great Gene Sarazen recruited tour players such as Sam Snead, Tom Watson and Lee Trevino. The tournament's popularity snowballed, eventually attracting the likes of baseball players Joe Garagiola and Mickey Mantle, football greats Terry Bradshaw and Bob Griese and celebrities such as Evel Knievel, Jimmy Dean and Jackie Gleason.

Golf had come a long way from the 1930s, when Naples' first 18-hole golf course at the present-day Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club was the center of the town's social scene.

Naples' early townfolk would eat a stew-like concoction called Kentucky burgoo, drink Champagne and whiskey cocktails and then take to the course for games of "monkey golf" in which each member of a foursome would play with a different club.

The kettle of burgoo is long gone, but the 19th hole still is one of Collier County's favorite places for a good time.

CHAPTER FIVE: Mosquito Control



Dan Weeks, an inspector with the Collier Mosquito Control District, checks a trap off Collier Boulevard in Naples in 2011. The daily check yielded fewer mosquitoes because the area was sprayed by airplane the prior evening.

Some Collier County pioneers had a nickname for the little winged devils. They called mosquitoes — sarcastically — swamp angels. Taming the county's mosquito population over the years has gone from smudge pots to high-tech chemical aerial assaults. The Collier Mosquito Control District has taken the fight farther and farther east as the county's population has grown.



Collier Mosquito Control District DC-3 airplanes make an early evening summertime flight over Naples in 1990, "fogging" a spray mixture of diesel fuel and the pesticide Baytex..

"The two things that made this place livable were air conditioning and mosquito control," longtime Neapolitan Lodge McKee said.

In his book, "Crackers in the Glade," Everglades City fishermen Rob Storter recounts a run-in with a swarm of mosquitoes during a mullet fishing trip to Chevelier Bay.

"We made one strike and it looked like the mosquitoes would kill us before we could get up our nets."

Storter, a member of Everglades City's founding family, was born in 1894. Settlers repelled the biting pests by filling buckets half full of dirt and black mangrove wood and burning them, sometimes with rags on top to make them smokier, Storter wrote. If smudge pots wouldn't work, the only alternative was to wait for a breeze to blow the mosquitoes away or head indoors, being careful first to brush the mosquitoes off with a homemade broom.

Collier County's founding on the edge of the western Everglades has shaped the district's fight against mosquitoes. More than 40 species of mosquitoes buzz around Collier County. Most of them breed in inland freshwater.

The county's lone species of saltmarsh mosquito is the most aggressive — and the most troublesome. It breeds in the mangrove forests along the coast, where environmental rules prohibit mosquito spraying. In November 1950, voters decided it was time to fight back. They established an independent taxing district, originally called the Naples Mosquito Control District, to do the job. The district covered just six square miles of Old Naples. Without money, employees or equipment, the district borrowed a truck and driver from the city of Naples. A fogger on the truck would heat a mix of diesel fuel and malathion.

"Smoky Joe," as some neighborhood kids called the truck, was the highlight of the day when they heard it coming down the streets of the quiet town, leaving a chemical-laced cloud in its wake, Ray Carroll said.

"We ran behind it, we rode our bikes through it," he said.

Everything changed in 1963 when East Naples and North Naples joined the district, the first of a half-dozen expansions that have brought the district to its current 400 square miles. The district had to change its approach. In 1965, mosquito fighting took to the skies from a hangar at Naples Municipal Airport.

The sound of a fogging truck was replaced by the thunder of aircraft, at first Beechcraft D-18s and later Douglas DC-3s, and eventually government surplus Huey helicopters, skimming the treetops on dawn fogging missions.

"People would say, 'Wow it looks like that DC-3 is about to crash,' the district's Director Frank Van Essen said. He said only one DC-3 has crashed, when it lost an engine over East Naples. The crew walked away.



By the mid-1980s, aging helicopters were replaced with smaller, more nimble helicopters that ushered in another major innovation. In 1991, the district replaced foggers on its aircraft with more efficient ultra-low volume spray nozzles.

A problem emerged though. Scientists at Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, which stretches along the coast between Naples and Marco Island, began to notice more dead fiddler crabs after helicopters sprayed over nearby residential areas. Monitors also found dozens of dead or sick shorebirds off Tigertail Beach on Marco Island beaches.

"There were rows and rows of them," said the reserve's avian ecologist Ted Below. "I knew something was wrong."

Below's discovery led to a federal investigation that found mosquito control insecticide Baytex was to blame.





- After an elaborate two-year field study by a host of state and federal agencies in Golden Gate Estates and Rookery Bay, the district changed its equipment and flight patterns to spray just the right size of droplets to kill the most mosquitoes with the least amount of insecticide hitting the ground.
- The district moved to a new headquarters at the Naples Airport in 1990 and sold the old offices for \$1.1 million. The district used the funds to replace its aging DC-3s with SC-7 Skyvans.

When it's not pursuing mosquitoes, the district is testing alternative insecticides and spray systems, figuring out how high saltmarsh mosquitoes fly and at what time of night mosquitoes are most active.

Swamp angels continue to prove a worthy foe.

CHAPTER FIVE: Hospitals



Dr. Pia Myers, right, prepares to stitch up a boy's nose after he was in a scooter accident. Sixty years ago, the nearest hospital was 40 miles away, and Naples residents worried about receiving urgent medical care. When Naples Memorial Hospital was built in 1956, seven doctors and 35 nurses and technicians were on staff to cater to the city's medical needs. Today, Collier County has four hospitals.

Sixty years ago, the downtown Naples Community Hospital was nothing more than a field of grass next to a scarcely traveled U.S. 41. A handful of doctors made house-calls for the occasional snake bite or to assist women in labor. But residents feared the day when they would require acute medical attention for real emergencies. The closest hospital was 40 miles away.



John Turner, a volunteer at Naples Community Hospital, says goodbye to patient Connie Makrides, center, and her sister Jo DeMay at the end of his shift. Turner has been volunteering at NCH for two years and was one of the first babies born in the hospital in 1956, the year it opened.

"There is no question that a hospital is badly needed," Fred Lowdermilk said in a speech he made at a Naples Woman's Club luncheon in 1952. "Many winter visitors are actually afraid to come here because of our lack of facilities to care for the seriously ill."

That situation changed when, in 1956, Naples Community Hospital was built.

For more than 40 years, it remained Collier County's only hospital. Today, the county has four hospitals: Downtown Naples Community Hospital, North Collier Hospital, Physicians Regional-Pine Ridge, and Physicians Regional-Collier Boulevard.

But establishing this robust health-care system took time.

Plans for Naples Community Hospital began in 1949. A committee came up with a goal to raise \$500,000. It appointed Beatrice Branch Briggs, of Briggs and Stratton Motor Co. and the Outboard Marine Corp., president.

When Briggs wrote a check for almost \$12,000, the donations went "over the top." Other Naples philanthropists such as Lester and Dellora Norris and Addison Miller also made large contributions.

On March 7, 1956, Naples Memorial Hospital opened its doors with 50 beds. Soon after, it was renamed Naples Community Hospital. The third nurse hired at Naples Community Hospital remembers very few patients in the early days.

"At first, there was not much to do," Thelma Hodges said. "I was lucky to take care of an ingrown toenail."

The new Naples hospital boasted seven doctors and about 35 nurses and technicians.

The 83-year-old Hodges' sharpest memories of the hospital are when Hurricane Donna struck in 1960.

"We put all the pregnant women, those that were about to deliver, in the lobby," Hodges said. "Thankfully, the water didn't come up that high."



A medical team observes an operation at Physicians Regional-Pine Ridge. The hospital, originally built by Cleveland Clinic in 2001, was purchased by Health Management Associates Inc. in 2006 and given its current name. Another Physicians Regional campus opened in Naples in 2007..

She said the real challenge came in the days after the storm when people took to the debris-scattered streets to clean up.

"We got more injuries from people stepping on nails that came through their shoes," she said. "We weren't ready then like they are now."

As Naples grew, the hospital continued to expand.

By 1980, the number of hospital beds had increased to 400. Today, there are 715 beds between the downtown hospital and the North Collier satellite hospital.

Naples Community Hospital remained the county's only hospital until 2001 when two competing companies vied to open another hospital in the county. A long legal battle between Naples Community Hospital, Columbia/HCA Healthcare Corp. and Cleveland Clinic ensued. Ultimately, Columbia struck a deal with Cleveland Clinic and bowed out.



Thelma Hodges, the third nurse hired at Naples Community Hospital, at her home in Naples on Feb. 21, 2012.

In 2001, Cleveland Clinic's \$57 million, 70-bed hospital opened off Pine Ridge Road near Interstate 75. The hospital was purchased in May 2006 by the Naples based Health Management Associates Inc. and renamed Physicians Regional. The ownership change meant the hospital was no longer closed to only Cleveland Clinic physicians.

On February 5, 2007, HMA opened a second hospital, Physicians Regional-Collier Boulevard. Today, there more than 100 beds between the two Physicians Regional hospitals.

Even though Collier County is now home to four hospitals, Hodges said her hospital will always be Naples Community Hospital.

She still volunteers there.

"It's my hospital," she said. "I have to make sure they take care of it."

CHAPTER FIVE: Hurricanes



Francisco Bernal sits in front of what used to be his home inside the Pink Citrus Mobile Home Park on Sunday afternoon. Bernal is one of about 500 people in the park, located on Pine Island, Fla., whose home was damaged or destroyed during Hurricane Charley on Friday. As of Sunday the residents of Pine Island hadn't received help from any government agency.

They've caused millions of dollars in damage, knocked out power, disrupted communication, left thousands homeless and destroyed the Naples Pier time and time again. From Donna to Wilma — and numerous earlier storms — hurricanes have had a profound effect on Southwest Florida's residents and its history.



People fill the floor of Germain Arena in Estero, as they seek shelter from Hurricane Charley on August 13. More than 2,000 people came to Germain Arena looking for shelter from Hurricane Charley, which hit Southwest Florida Friday afternoon..

Last year marked six years since Wilma — the longest the U.S. has gone without a major hurricane since the start of record-keeping in 1851.

“And I'd like to see that record continued, thank you,” National Hurricane Center spokesman Dennis Feltgen said. But it's likely that good fortune will only continue so long. Florida, especially its coasts, is naturally vulnerable.

“You can count on another hurricane in Southwest Florida,” National Weather Service Meteorologist Dan Noah said. “We just can't tell you when.” On average, a major hurricane can be expected to occur in the region every 18 years, Feltgen said. Eighty-one named storms have passed within 65 miles of Naples since 1851.

The worst of them — Category 5 hurricanes — cause an extreme threat to life and property, destroying poorly constructed or maintained homes and substantially damaging the roofs or walls of stronger ones. They can take down signs and trees, knock out power for extended periods and leave roads impassable.

“Hurricanes are a fact of life in Florida and they’re not going to go away, and we’re not going to be able to control them,” Feltgen said. “The only thing we can do is prepare for them.”

Today, readying for hurricanes is assisted by technology that was unimaginable when Donna devastated Southwest Florida in 1960. People knew a major hurricane was coming, but weather satellites were just getting started, Noah said. Computer simulations were unheard of.

“Back then, you didn’t get five-day hurricane forecasts; you didn’t get warnings 36 hours in advance,” Feltgen said. “Things have changed today quite a bit — and certainly for the better.”



Naples, Fla. police officer Amber Baginski tries to keep her balance as the winds from Hurricane Charley picked up across Naples Pier on August 13. The pier was closed at 4 a.m. Friday morning in preparation of the category four hurricane.

Feltgen said the hurricane center aims to improve track and intensity forecasting by 50 percent in the next 10 years. Already, data from hurricane hunter aircraft, data buoys, Doppler radio and satellites are combined to create a five-day track forecast that is as reliable as three-day forecasts were just 15 years ago.

Improvements have also come at a local level in Southwest Florida. After Hurricane Charley, which took officials by surprise in 2004 when it suddenly veered off course and tore through Lee County, changes were made to the area’s transportation, power and emergency management systems.



Richard Gazda emerges from flood water after trying to clean out the drains along Park Shore Drive near his home to keep the water from flooding any worse in Naples Fla. after Hurricane Charley moved through the area. Water along Park Shore Drive had sections as deep as two feet.

Aging wooden utility poles and traffic signals were replaced with stronger, newer models and emergency management and relief agencies tweaked preparedness plans to allow quicker deployment of water, ice and other supplies to areas most in need.

But the improvements don’t matter if Southwest Floridians aren’t prepared for the likely occurrence of another hurricane.

“Watches and warnings are absolutely useless if you don’t use them,” Feltgen said. “If you ignore them, then the odds go up exponentially that you can get yourself injured or killed in these things.”

CHAPTER FIVE: Charities



Denise Cobb, center, celebrates with friends after she and five other friends won a 10-day Caribbean cruise for \$350,000 during the 2009 Naples Winter Wine Festival auction. The annual festival is the most successful philanthropic venture in the past 20 years, having raised more than \$106 million for the Naples Children & Education Foundation.

Dylan Chatham is an example of philanthropy done right. It was just a few years ago that he would sit alone during playtime at school. He wouldn't play with the other kids. He wouldn't make eye contact with his parents. And he wouldn't talk.



Tommy Daley, 4, from left, Mary Grace Benavitz, 7, and Dylan Chatham, 5, follow instructor Jennifer Modzelesky during a yoga session at Able Academy. Many organizations such as Able Academy are the recipients of grants from the Naples Children & Education Foundation, which help fund programs for children.

"It was scary more than anything," Dylan's father, Jay Chatham, told the Naples Daily News last year. "To not be able to communicate with your child, it's frightening."

Dylan's school suggested that it might not be the best place for him. School officials suggested his parents enroll him in the clinical classroom program at the Applied Behavioral Learning Enterprises Academy in Golden Gate.

But at \$2,500 to \$4,500 a month, the program was out of reach for Dylan's parents.

"I didn't expect to be funding what is the price of a college education for a 4-year-old," he said. "I mean, it's a mortgage payment."

That's where the Naples Children & Education Foundation stepped in. Through the money raised at the Naples Winter Wine Festival, the charity provides grants to organizations such as ABLE, which was able to use a portion of its grant to help Dylan go to school.

"Without the Wine Festival, it would be impossible for Dylan to come here," Chatham said.

Collier County has been a community with means. But it also is a community that shares its wealth with others.

Lavern Norris Gaynor recalls the projects her parents, Lestor and Dellora Norris, contributed to over the years — including Lowdermilk and Delnor-Wiggins parks, NCH Healthcare System, Big Cypress Bend and the creation of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida.

"Both he and my mother were very conscious of doing for the community," she said. "They wanted to keep some of these things people enjoyed. They wanted people to be able to have access to them. They did the same up north."

Gaynor said she was unaware of many of the philanthropic deeds her parents did.

"They didn't talk about it," she said. "That wasn't them."

The Norrises were just one of Collier County's major philanthropic donors who left their mark on the county. S.F. Briggs got a group of friends together and put the \$500,000 initial fund drive over the top to allow for the construction of what would become Naples Community Hospital.

The Briggs' home on Gordon Drive was, for many years, an unofficial center of community activities, with white elephant sales for charities held on the lawn. Their philanthropic nature passed to their children, who funded the Briggs Nature Center at Rookery Bay in 1981 in their memory.

When William von Liebig and his wife, Suzanne, relocated to Naples in 1990, they would expand the philanthropic work they had done up north, according to William von Liebig's obituary in The New York Times. They donated substantially to the Naples Philharmonic, the Naples Depot and the von Liebig Art Center, which is named for them.

Julius Fleischmann arrived in Naples in 1946 from Cincinnati and would, in the early 1950s, shape what is now Third Street. But perhaps his greatest legacy was purchasing what became known as the Caribbean Gardens. Opened back to the public in 1954, two decades after falling into disrepair after the death of botanist Henry Nehrling, the gardens boasted tropical flora and breathtaking wildlife.

Naples' first lady of the arts, Myra Janco Daniels, recently ended a 30-year run as the CEO of the Philharmonic Center for the Arts. The 90,275-square-foot center was built in 1989 for \$19.5 million which initially began as a fundraising campaign to support the Naples/Marco Philharmonic Orchestra.

"I used to say to my staff, a community without the arts is a community without a soul," Daniels said. "Well ladies and gentlemen, we have plenty of soul."

But perhaps the most successful philanthropic venture in the last 20 years has been the Naples Winter Wine Festival. Since 2001, the organization has raised \$106.7 million for the Naples Children & Education Foundation, which provides 20 grants to help underprivileged and at-risk children. The charity has helped more than 150,000 children and impacted more than 35 nonprofit agencies.

The Naples Winter Wine Festival is a weekend event that features dinners from some of the world's greatest chefs with some of the world's best wines and concludes with an auction of everything from rare wines to trips around the world.

"This is the chi chi part, but it is going to impact so many children," Katharine Anderson Groethe said at this year's auction. "And that's what it's all about — helping the kids."

CHAPTER FIVE: Arts



Naples Philharmonic Center for the Arts is celebrating its 22nd year and going in to its 23rd season.

NAPLES —Sounds of a Rachmaninoff piano concerto and a Tchaikovsky symphony filled the hall the night the Naples Philharmonic Center for the Arts threw open its doors for the first time. The gala turned Naples on its ear in 1989, but the Phil's landmark spires are just the most visible representation of an arts scene that found a home in the community more than a half-century ago and has grown along with Collier County.



Myra

Janco Daniels, center, greets scores of patrons, friends and members of the community at the "Thank You Myra Grand Gala" at the Philharmonic Center for the Arts in Naples in January. Daniels is the founder of the Philharmonic Center for the Arts — pictured at far right — and served as its CEO from the day it opened in 1989 to Sept. 1, 2011. The "Thank You Myra Grand Gala" in January was a tribute to her. .

"There's a certain ambience to this town, and art is part of it," Harmon-Meek Gallery owner Bill Meek said. "There's a lot of cities up and down the coast that don't have what we have."

Its stable of wealthy arts patrons and its knack for attracting renowned artists and art collectors has put Naples on the art world's map. Outside its mansions and galleries, the city's public spaces are adorned with sculptures and are taken up by buildings that house the arts. Sugden Theatre occupies what used to be a stretch of Fourth Street South, and the von Liebig Art Center stands on a corner of Cambier Park.

A century before today's arts temples, early forms of art were blossoming in Seminole Indian villages in the Big Cypress and the Everglades. The tribe's women used hand-cranked sewing machines to create colorful patchwork clothing that they sold to admiring tourists. A homegrown arts scene was taking root in Naples by the 1950s.

The quaint town had only one art gallery, McNichols Gallery, when accomplished painter Emile Gruppe moved to Naples, drawn by the good fishing and warm breezes, according to one biographer. Others would follow. One of them was William Henry, whose mural of pirates couldn't be missed hanging above the bar at the affluent Port Royal Club.

Becoming a member of the club was a requirement for wealthy northerners to buy a home in the new subdivision at Naples' southern end, and a Gruppe or a Henry hanging on the wall helped a newcomer's standing, Meek said.

"That was essentially the price of admission to be accepted," he said.

Arts in Naples entered a new era in 1964 when Naples landowner Julius Fleischmann recruited Sarasota arts mainstay Foster Harmon to open an art gallery in his new shopping center on Third Street South. Fleischmann, hoping to expand Naples' arts reputation, gave Harmon a deal. If he'd make the move to Naples, he would not have to pay Fleischmann rent during the summer when the gallery was shuttered. They shook on it.

Harmon's gallery exhibited art that fetched thousands of dollars, not the hundreds that art had sold for in Naples before, and set the tone for what would become today's Gallery Row. In the late 1960s, the handful of galleries in the Third Street South district had openings on Sunday nights that became eagerly awaited social events. Popular artists of the day included Edna Hibel, Albert Schroder and Richard Segalman, and each gallery had its star.



Cuban artist Eduardo Miguel Abela Torras takes photos of paintings by other Cuban artists included in the "Cuba on my Mind" exhibition preview at the von Liebig Art Center in 2011, in Naples. Torras was one of 11 artists featured in the exhibit.

"People would line up waiting for the gallery to open and rush in and grab one of his (Schroder's) paintings," said Olga Hirshhorn, who came to Naples in 1969, with her husband, Joseph, a prolific art collector and namesake of the famous museum and sculpture garden at the Smithsonian Institution to which he donated his collection.

Segalman, whose work hangs in museums and private collections around the nation, had his first showing in Naples in 1959. He said he considers Naples, where he tended bar for his uncle before launching his art career, to be the town that gave him his start. "There were always plenty of painters painting here," he said.

When artist Paul Arsenault came to town in 1974, Naples was still the sort of place where painters could put on their own shows in Swan Court, where Campiello's sits on Third Street South today. He sold paintings for \$15. "There was a certain homey charm," he said.

About the same time, Everglades City folk artist Rob Storter, a fishermen by trade, was picking up a watercolor brush for the first time and drawing scenes depicting life in pioneer days. Storter also built model boats out of whatever he could find and painted scraps of wood to look like fish he displayed in wooden boxes.

The arts scene was reaching critical mass by the 1980s, when the Naples Cultural Foundation unveiled plans for a new arts center. They were no match, though, for Myra Janco Daniels.

Daniels launched a rival bid to build a performing arts center to house a fledgling orchestra that was playing in Marco Island churches and later at Naples High School auditorium. The two competing visions polarized the arts community.

Daniels eventually raised \$21 million, adjusting her plans to add art galleries and a theater along the way.

"It was a high ride," said Daniels, an advertising executive from Chicago. "Never in my career had I had something that just unfolded. People were hungry and they wanted it."

Millionaires wrote seven-figure checks. One boy found Daniels at the grocery store and pulled a wad of money out of his pocket to contribute. An old woman rode her bicycle to the campaign's office every month to offer \$10 from her Social Security check.

That woman later approached Daniels at the Phil after the opening: "She came up to me and said, 'This is the best damn thing I've ever seen,'" Daniels said.

CHAPTER FIVE: Museums



Scenes from the Old Florida Festival at the Collier County Museum in Naples, an annual event that offers the chance to see 6,000 years of Southwest Florida's history come to life with historical re-enactments, arts and crafts, weapons demonstrations, music and food.

Collier County has heaps of history — if you know where to find it. So whether you're an armchair historian or prefer to think of yourself as the next Indiana Jones, read further to find the best local history hints, haunts and happenings.



The Museum of the Everglades

Collier County Museums offer five different locations to give history fans an up-close look at the area's past.

The main Collier County Museum campus at the Collier County Government Complex offers an overview of the area that's complete with prehistoric animal skeletons and exhibits highlighting the lives of Southwest Florida's other early inhabitants. Exhibits continue through the 20th century, including a 1910 locomotive and a Sherman tank from World War II.

The Museum of the Everglades in Everglades City tells the story of the hardy frontier folk living among the River of Grass.

On Marco Island, the newly opened Marco Island Historical Museum reveals the history of the island with a special focus on the Calusa Indians.

At the Collier County Museum's Naples Depot in Old Naples, that story is centered on transportation, from dugout Seminole canoes and mule wagons to swamp buggies and passenger trains.

At the Immokalee Pioneer Museum in Immokalee, history buffs can play pioneer at the 15-acre homestead of cattleman Robert Roberts and learn more about ranching life in the 1900s.

The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Big Cypress Reservation is a way to discover more about traditional Seminole people.

Back in Naples, a visit to the town's oldest home means a stop at Palm Cottage. Docent-guided tours are available, as are tours of the home's adjacent Norris Gardens.

Palm Cottage also is the spot to stop if you're looking to hear oral histories of the area.

As part of "Naples Oral Histories: If These Walls Could Talk!" visitors can relax in the 16-seat Cottage Theatre and enjoy firsthand accounts from people who made the area what it is today.

More community histories are shared in "Untold Stories." Produced by public television station WGCU, the series began in 2004 and has produced 43 episodes. Full episodes may be viewed at www.wgcu.org



Visitors view the exhibits of the Naples Depot Museum. The restored Seaboard Air Line Railroad Depot, built in 1927, holds exhibits that show Southwest Florida's history of trade and transportation. The museum is located on the corner of Fifth Avenue South and 10th Street in Naples.

If you're looking for a cinematic experience check out "Distant Drums." The most famous of all Hollywood films shot in Collier County, this Gary Cooper movie is set during the Second Seminole War.

The Collier County Museum offers a recommended reading list for armchair historians. At the top of the list is Earl L. Baum's "Early Naples and Collier County."

Also on the list is "Florida's Last Frontier: The History of Collier County" by Charlton W. Tebeau. Tebeau was chairman of the University of Miami's History Department for more than two decades.

Baum and Tebeau's books are out-of-print but are available through the Collier County Public Library.

Few books have made such a sensational splash as Peter Matthiessen's best-selling novel "Killing Mr. Watson." It recounts the story of the famous turn-of-the-century murder of Edgar J. Watson at the Smallwood Store in Chokoloskee.

The wonderful quirks of local history come to light in Doris Reynolds' "When Peacocks were Roasted and Mullet was Fried: Toothsome Tales of Naples, Florida." Its chapters of lore detail the origin of swamp buggy races, the pioneer names behind places such as Lowdermilk Park and some of the shadier economic stimuli, such as rum running.

Yet to come: a definitive history of Naples, written by local historian Lila Zuch and expected in print before 2013. This is a history taken from 20 years of research and will bear the imprimatur of the Naples Historical Society, which is its publisher.

Other books: "Swamp Buggy Fever" by Maria Stone, "Pilots, Pinballs, and Politics: A History of the Naples Municipal Airport" by Nancy Fessenden and "Naples 1940s to 1970s" by Lynne Howard Frazer.

CHAPTER FIVE: Historian Doris Reynolds



Doris Reynolds at her Naples home, February 28, 2012.

A casual conversation with Malcolm McDonald, the president of Florida Power and Light, changed my life. It was the summer of 1952 and I was attending a meeting in Miami. I mentioned that I had driven down the west coast from St. Petersburg and had stopped in the small village of Naples for lunch. A colleague had mentioned the position of Chamber of Commerce executive secretary was vacant, and I was curious about the community.

I drove around the quiet, serene town and walked along the deserted beach. I knew that my destiny was in this place.

Malcolm urged me to apply for the position and was effusive in his description of Naples and its potential to become one of Florida's greatest small cities: "Naples is an ideal place for anyone with ambition, energy and who enjoys a challenge."

There were 18 applicants (all men) for the Chamber job and I believe that my willingness to work for \$65 a week was instrumental in the board's decision.

Within months I was ensconced as "executive secretary and managing director" of the Naples Chamber of Commerce. The office consisted of a 16-by-22-foot building that resembled a Chick Sales outhouse. There was no air conditioning, no bathroom, an ancient mimeograph, a worn-out portable typewriter, a single bulb hung from the ceiling amid dirt, dust and debris from months of neglect. I spent my first day on the job dusting, mopping and washing windows and floors.

At that time, the year-round population of Naples was about 1,200 hearty souls who were joined by winter residents who brought the number up all the way to 2,000. There was one streetlight, three churches, two grocery stores, two hotels and four guesthouses, one school, one bank, four restaurants and several bars.

The development of Port Royal and Aqualane Shores had just begun while along the beachfront were several large homes, many built during the 1930s. World War II had prevented further development and the 1950s marked the beginning of a new and exciting era for the burgeoning town.

In 1947, the holdings of the Naples Improvement Co. were purchased by Henry B. Watkins Sr., a successful business executive from Ohio who owned most of the land in Naples along with the Naples Hotel and the Beach Club Hotel.

The atmosphere of Naples was filled with energy, hope, optimism and cooperation. The town was on the move, and residents and winter visitors gave their time, money, expertise and energy to ensure thoughtful growth and zoning that would be beneficial to future generations.

I remained at the Chamber for four years. There were only 12 members when I arrived. The winter residents became associate members and supported our efforts to publicize and bring new residents and businesses to Naples.

I am often asked if I was born in Naples and my reply is that "I was born again when I came to Naples." It was in Naples that I learned about dedication, determination, courage and the importance of soldiering on in the face of great obstacles and tragedies.

Despite hurricanes, hard economic times, political chicanery, other natural disasters and personal tragedies, Naples has emerged just as Malcolm McDonald predicted.

It is vitally important that we honor and pay homage to those courageous pioneers who saw beyond the hardscrabble land and visualized a great city. Walter Haldeman and his band of Kentucky cohorts, the town's early settlers, were visionaries who were followed by others who gave us the gift of a community envied and revered throughout the world.

Although those hearty pioneers are gone from our midst, they have left behind a legacy that we must cherish and protect. We each bear the responsibility of preserving the past, while working toward a future that honors those who saw a paradise where most only saw a wild and untamed wilderness.

CHAPTER FIVE: Hurricane Donna



The Pier was ravaged by the storm and had to be reconstructed in the aftermath.

The winds of change blew into Collier County — literally — on Sept. 10, 1960.



Pictured are the Mackle brothers, the developers of Marco Island. From left, Robert, Frank Jr. and Elliot. A photo of their father, Frank Mackle, can be seen in the background

That's the day Hurricane Donna, a category 4 hurricane that packed enough energy to equal a hydrogen bomb exploding every eight minutes, whipped through the area.

The 9 ½ foot surge from the Gulf of Mexico and the high winds from the storm caused more than \$25 million in property damage locally and \$387 million nationally as it swept up the East Coast.

The windfall of insurance money flowing into the region in the aftermath of the storm would change Naples forever.

"You had a town getting about \$30 million in insurance claims, which in today's figures would be now over \$100 million. In a community with 15,000 people. It has an impact," said David Pfaff, the executive director of the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce from 1960 to 1970. "And, in addition to all of the insurance money, you had the infrastructure." But there was more to be built. Lots more.

The vision for the modern Marco Island began to take shape in 1962 when the Mackle brothers purchased the land for \$7 million. John Bonner, in a news release from that time, called Marco Island "the scenic 'last frontier'" of Southwest Florida's Gulf Coast. Thirty days after the Mackle Brothers officially opened Marco Island on Jan. 31, 1965, 50,000 inquiries would flood the administration office on San Marco Road, where the island's police and fire department stand today.

But Marco wasn't the only development going gangbusters. It was the time Raymond L. Lutgert began the Park Shore project, which turned 760 acres bordering 1.25 miles of Naples coastline into a community, the first planned unit development in the state. Less than a decade later, The Collier Company and Coral Ridge Properties would announce joint plans for the development of what would later become Pelican Bay.



Laverne Norris Gaynor is the daughter of Lester and Dellora Norris, who paid to have the Naples Pier rebuilt following Hurricane Donna at no cost to taxpayers. The Norrises have left a lasting mark on Naples, including helping to found Lowdermilk Park, the Collier County Conservancy and Delnor-Wiggins Park.

Even in downtown Naples, property was being developed. K&R Contractors of Bradenton built what was believed to be the first Federal Housing Administration-financed black waterfront subdivision in the U.S.

Called River Park East, the Naples Development Corp. funded the project for \$794,000 and gave black residents in Naples an alternative for housing. Before this, black residents lived in McDonald's Quarters, which would be deemed slums and eventually demolished in the 1980s, or the River Park Apartments.

Pfaff said the ball really began rolling in the 1950s, when Port Royal, Aqualine Shores, Coquina Sands and the Moorings were being developed.

"But the 1950s were also the time of the Eisenhower recession. Naples was hurting as much as everyone else," he said.

What saved the community, Pfaff said, was an Indianapolis insurance agent who bought land along U.S. 41 and absorbed many of the losses people had.

Then, Hurricane Donna hit.



By 1966, six years after Hurricane Donna, the heart of Naples was bustling with gas stations at the Four Corners (intersection of U.S. 41 and Fifth Street South) and early versions of many of today's landmarks. Photo is from a Collier County News clipping courtesy of Richard and Rachel Holland of Naples.

"Donna made Naples," said John Mayer, a local resident and member of the Naples Historical Society board.

Locals remember the city returning to its feet quickly after the storm.

"It was like, anything you needed, you would get," said Lavern Norris Gaynor, whose parents — Lester and Dellora Norris — paid to have the Naples Pier rebuilt following Donna at no cost to taxpayers.

"Everyone helped everyone else. It was so united, so helpful. They did it because they loved Naples."

The Norrises, who owned the Keewaydin Club on Keewaydin Island, would eventually put a large stamp on the way Naples is today. After realizing that private property owners were going to swallow up public beach access, the Norrises helped to found Lowdermilk Park, the Collier County Conservancy and Delnor-Wiggins Park.



The Naples Pier under reconstruction in 1961 after Hurricane Donna the year before.

"My father really loved nature ... Both he and my mother were very conscious about doing for the people of this community. Although, we never really knew about it," Gaynor said with a laugh. "He wanted to keep some of these places for people to enjoy."

Naples fared better through Donna than Everglades City did. A year later, in 1961, the Collier Company would move its headquarters from Everglades City, which was the county seat, to Naples and the Bank of the Everglades would relocate to Immokalee. A public referendum found the community was ready to move the county seat to the Naples area.

"Donna not only altered the landscape of the town, it demonstrated that Everglades City was too vulnerable, small and remote to serve as the business and government center for the county," according to an exhibit at the Everglades City Museum.

But development didn't happen overnight. Talk to those who grew up in Naples and they still remember a town without a shopping mall or a McDonald's. A town where the drive-in, at today's busy intersection at Immokalee Road and U.S. 41, seemed to be in Siberia.



The old Naples pier and the devastation of Hurricane Donna.

"We came as a family in April and had five days to find a house. At that time, there were four four-bedroom houses for sale in this town," said Nancy Jane Tetzlaff Berens, who moved with her husband, "Jungle" Larry Tetzlaff, and their children to Naples in 1969 to open Jungle Larry's African Safari and Caribbean Gardens.

"We lived in the Moorings and Naples was such a quiet town back then that, once when we went on vacation to the Cayman Islands and we were putting our suitcases in the back of the car to go to the airport, we could hear the lions roaring at the zoo. Going grocery shopping was the social event back then."

But while popular, it wasn't profitable. Berens said Jungle Larry's, which would eventually become the nonprofit Naples Zoo, didn't make money until the late 1970s or early 1980s, a decade after the attraction came to Naples.



Local businessman Ray Carroll, 57, watched the city of Naples grow around him as he grew up on 12th Avenue North. As development squeezed out the open spaces around town, his family acquired a piece of property as a "hideout" along Henderson Creek surrounded by what is now Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. "As my playgrounds were absorbed by development, my range of movement increased," said Carroll. "And, as Naples got more developed, we had the foresight to acquire places that didn't change very much. When I stand on my dock and look at the sky, I might be upset that the sky isn't as black as when I was growing up. But I still have the dock under my feet."

"Our paychecks came from Cedar Point for a long time," Berens said, referring to Jungle Larry's other attraction in Sandusky, Ohio. "But every year, the number of visitors grew and, eventually, we were in the black."

Pfaff said all communities go through the same stages of growth. Naples and Collier County, he said, just did it faster than most. He cites significant changes for people being small things, like the opening of a bigger grocery store.

"When we got the first shopping center on 41 with the Publix," he said. "When the Collier County News went to twice a week, it was a big deal."

Pfaff also cites development of areas such as Golden Gate city as a savior for the community.

"Golden Gate is never given credit. It was the safety valve for what was going on here. With all of this development, there was no place to put working folks, no place with low- to mid-cost housing where people could live and work," he said.

Local businessman Ray Carroll, who grew up in Naples, remembers growing up at the end of 12th Avenue North when every other lot was vacant.

"I remember there was a lot of water. There was no drainage to speak of. There were puddles everywhere," he said.

Carroll also remembers sitting in class at Lake Park Elementary School and having class stop every time a Naples Airlines plane flew over the school. Naples Airlines started Jan. 1, 1960, and began flights between Miami and Naples a month later.

But with development came concerns about how Florida's growth was shaping the community. In 1967, the Gulf Land Corp. developed Golden Gate Estates and acquired a reputation for selling swamp land at highly inflated prices to unsuspecting buyers, as well as destroying the old growth environment.



In the early 1970s, groups including the National Wildlife Federation and AAA objected to the state's plans to pull a toll road across Alligator Alley, with AAA threatening to not put the toll road on its maps.

By the end of the 1970s, backlash on development began to gather steam, particularly when it came to the Mackle Brothers. In 1976, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denied the brothers permits to develop Barfield Bay and Big Key. That same year, state and federal officials won a three-year battle to deny permits to the Deltona Corp., which was owned by the Mackle Brothers. The permits would have destroyed 3,200 acres of Marco wetlands. Deltona, teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, would fight that denial to the U.S. Supreme Court. The financial problems forced it to sell some of its underdeveloped properties at "Bargain basement prices and began selling assets, including its prized possession, the Marco Beach Hotel and Villas, which was sold the Marriott Corp. in 1979 for \$35 million," according to the city of Marco Island's website.

Eventually, the Mackles would turn their underdeveloped holdings into nature preserves, upending plans for 7,000 people who had contracts for home sites on land that could not be developed.

Carroll said he believes now that Collier County has developed, the future will be about preserving places and the memories of what Naples used to be like.

"As my playgrounds were absorbed by development, my range of movement increased," he said. "And, as Naples got more developed, we had the foresight to acquire places that didn't change very much.

"When I stand on my dock and look at the sky, I might be upset that the sky isn't as black as when I was growing up. But I still have the dock under my feet."

CHAPTER FIVE: Naples Zoo



David and Tim Tetzlaff, from left, and their mother Nancy Jane Tetzlaff Berens, are the surviving family members who built Jungle Larry's Caribbean Gardens, now the Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens.

David Tetzlaff doesn't hesitate when you ask about his family's legacy in Naples. "If there was no Jungle Larry's, there would be no Naples Zoo," said Tetzlaff, whose father "Jungle Larry" Tetzlaff brought his animals to Naples in 1969.



R. Henry Nehrling at H. Nehrling Tropical Garden and Arboretum. Circa mid-1920s.

"After Orlando blossomed, there were not a lot of family attractions around. But it was my mom's business acumen and my father's style that brought people through the gate."

But the story of the Naples Zoo at the Caribbean Gardens, as it is formally called, begins long before the Tetzlaffs came to Naples. Botanist Henry Nehrling first acquired the Naples site in 1919 to avoid the repetition of a disastrous freeze to his plant collection in Central Florida in 1917.

Nehrling's great grandson, Richard Nehrling, said without the Caribbean Gardens, there would be no zoo in the first place.

"It is an important landmark to Naples," he said. "Initially, it was 13 acres and an old cabin."

Nehrling built his home in the Gardens in the northern acreage of the present day zoo. He entertained scientists and environmentalists, as well as notable people such as Theodore Roosevelt. During his work for the Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction to the U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry, Nehrling introduced more than 300 new plants to the U.S., including caladium.

Nehrling would live on the Caribbean Gardens property until October 1929, when he abandoned the land and moved to Gotha, where his other garden was located. Palm Cottage Gardens, as that property is known, was placed on the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



"He was penniless," said Richard Nehrling. "We have writings he did from the Caribbean Gardens when he was in his 70s, living in essentially a shack alone. ... (It is said) he lives on faith, hope and charity."

Nehrling would die a month after leaving Naples, in November 1929, and more than 20 years would pass before the public was to see what was behind the garden's gates.

After decades of neglect, Julius Fleischmann re-opened the Caribbean Gardens in 1954.

The Tetzlaffs found the Caribbean Gardens on a visit to Naples in 1967. The Tetzlaffs ran a successful venture called Jungle Larry's at the Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky, Ohio.

"We came on vacation," Nancy Jane Tetzlaff Berens said. "We stayed at the Howard Johnson. And, like any tourists, we visited the Caribbean Gardens. Larry was so impressed that he asked if the Gardens were for sale."

The Tetzlaffs were politely told that the Gardens were Fleischmann's "rest and relaxation" and they were not for sale.



Jungle Larry and Nancy Jane Tetzlaff

A year later, Cedar Point CEO Robert Munger received a phone call from the Fleischmann family asking if he knew of anyone who might want to take over the Gardens. He did and mentioned the park to the Tetzlaffs.

"Our lease started Sept. 1, 1969," said Berens. "Larry had made several trips down, but we came as a family in April. At the time, there were four, four-bedroom houses for sale in this town. I had five days to find a home and Larry hired a contractor and architect for the Gardens. It all worked out."

Jungle Larry's opened at a time when roadside zoos in Florida were very popular.

"It was a time you could stop at a gas station and there would be a tiger in the cage," David Tetzlaff said.

The family actually rescued a lioness that had been abandoned at a roadside attraction.

"It was so sad. But that lioness was able to come back. She lived here and produced cubs," Berens said. "Larry was very instrumental in getting minimum cage standards set. Some of those animals, the way they were kept, it was very cruel."

The Tetzlaffs said things also began to change when Walt Disney World opened in Lake Buena Vista in 1971.

"Before Disney, people would drive down one coast and come up with other, stopping along the way," she said. "Once Disney opened, there wasn't that. But, if the Disney parking lot was full, people would spread out and it would give us a bump."

While attendance grew every year, Jungle Larry's operated in the red for about a decade, Berens said.

"We used the profits from Cedar Point to subsidize our operation in Naples," she said.

But Naples offered the Tetzlaffs a warm place for their animals during the cold Ohio winters, when the amusement park was closed.



"We had two basic collections of animals. Our major acts were in Ohio because that was our bread and butter," said Berens.

The new digs also allowed the Tetzlaffs to breed a lot of animals, including leopards and a chimpanzee. Some of them even came to live with the Tetzlaffs in the Moorings, something that would never be tolerated today.

But having what was essentially a "stationary circus" allowed David Tetzlaff to focus on his love — training animals, particularly leopards.

The family recalled peacocks that lived in the zoo and would fly over the fence, attacking shiny Mercedes-Benz cars and increasing the zoo's insurance premiums.

"We still get calls about peacocks on the loose," said Tim Tetzlaff. "We haven't had them for years, but we still get calls on them."

When the Blue Angels came to town and practiced over the garden area, all of the zoo's water fowl, which had been on there since the Fleischmann days, flew away. "They never came back," Berens said.

But perhaps their favorite stories are that of Jungle Larry, who died in 1984. "He was the pied piper here. We had trams that would take people on tours and, when they were jammed, Larry would go out and take people on walking tours. He'd be out there for two hours talking about his knowledge and stories," said Berens. "That was his gift."

In 2002, the Fleischmann family indicated it would be interested in selling the 43 acres of zoo property and the 120 surrounding acres for \$67.5 million. The Tetzlaffs began having meetings with county commissioners about buying the property, an idea voters ultimately approved.

The zoo became a nonprofit and was handed over to a Naples Zoo board of directors. It continues to expand on the acreage it leases from Collier County.

CHAPTER FIVE: Remember Donna



Clyde C. "Carl" Dampier, Naples Pier, September 1960 after Hurricane Donna.

When Hurricane Donna slammed into Southwest Florida, it was big news. But lost among the stories of devastation were a few colorful tales. Two men were pardoned after Donna struck for their efforts to help move people to safety. Willie McNeil, 22, of Tarpon Springs, and Otis Boyd, 25, of Naples, volunteered to help move women and children seeking shelter in the Naples Police Station to fire trucks where they could be taken to higher ground.



Aerial view of Everglades City, Fla. looking north along the Barron River with extensive storm damage caused by Hurricane Donna on September 10, 1960

When the firetrucks became bogged down in high water during the storm, the two men waded in and helped the women and children to a house at 10th Street South and Eighth Avenue South.

Officers, according to the Collier County News' account on Sept. 15, 1960, said the men had not tried to run away following Donna, even though they had the opportunity.

McNeil had been arrested for drunk and disorderly conduct, obstructing an officer and carrying a concealed weapon. Boyd was arrested for drunk and disorderly conduct and petty larceny.

The men were pardoned by both Naples Mayor Francis Ford and Gov. LeRoy Collins.

As Hurricane Donna approached, Lester and Dellora Norris, who lived on Keewaydin Island, decided to head to the mainland. But, as their daughter Lavern Norris Gaynor tells it, the couple's chimpanzee, Secu, stayed on the island with a maintenance man who wanted to remain during the storm.

"The maintenance man stayed and sat with the chimp in the lodge during the storm," she said. "My father was not happy about leaving the island, but my mother insisted."

Secu, so named because Gaynor's daughter could not pronounce the phrase "Grandpa's Secret," was brought to Keewaydin by Lester Norris.

"Secu was amazingly sweet," she said. "He always wanted to give you something in return. If you gave him a banana, he would break off a piece and give some back to you. We just loved him."



The cover of the Sept. 15, 1960 Bonita Banner. Hurricane Donna had devastated the south Gulf Coast of Florida five days earlier. Note the hand-written type for the front page

Gaynor said after Secu had been with the family a while, Lester told Dellora that he was "bringing home a brunette" from a trip.

"My mother got the guest bedroom all ready," Gaynor said with a laugh.

"She didn't know my father was bringing home another chimp."

The second chimpanzee, Bedulah, was Secu's opposite in every way, Gaynor said. Mean and bossy, Bedulah could only be comforted by Secu, who would walk her around the couple's cage.

Secu lived on Keewaydin until he succumbed to pneumonia after some cold weather, Gaynor said. Bedulah was sent to live in Boca Raton, where she "lived out her final days in peace and solitude," according to Doris Reynolds' book, "When Peacocks Were Roasted and Mullet was Fried — Toothsome Tales of Naples, Florida."



Furniture litters the beach following Hurricane Donna on Sept. 10, 1960. A notation on the photograph reads: "Furniture from Vanderbilt Beach Motel on Naples Park Road a half-mile away."

While insurance money flowing into Naples after Donna helped rebuild the city, several public structures had no insurance at all, including the Pier and several Collier County Public Schools.

The Naples City Council voted unanimously to terminate the insurance on the Pier on May 18, 1960. According to minutes from the city council meeting, Councilman Arnold Hayes suggested the council terminate the insurance after Councilman Thad Moss said the city had spent \$21,000 to have the insurance on the Pier and had only collected \$4,000 in damages.

At the time, the Pier was valued at \$64,500 and Moss told his fellow councilman the city's insurance policy would not fully cover the Pier if it were damaged. Moss told the council that he thought the city should increase its coverage or drop it completely.

Lester and Dellora Norris paid for the rebuilding of the Pier, which opened 10 months after their donation in 1961.

Collier County schools suffered \$175,000 in damage as a result of Donna, not including the loss of what was inside the buildings. The school to suffer the worst damage was Naples High School, which had \$75,000 in roof damage. There was also significant damage to Shadowlawn Elementary School. Everglades City High School and the Immokalee schools.

"There were deep puddles everywhere," he said. "Everything smelled salty and fishy. I remember picking up fish, taking them to my dad and having him identify what they were. Dead fish were everywhere."

In Everglades City, which endured the brunt of the storm, half of the city's structures were lost or damaged. Some 200 residents, who did not evacuate in advance of the storm, sought shelter in the county courthouse and had to move to the second floor of the building when the town was submerged under 8 feet of water.

Those buildings left standing after the storm were covered in dead fish, filth and mud. The damage would mean the beginning of the end for Everglades City serving as the county seat.

Donna did more than damage to property. According to an exhibit at the Everglades City Museum, Everglades National Park lost 40 percent of its great white heron population in the storm. Every nest in the park was destroyed over about 1.4 million acres as a result of the hurricane.

The National Hurricane Center retired the name Donna because of the devastation caused by the storm. The name was replaced by Dora in 1964.

CHAPTER FIVE: Black Community



Pictured are the homes of the former McDonald's Quarters in Naples, just north of Central Avenue. It was given the new nickname of Progress Village shortly before it was torn down in the early 1980s.

It gets better. That's what minorities who have lived in Collier County said about race relations here.



LaVerne Franklin, former Collier County NAACP president, inside the sanctuary of Bethel AME Church, a historically black church, in Naples. Franklin, originally from Philadelphia, says God's words have given her strength to persevere through the tough times of segregation and inequality.

Better, but not great.

"We were in a deep hole. We are gradually coming out of it," said Willie Anthony, a River Park resident who has lived in Naples since the 1950s. "I think like most small towns, the expectations are on a minuscule level."

Anthony was almost 10 when his family moved from Alabama to Naples.

"It was a segregated city," he said. "McDonald's Quarters was just being built, but this was still the black neighborhood."

McDonald's Quarters was a white-owned, shantytown slum that was, for a time, the only housing available to blacks, who could not buy land in Naples, even if they had the money. It would be torn down in the 1980s, but not after decades-long complaints from city leaders about code violations that were ignored and allowed to continue.

"I'd never seen a community like McDonald's Quarters. I knew what a debilitating effect that place must have on the children going to school," said Herb Cambridge, who came to Naples to help open its first black high school, as told by Maria Stone in her book "We Also Came - Black People of Collier County." "Number one, the expectations people held for children who came out of situations like that would be terrible."

Anthony said the first time he realized he was rebuffed was when the Dairy Queen was built on U.S. 41. In the book "We Also Came," Anthony said the water fountain was for whites only and blacks had to get their ice cream from a window on the side of the building.

Anthony said when Collier County became more integrated, many blacks moved out of the area, but he chose to stay.

"I don't want to run from my past," he said. "This is my home."

Anthony said his neighborhood is still very much "a city within in a city." It could be illustrated in experiences like those that happened on April 28, 2001, when a white Naples police officer shot and killed black River Park resident Marvin Harris, 21. After the shooting, River Park residents and blacks from Collier and surrounding counties accused the police of mistreatment.

"It's high time the city accepts us as part of them, even with all of our warts," he said. "They're just warts. We're not lepers."

Walter Hamilton, 61, and his wife, Betty, moved to Naples in 1970 to be closer to Betty's mother. They moved into McDonald's Quarters where they lived for four years.

Hamilton admits McDonald's Quarters was "not the nicest of places," but he said the new couple liked living there.

"It was like leaving home and coming home," Hamilton said. "Everyone here was very friendly. It's been a blessing to me and my family."

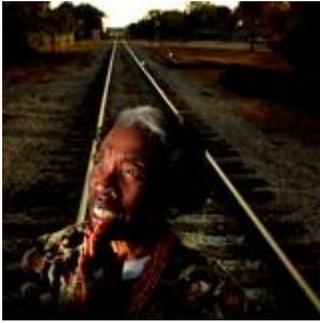
Hamilton and his wife joined the Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church in River Park, where Hamilton became a deacon.

"It was a small church then," he said. "Around 1973, it was renovated to what it is now."

In 1979, Hamilton and his family moved to Golden Gate City, where they still live.

"I used to go out and fish out here in the canals," he said. "It was just woods then. But this is right where I wanted to be. The funny thing is, once we bought the house, I fished less than when we lived in town."

Hamilton, who was a concrete finisher until he retired for health reasons in 2005, said he saw progress as he saw black families leave the River Park area and move into those areas like Pelican Bay, where he had done work.



"At first, blacks didn't have a big area to stretch out," he said. "But that changed."

LaVerne Franklin, past NAACP of Collier County president, said minorities are not given enough recognition in the community.

"It's a disservice," she said. "Our contributions are not shown. We are not recognized."

Franklin became active with the black community after moving to Naples from Philadelphia, where she was a retired Army warrant officer and special education teacher. In addition to serving as NAACP president, she worked with Yes Kids, a Conservancy program at Lake Park Elementary School and was a trustee at the NCH Healthcare System.

"I saw a need. I didn't just want to be a retiree. God gave me ways to contribute," she said.

When Franklin moved to Naples, one of the first things she undertook was bringing the Black Entertainment Television (BET) channel to Naples.

"No one thought it was needed because they thought people would not watch it," she said. "But we had petitions of thousands of people."

Franklin recalls fights with county officials to name County Road 951, now Collier Boulevard, and several schools, including Sabal Palm Elementary School, after Dr. Martin Luther King.

"We had people threatening to burn the school down," Franklin said, shaking her head. "There's a lot of racism here."

Eventually, county officials compromised, naming the school district's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Administrative Center and naming the building in the Collier government complex where the Supervisor of Elections Office is located the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Building.

Anthony said things like not showing President Barack Obama's speech in public schools furthers the impression that blacks are not respected. Collier County public schools did not show the president's education pep talk live last year, but the district did give teachers the opportunity to show it to their students at a later date and gave parents the chance to have their students "opt-out" of the speech.

"It's a travesty," he said. "And it has nothing to do with politics. It sends a bad message to black kids. And it sends a bad message to white kids." Anthony said he believes one of the worst things to happen in Collier County was the closing of the Carver School. He said following integration, many black students had the feeling that the teachers didn't want them to be there.

"A lot of black teachers lost their jobs," he said. "We had to put our formative years in white folks' hands. We had to put our formative years in the hands of people who didn't want it."

Anna Mae Perry, known as Mother Perry, said in "We Also Came" that many black people wanted her to show prejudice in reverse, but she couldn't.

"I never did do it when I was delivering white babies," she said. "I didn't ever think about it. In my heart, I had Jesus, and I couldn't mistreat nobody for what was done back there years ago."

Still, Anderson doesn't absolve minorities.

"We need to be vigilant in getting the support we need to sustain our neighborhood," he said. "Someone has to say this is not going to be. ... It ain't what we say, it's what we do."

Franklin agreed that their voices need to be heard. And she is still fighting, even contacting a company bringing a World War II exhibit to Naples to find out why there was no mention of the Tuskegee Airmen in their program.

"There are still areas that need to be improved," she said.

CHAPTER FIVE: Naples is Built on the Water



Workmen stand amid the pilings for the Boat Haven marina, the location of the current Naples Bay Resort. Naples businessman Phil Morse built the marina in the 1950s "in the dry," meaning water from the Gordon River was kept out of the boat basin to make it easier to dredge. The sale of Boat Haven in 2003 to make way for Naples Bay Resort was a blow to Naples' working waterfront.

Before Collier County's bays and beaches became props to sell a lifestyle of leisure, the waterfront was for working. "It was a hard way to make a living," said Duke Turner, 74, the youngest of six sons of one of Naples' early fishing families. "It was a good way, though."



Commercial fishermen Win Turner, tossing snook, and Mickey Brown, lower right, unload snook at Combs Fish Co. docks on Naples Bay in 1949. Brown would tear a hole in his hat each time he would haul in a catch of 10,000 pounds or more. Commercial fishing for snook was outlawed in 1957 as a conservation measure. In the 1940s, many of Naples' residents made a living off the water. As the town grew, the commercial fishing industry shrunk. The number of saltwater commercial fishing licenses issued in Collier County peaked at 690 in 1989 and fell to 127 in 2011, state figures show.

By the 1960s, Naples waterfronts were undergoing big changes. Developers were dredging canals and filling wetlands to carve out new communities from North Naples to Marco Island. Condominiums were rising along the beach, and construction sites ringed Naples Bay.

The fortunes of the people who have lived in Collier County always have been intertwined with the water.

Calusa Indians used dugout canoes to travel among the first waterfront communities on huge shell mounds. Galleons brought Spanish explorers to Southwest Florida's shores. The first settlers are memorialized in places like Barfield Bay, Roberts Bay and Gordon Pass.

Until the 1920s, the only way to get to Collier County was by water. A mail boat between Fort Myers and the Naples Pier was a fledgling Naples' main connection to the outside world. Ships carried goods, people and supplies to outposts at Everglades City and Marco Island.

Naples was built, literally and figuratively, on the water.

"That's what Naples is about, the beach and the bay side and the waterfront," Turner said. "If you didn't have that, you wouldn't have anything but another flat piece of land."

Naples' roots in its working waterfronts are often overlooked in favor of a history that remembers Naples as a landing spot for well-to-do snowbirds. Rather than throw cocktail parties, though, Naples' first families cast nets. Naples was a fishing village before it was a tourist town.

"It was us, the mosquitoes and the sand gnats," said Turner, whose father, Pappy, brought his family — including Duke's brother, mayor-to-be Archie Turner — to Naples in 1941.

About that time, Collier County's first commercial fishing grounds, clam beds south of Marco Island, were about to run out. The Burnham and Doxsee clam canneries on Marco were the region's biggest industries in the early 20th century.

In the 1940s, Naples Bay was home port to a community of commercial fishers who unloaded piles of catches at a half-dozen fish houses perched on stilts along the upper reaches of the bay.

They fished from boats they built by hand and sold among themselves. They had names like the "Big Dipper," "Victory Morn," and "Daily Double."

Boat building in Naples reached its zenith when Capt. Johnny Morgan launched a line of Morgan boats, which became popular for their shallow drafts and center-mounted engines that made it easier to pull nets out of the water from the back of the boat.



Port Royal, in the foreground, circa 1950, and a recently completed Royal Harbor, in the background, transformed Naples Bay as they replaced ecologically important mangroves and dug up seagrass beds that supported the bay's marine life. In a 1955 flyer, Port Royal developer Glen Sample predicted lots in the upscale neighborhood would increase dramatically in value: "However we offer Port Royal property as a place to live, not to make money."

In 1950, the Collier County News reported that hundreds of curious townsfolk gathered at Combs Fish Co., near the Gordon River bridge, to watch six shrimp trawlers unload more than 29,000 pounds of shrimp that had been caught at a newly discovered find of jumbo shrimp some 35 miles offshore of Naples. Most of the fleet moved on a few weeks later, citing the shallowness of Gordon Pass, the newspaper reported. Shrimp boats remained on Naples Bay, catching pink shrimp in the Dry Tortugas, until the 1980s.

Boats hauled more than fish. The tugboat "Wilbur S" — named for prolific boat builder Wilbur Storter — was built for the Turners to pull barges loaded with oyster shells from a shell mound near Marco Island to Naples to be used as a base for the growing town's new roads. The job took 16 years.

The 1960s land boom went right to the water's edge.

Miles "Rocky" Scofield moved to Naples permanently in 1959 when his father brought his Marathon Dredging Co. to town to build the dry land that would eventually become Royal Harbor, the Moorings and Park Shore.

One of the favorite fishing spots of the young Scofield and his friends was at the end of Bow Line Drive where snook would pool in the currents in the channel created by his father's dredgers. At night, the feeding snook slapping at the surface sounded like firecrackers.

"The fish just poured in," he said.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, Naples Bay's shoreline was taking more shape with Boat Haven Marina, the Cove Inn, the Naples Yacht Club, Bay Terrace condominium — controversial at the time for its eight-story height. Commercial sites north of the Gordon River bridge still were sandy lots.



The jetties at Doctor's Pass in Naples were installed in the early 1960s, a project that exemplified the push to change Naples waterfront from mangroves to subdivisions. Dredges would dig canals and use the fill to create dry land behind seawalls. Aqualane Shores was Naples' first dredge-and-fill community in the 1940s. Port Royal would follow and the trend continued north along the coast. The Moorings, Park Shore, Vanderbilt Beach, Naples Cay emerged from the estuary.

The 1960s land boom transformed the Naples waterfront, but the commercial fishing industry's future was headed toward bust.

Regulations — first closed areas in Everglades National Park and later fishing gear restrictions — dealt a blow to the heart of Collier County's commercial fishing industry in Everglades City.

Mullet was Collier's marine cash crop until voters approved a constitutional amendment in 1994 that restricted net sizes. Catching mullet for a living became a losing proposition. Catches of mullet bottomed out in 2010 at 38,000 pounds compared to a peak of almost 3 million pounds in 1989, according to state figures.

Many fishers switched from nets to crab traps.

The start of the stone crab season, which runs from October to May, is cause for celebration in Everglades City and beyond. The stone crab fleet receives a ceremonial blessing, and local restaurants and seafood markets brace for a crab claw lovers' frenzy.

Collier County's stone crab fishery, the largest in the state, was worth \$5.5 million in dockside value in 2011, the bulk of the \$6.3 million dockside value of the county's entire commercial catch.

Still, the commercial fishing industry is not what it once was. Since Florida started keeping track in 1986, the number of commercial fishing trip landings in Collier County has gone from a peak of 12,500 in 1988 to 4,172 in 2011.

All but one of Naples Bay's fish houses are gone. Only Combs Fish Co., at Kelly's Fish House restaurant, remains open. Parker Fish Co. was sold to Outboard Marine Corp. for a testing facility in 1957 and then became a condominium called Old Naples Seaport.

Built in 1944, Turner Marine's boat yard and later a dry dock storage and fish market, became Naples Boat Club.

Boat Haven marina became Naples Bay Resort. Naples' only oyster shucking plant has been overtaken by tourists at Tin City.

As the Naples Bay waterfront Duke Turner knew seemed to disappear before his eyes, he lamented that Naples did not do more to preserve it.

"One day they'll wonder why there's all that shell under those roads," Turner said.

CHAPTER FIVE: Changes in Education



Sea Gate Elementary English Language Learner teacher Maria Cabrera explores a North American map with her students, including six-year-old Kelly Nguyen, center, on Thursday, Oct. 22, 2009, in Naples. Cabrera is one of three educators across the state who won Gov. Charlie Crist's annual Excellence in Education Award contest. The award, which is given during Hispanic Heritage Month, is open to all Hispanic, full-time educators at an elementary, middle or high school in Florida. One winner is selected for elementary, middle and high school.

"I had to decide what the students were going to read and was told to go to the book room to get some books," he said. "But the book room was empty because all of the veterans took all of the books and the newbies were left with nothing."

When Gary Brown began teaching at Naples High School in 1970, he discovered he had no books. Brown also had no curriculum.

"There was no scope and sequence, no book, no materials," he said. "I had no idea what level my students were. None of that existed."

Much has changed in the intervening years said Brown, who is currently a district administrator with the Collier County School District.

"It is better now. All of the materials, the curriculum, the data teachers have available to them, it's better," he said. "There is a loss of the individuality and the freedom to teach, but the community was different then. As the communities changed, so did the schools."

The changes began when Collier County Schools were desegregated in 1967, but Brown said the effects were still being felt when he was teaching in the 1970s.

"The Naples schools would get the new books and the new furniture, and all of the old books and furniture would be sent to Immokalee," he said. "But, if you look at our schools today, it has all been equalized. It is not the way it was back then."

Claudette Williams, an Immokalee resident, went to the Bethune School until 10th grade, when she was sent to integrated Immokalee High School.

"I didn't like going to the white school," she said. "Everything you see in the movies is what happened ... the 'n' word, we were picked on, names called."

Williams later taught at Immokalee High School for more than 20 years.

As a student, though, she said she rarely earned higher than a C in any class at Immokalee, and not because she wasn't smart.

"I would be making As or Bs on tests and assignments and be getting Cs and Ds on my report card," Williams said. Many black students dropped out. "They couldn't take it," she said.

Williams said she "zoned out" her last two years of high school. "I went to school, did what I had to do and came home," she said.

She didn't make any more friends. She said all the black students from Bethune would sit together in the cafeteria. They would only talk to each other.



Tommie Barfield Elementary art teacher Kathy Anderson explains how to draw a cat using basic shapes to first-grade student Paige Banaszak, 6, during class on Nov. 22. Anderson recently received certified status by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

"Some things haven't changed all that much," she said.

Naples resident Ray Carroll and his sister, Cindy Carroll, said they don't really remember the actual desegregation experience. Ray was in middle school and Cindy in elementary school when the change occurred.

"It wasn't a big deal to me," said Cindy Carroll. "What I remember is the teachers' strike. (School) was a stable anchor in my life and suddenly it was disrupted. And it was really politicized."

In 1968, teachers in Collier and Lee counties, and around Florida, went on strike in February and March. The strike occurred at a time when the underfunding of the state's educational system collided with sharply rising attendance and low pay and low benefits for teachers.

The strike, which is considered to be the first statewide teachers strike in U.S. history, went on for a few days in some districts to three months in others. It came after the Democrat-controlled Florida Legislature approved a higher sales tax to provide for more school funding, but Republican Gov. Claude R. Kirk vetoed the budget in 1967. Republican legislators upheld the veto.



Gary Brown presided over the Naples High School graduation ceremony in 2004 when he was principal of the school, a position he held for more than a decade. Brown began teaching at Naples High School in 1970 and has been an employee of the district for more than 40 years, giving him a unique perspective on the changes that have occurred in Collier County schools. Before current school superintendent Kamela Patton was hired, the

school board appointed Gary Brown to be interim superintendent in 2011 after the board voted unanimously to terminate then-superintendent Dennis Thompson's contract without cause.

Spot strikes concerned Kirk enough to call a special session and, in a bipartisan effort, legislators raised taxes to expand state funding for school building and to raise teacher salaries. Kirk signed the legislation, but most teachers felt the increase was not enough.

At the height of the strike, 25,712 educators — about 40 percent of the state's teachers — walked out. But Kirk and the legislators refused to appropriate more money or raise taxes further and the public support for the teachers waned.

The 1970s brought new challenges for schools. Overcrowding at Naples High School led to a morning and an afternoon session for students.

"It was like a factory. The buses that brought the kids in the afternoon would take the kids in the morning home. They only passed one another getting off the bus," said Brown. "It was crazy. We had 40 portable classrooms. We had 2,500 to 3,000 students from Marco Island to Bonita Shores."

Brown said the overuse of the building wore it out.

"We had to padlock the outside doors because they would not latch," he said. "We didn't have all the capital dollars we do now."

To get Lely High School open in January 1975, the county had to take out the only school bond it issued in its history.

"The bond was for \$7 million and it built Lely (High School), Poinciana, Naples Park, Golden Gate (elementary schools) and Pine Ridge Middle School. All of those schools," he said. "Now, a new high school would cost you \$50 million."

But it wasn't just the high schools that were crowded.

"I split my week. I was at Avalon Elementary School (in East Naples) for three days and I was at Tommie Barfield (on Marco Island). It was very heavy duty," said Kathy Anderson, a Tommie Barfield Elementary School art teacher who now teaches six, 50-minute classes a day.

In fact, Anderson would split her time between two schools until the late 1980s, when Collier County introduced full-time kindergarten.

Anderson wistfully remembers times when teachers would collaborate more with one another.

Now, "everyone stays in their classroom and works through lunch," she said.

"The teachers' lounge — no one uses it anymore."

Much of this, teachers said, could be attributed to the rise of standardized testing.

Brown said the state's first accountability test came in 1976. Before that, students had to take a functional literacy test and pass it to graduate.

The state began administering the current exam, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), to students in 1988 as part of an overall plan to increase student achievement by implementing higher standards.

"Some say that it has gone too much the other way and we need to find a happy medium," Brown said. "But we needed accountability and there wasn't any. We had a 12th-grade exam, but it didn't mean anything."

Brown recalls that Naples didn't have a program for English Language Learners, despite the fact that it was needed in the county.

Today, 14 percent of Collier County students are English Language Learners.

Immokalee did have a program, although it is very different from today.

Gracila Somoza, who began teaching at Lake Trafford Elementary School in 1974, had one of the bilingual classrooms, where students were taught in English and Spanish.

"We had two teachers in the classroom," she said. "One would teach English and one would teach Spanish."

Somoza would move from Immokalee four years later to Lorenzo Walker Institute of Technology, where she would teach English to adult students. Today, she is the department chair for Academic Student Services at LWIT, and she teaches English literacy career and technical education and academic English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

"It was different back then. There was less stress," she said.

"There was more of a collaborative environment. We were one big family. Every teacher pitched in. But we were a much smaller school."

Somoza said technology has drastically changed education in Collier County.

"You had to retool how you taught," she said. "It also gave our students the opportunity to be exposed to it."

Anderson said schools have also seen a dramatic family dynamic shift since she started teaching.

"We had poor families, but you didn't see the number of homeless students or families living three families to a house that you see today," she said.

Somoza said she is proud when she sees her students with good jobs, nice homes. Students who are married, who have become teachers.

"I am proud of this school system," she said. "I am proud of my students."

CHAPTER FIVE: Sunniland Oil



Sunniland Oil Field was originally owned by Barron Collier and then leased to Humble Oil. The mineral rights are held in perpetuity to the Collier Family, who donated the land to Florida Rock.

Barron Gift Collier believed. He believed oil could be found in Collier County, even after his son told him to stop looking. Even when drilling had been going on in the county for a decade without yielding positive results, he continued to be sure.

It was not until 1943 — five years after his death — that Collier would be proved right and the Humble Oil Corp., a predecessor to the Exxon-Mobil Corp., brought in the first producing oil well in Florida at Sunniland, which is about 10 miles south of Immokalee.

Today, the Sunniland fields are still producing oil, and more than 118 million barrels of oil have been produced from the Sunniland Oil Trend, which includes Raccoon Point and Bear Island, according to the Collier Resources Co. website. BreitBurn Florida LLC currently leases the land, and in the last 18 months, has drilled eight new wells in the area. The company pulls between 2,000 and 2,500 barrels of oil a day from the fields, according to Tom Jones, senior vice president for Collier Resource.

After the discovery of oil in the 1940s, the Humble Oil Co. leased the 262,000 acres from the Collier Corp., which is a joint venture between the Barron Collier Co. and Collier Enterprises, for its oil field. The company also collected a reward of \$50,000 from the state for its discovery, according to an August 1985 edition of the *Timepiece*, which was a publication of the Collier County Historical Society.

Humble Oil matched the reward and donated \$100,000 to Florida State University and the University of Florida, according to the *Timepiece*.

The Sunniland oil wells were not gushers. According to a Fort Myers News-Press article from Nov. 13, 1962: "Oil men say there is a lot of salt water in the field which has to be separated from the oil cutting down on profits from production. The oil is transported by trucks from here to Port Everglades for shipment to refineries."

But diluted oil did not stop people from looking for more oil possibilities, even though it cost \$400,000 to drill a single well. Still, after Sunniland no new oil fields would be discovered for 12 years. The 40-Mile Bend field, southeast of Sunniland, was discovered by the Commonwealth Oil Co. in 1955, but the reserves of 32,888 barrels were quickly depleted and Sunniland again produced alone.

Sunniland and its 11 wells would be the state's top producer of oil until 1964, when the Sun Oil Co. discovered its Felda field. Then, in 1966, Sun Oil discovered West Felda, and Lake Trafford was discovered in 1969, followed by Bear Island, Seminole and the Lehigh Park fields.

Oil production during this time went from 1,200 barrels per day in 1964 to 13,000 barrels of oil in 1975, according to an article titled "Recent Developments in Sunniland Exploration of South Florida, which is in the Collier County Museum's possession.

"Many Floridians even today tend to think of energy production as alien to their way of life or been a threat to the state's environment and tourist economy," said William J. Johnson, in his remarks at the dedication of Oil Well Park on May 19, 1972.

"Yet nearly 80 percent of Florida's electrical energy is produced by generating stations using oil or gas. In simplest terms, eight out of every 10 air-conditioned rooms in a Florida hotel is tourist-tolerable because of oil or gas."

Oil also was important in that it was a revenue generator for the county. According to the July 4, 1976, edition of the Naples Daily News, a portion of the severance taxes paid to the state are returned to the county. In 1976, the county's portion of those taxes was expected to be \$73,000.

But some argue that it also came with an environmental price.

The Colliers sought to swap some percentage of their mineral rights, which included Big Cypress and the Florida Panther refuge, since 1994. In a 1999 Miami Herald article, David Pearson, a Miami-based public relations representative for the families, said the rights were worth \$400 million to \$700 million, although the federal government put the value at between \$200 million and \$400 million. In 1999, the Colliers attempted to swap those rights for the right to develop Homestead Air Reserve Base.

By the early 2000s, Collier Resources, an oil and gas company, sought to use thousands of buried explosives to search for more oil in the preserve. Environmental advocates worried that roads and pads for drilling would interrupt water flow and serve as barriers to wide-ranging animals such as the Florida panther.

Still, Collier Resources boasts on its website a 30-year safety record, as concluded by state commissions — including the Big Cypress Swamp Advisory Committee.

In 2002, then-U.S. Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton said the Bush administration had been in touch with the Colliers about acquiring the family's mineral rights below the Big Cypress National Preserve, which would end six decades of oil drilling in the Southwest Florida forest. At the time, the biggest issue was how much the minerals were worth and whether the Interior Department could afford them.

In May 2002, then-President George W. Bush approved the purchase of the drilling and mining leases for \$120 million, pending congressional approval and funding. But that approval never came, and the Colliers still own the mineral rights to this day.

Jones said some 800,000 acres of mineral rights are owned by Collier Resources in Southwest Florida. But the Colliers are not just sitting on the rights. Since the congressional denial of the money to purchase the rights and the expiration of the Bush agreement, Collier Resources has established a partnership with a company from Tyler, Texas, and is exploring the possibility of drilling for more oil in the area.

Currently, a three-dimensional analysis of the Collier Resources' seismic lines, which were laid out in the 1970s and 1980s, is being undertaken. The survey will show whether geological formations or hills equivalent to those producing oil are present and, if present, the shape, orientation and location of those formations, which indicate the optimal location for a new well.

Once that is complete, Jones said, a determination will be made if the structure is available to undertake more drilling.

CHAPTER FIVE: Game Changers People whose influence made an impact on the area:

Herb Cambridge

The undisputed leader of Naples' black community during the turbulent 1960s and beyond. Cambridge came to Naples in 1959 as its first black teacher to help open the first high school for blacks. He became the county's director of teacher education. Cambridge led a decade-long fight to eliminate McDonald's Quarters, a slum area in central Naples.

Deaconess Harriet M. Bedell

Moved the Glades Cross Mission to Everglades City in 1932. Worked tirelessly with the Seminoles until Hurricane Donna destroyed the mission in 1960.

James Billie

Seminole chairman, elected in 1979, who took his people from poverty in the 1950s to prosperity in the 1990s.

Addison Brown

Founder of the Voters League, powerful influence in local politics during 1970s and 1980s.

David C. "Doc" Brown

Immokalee farmer and politician who was an influential voice on the County Commission during three decades. Immokalee Road, which he was instrumental in building in the 1950s, bore his name for a short time in the early 1980s.

Fred K.

Lowdermilk

Naples city manager from 1949-1961. His job also entailed being town clerk, treasurer, tax collector and tax assessor. Planted many trees in Naples. Beachfront park is named in his honor.

Ray Lutgert

Developed Park Shore and other areas in North Naples, which contributed to the surge of growth in the area in the early 1970s.

J.C. McDonald

One-time owner of McDonald's Quarters, slums reserved for Naples' black population.

Leland L. "Doc" Loach

Developer of Isles of Capri, starting in 1955. He built Isles of Capri Road, now the main route to Marco Island, and gave it to the state.

Chapter Six: 1980 - 1995

Collier County fired its starting gun in the 1980s. The economic malaise of the 1970s was wearing off. An idled growth machine was cranking up. Modern-day growth management came to Collier County, its effects — some would say not all good — can be seen still today. The changes weren't just on paper. Interstate 75 and a big new airport in Fort Myers connected Southwest Florida to the rest of the state and the rest of the nation like it had never been before. Trumpet fanfares welcomed

CHAPTER SIX: Construction



Four

mares and one stallion, known as the Lely Freedom Horses, sculptures by artist Veryl Goodnight that each weigh about 1 ton, were lowered into place in 1992 during the height of the building boom in Southwest Florida, marking the entrance to Lely Resort Golf & Country Club on U.S. 41 East in East Naples.

The showdown had been brewing for months before the date was finally set for a Wednesday night in March.



In 1993, when this picture was taken, it seemed like everywhere you turned, homes and commercial properties were springing up in Southwest Florida.

More than a thousand construction workers, real estate agents, developers and their lawyers converged on the auditorium at Lely High School and spilled into the hallway. On stage, Collier County commissioners sat ready to vote on new laws meant to rein in growth. The show of force was meant to stave off tighter restrictions.

"There was a lot of testosterone bouncing around that place," said Mike Carr Sr., a Naples real estate broker who was in the audience that night. "They were excited."

It was 1990, and Collier County was growing up. The 1980s had started with the county's population at 86,000. By 1982, it had passed the 100,000 mark on its way to 197,000 by 1995.

A realization was dawning though: Road construction had not kept up. The low-key town everybody had come to Naples to enjoy had started to experience big-city traffic. The boom became a backlash as Collier County wrestled with its self-image.

County officials had moved a final vote on the new growth laws from the County Commission chambers to the high school auditorium. They expected a big crowd. They got a circus.

A caravan of hundreds of construction vehicles circled the county government center, blowing their horns, before heading to the hearing, tying up rush-hour traffic. Cement mixers and well drilling rigs stood watch in the parking lot. Inside, drywall hangars walked up and down the aisles on their stilts. Workers carried signs stenciled with "No Moratorium." The crowd booed when a slow-growth proponent stepped to one of the microphones to make his pitch.

The workers won a backhanded victory: As the night grew late, commissioners adopted compromise versions of the laws the building industry favored, but the path to Collier County's future had turned a corner.

"Don't East Coast the West Coast" and "Make Growth Pay for Growth" became the bumper sticker mantras for the era, the root of present-day complaints that Collier County is too anti-business.

Starting in 1985, the county adopted impact fee after impact fee — charges on new construction to pay for roads, parks, libraries, a jail and emergency medical services. A construction industry rally on the courthouse steps was not enough to turn the tide. Builders longed for the days when the permit counter was a more friendly place.

"You just went in and said, 'I'm going to build, I need a building permit,' and away you'd go," Naples Lumber and Supply chief operating officer Dave Weston said.



The Ritz-Carlton, Naples under construction in 1985

One project in particular became the epitome of the fight over growth. Sabal Bay, presented to county commissioners in 1986, was planned for 4,000 homes, golf courses, convention center hotels, shopping centers and an 800-slip marina on Naples Bay in East Naples.

"They voted to approve it in sort of a blinding flash," said Sabal Bay marina foe Harry Timmins, a veteran of the fight that would consume Naples politics.

That vote was only the start. Collier Development Corp. still needed city approval to dredge a channel through the mangroves to the marina. In 1989, this time at the Naples High School auditorium, the Naples City Council heard hours of testimony about the plan in front of an overflowing audience. Onlookers stood on tiptoe to get a glimpse inside, Timmins said.

When the City Council voted unanimously to reject the project, Timmins looked four seats down at Collier Development Corp. CEO Miles Collier. "I thought he was going to pass out," Timmins said.

The legal fight over that permit would last for seven years with the city and a group called Citizens to Preserve Naples Bay joining forces against the Collier company. In 1996, the Florida Supreme Court refused to hear the Collier company's appeal of the permit rejection.

The company eventually got approval for a scaled-back version of a marina and built Hamilton Harbor, but the rest of Sabal Bay remains unbuilt.

While the two sides wrangled over Sabal Bay, a 25-member citizens committee formed by Collier County was hashing out the details of the 1989 growth plan that would shape Collier County's urban landscape for decades to come.

The committee met for two years in an intensive public process that set the county's urban boundary, lowered densities in coastal high-hazard areas, created commercial activity centers at major intersections and added incentives in the activity centers for affordable housing. The plan had consequences, not all of them good, said Charles Gauthier, the county's long-range planning chief when the plan was written.

Gauthier said the affordable housing incentives have not paid off, leading to longer commutes for workers. The growth plan did not do enough to encourage a more interconnected road network, leading to the plethora of gated communities along the county's major roadways, he said.

"These things you can see on the ground now," Gauthier said.

Collier County is almost unrecognizable compared to 1978, when Carr, the real estate broker, came to town and started a plumbing supply business. Traffic lights numbered in the single digits. Interstate 75 had yet to come through Collier. The county's first water plant was still seven years off.

Carr used a Country Squires station wagon to deliver plastic pipe to customers. When 1,000 feet of pipe spilled into the intersection of Goodlette-Frank Road and Golden Gate Parkway one day, there wasn't enough traffic on the road for the mess to cause any tie-ups. Only a cop passing through noticed, Carr said.

When Marilyn Evanish began selling real estate in Pelican Bay in the 1980s, the community was akin to an outpost in a mangrove swamp.

"My friends in the real estate business in Naples said, 'Why in the world are you going way out there?'" said Evanish, an early president of the Naples Area Board of Realtors.

As the 1980s began, the economic malaise of the late 1970s had yet to lift. By the mid-80s, Southwest Florida was starting to blossom.

The opening of what was then called Southwest Florida Regional Airport in Fort Myers connected the region to the rest of the nation in a new way. The first flight, an Eastern Airlines flight to New York City with a stop in Atlanta, took off on a Saturday morning in May 1983.

By 1993, the airport was renamed Southwest Florida International Airport to reflect the region's emergence as an international destination with its largest foreign markets in Canada and Germany.

Another important connection was established when Alligator Alley was widened to four lanes, easing travel between Southwest Florida and Florida's east coast. The \$300 million project opened in 1992. In the year before the opening, 17 people were killed on the old two-lane highway.

Collier County's tourism industry got a game changer in 1985, when a line of white-uniformed valets greeted the first guests to the Ritz-Carlton beach resort. The Registry Resort — now called the Waldorf Astoria Naples — opened months later. The hotels drew a new brand of tourist and convention-goers, many of whom fell in love with Naples and helped spur the region's burgeoning real estate industry, said Pedro Prado, one of the Registry's first managers.

"It created a whole new economy," Prado said. One of his biggest challenges was finding workers, he said, eventually having to train workers from Immokalee to fill hundreds of jobs.

In 1989, Collier County got another uptown boost when the Naples Philharmonic Center for the Arts opened in Pelican Bay, capping a remarkable grass-roots fundraising campaign.

Guests at the black-tie gala walked into the \$20 million center in wonderment as trumpeters heralded the center's opening.

As Collier County built its way into the 1990s, higher education and health care also were making strides toward the future.

In May 1991, Gov. Lawton Chiles signed legislation creating a new university in Southwest Florida; 600 people celebrated the groundbreaking for Florida Gulf Coast University in Estero in 1995.

Edison State College opened its Collier campus in March 1992. International College, the predecessor to Hodges University, opened in 1990, the same year NCH Healthcare System opened its North Collier Hospital. NCH opened its Shick Heart Center in downtown Naples in 1996, which meant patients no longer had to leave Collier County to get open heart surgery.

On the other side of town, Naples' coming of age meant the end of an era for one beloved county tradition. Growth overtook the "Tater Patch," an old sweet potato field off Radio Road where swamp buggy enthusiasts had met since 1949 to race their creations. Some 10,000 fans turned out for the final races at the old site in 1985.

The site became an office park, and the races moved to their present-day home at the Florida Sports Park. At the time, organizers thought they were moving far from the path of development. Today, the sports park is surrounded by new subdivisions along one of the county's major travel corridors.

The county's growth machine was about to get supercharged. _____

CHAPTER SIX: Environment



Scenes from the 2.25-mile boardwalk trail at Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, a 14,000 acre preserve located east of Naples. The sanctuary is home to the largest remaining stand of old growth bald cypress forest in North America.

They met every month in a room at a community bank in North Naples to plot their strategy. It was the early 1990s, and the small group of Collier County citizens worried a line was about to be crossed.



Since moving to Naples in the 1950s, Ted Below, shown here in 1994, has witnessed the growth of the environmental movement and the decline of coastal waterbird populations he has tracked since 1972. Below's mother founded the Collier County Audubon Society, and he helped guide the Big Cypress Nature Center before the Conservancy of Southwest Florida took it over. Below later worked for the National Audubon Society as a warden at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Feeling the pressure building for growth, the group worried that growth's eastward march would wipe out wetlands and trample habitat for endangered species such as the iconic Florida panther. They set about to save what they coined the "western Everglades." It would prove to be a fight.

The tension between progress and preservation dates back a century in Collier County. Vast expanses of the county's wild, open spaces have been preserved. Ambitious plans to settle the region have left scars on the landscape and have prompted ambitious plans for restoration.

Early visitors marveled at Naples' natural beauty and abundant wildlife. Others saw profit. Orchid thieves raided the swamps. Plume hunters shot up heron and egret rookeries in the Ten Thousand Islands and at Corkscrew Swamp at the turn of the century. Florida outlawed the practice in 1901.

The construction of the Tamiami Trail across the Everglades represented progress for its builders, but the road cut off natural water flows and starved the sawgrass marshes south of it. A century later, raising a stretch of the road's eastern end is a top priority for Everglades advocates.

In the 1940s, logging decimated old growth cypress forests in the Fakahatchee Strand. When the Lee-Tidewater Cypress Co. moved to Corkscrew Swamp, a campaign to save it swung into high gear. By 1954, led by the National Audubon Society, supporters of the cause raised enough money to buy the first 5,000 acres of what would become Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

Naples did not have a formal local group dedicated to environmental preservation when Ted Below came to town in 1955. Below's mother, Lilla, an avid birder, started Naples' first environmental group, the Collier County Audubon Society in 1961.

"We weren't trying to save the world or anything," Below said. "She just liked birds."

Below, a plumber who later was a warden at Corkscrew and Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, joined the Naples Jaycees and found himself at the helm of one of Naples' first preservation projects. Naples landowner and businessman Julius Fleischmann wanted to start a youth nature center and donated his 15-room beachfront home for the venture. Workers cut it into five pieces, loaded them onto trailers and towed them to Fleischmann land north of the present-day Naples Zoo. Below was put in charge of putting the home back together.

The Collier County Conservancy would eventually take over the Big Cypress Nature Center's mission, but the seminal fight that led to the Conservancy's founding was still years away.



Volunteers and visitors seize the opportunity to photograph a little blue heron at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Volunteers play a vital role in the sanctuary's mission of preservation, conservation education and research. Annually more than 140 volunteers contribute more than 15,000 hours of their time there.

After Hurricane Donna tore apart Naples when it blew ashore in 1960, a land boom paved the way for two developments that got the attention of conservation-minded citizens in sleepy Naples. The Deltona Corp. began turning the largest of the Ten Thousand Islands's barrier islands into Marco Island, and Gulf American Land Corp. started carving up 114,000 acres of pine and cypress forests in central Collier County for Golden Gate Estates. Growth, it seemed, was unstoppable.

Then, one spring day in 1964, philanthropist and oil executive Lester Norris convened a meeting of the town's civic leaders on the front porch of his Keewaydin Island cottage. He needed a strategy and he needed it fast.

Collier County commissioners were about to set its road-building priorities and on the list was a developer-backed plan to push a road through the mangrove-lined estuaries to connect Naples and Marco Island. Opponents called it "The Road to Nowhere," and stopping it became a community cause.

When Naples attorney George Vega stood up to speak against the road at a special meeting of commissioners, he walked to the front of the room with a roll of taped-together petitions in hand. He attached one end of the roll to the dais and unfurled the roll as he walked back to the speaker's podium.

"I said, 'Here's who's against this. Where are the people in favor of it?'" Vega said, remembering the room was nearly empty. Commissioners dropped the road plan, but its foes were just getting started.



A one-month-old great horned owl peers out from his cage at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida after being fed on Wednesday, March 19, 2008. The fledgling, from a nest in the Lake San Marino RV Park, was beginning to learn to fly when he fell from his nest and was rescued by the Conservancy.

The victory led to the creation of the Collier County Conservancy, now known as the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, in 1965. Its first mission became the push to preserve what today is called Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Slowly but surely, the group raised enough money to create the sanctuary — piece by piece — where the road would have gone.

The effort spawned a big public relations war. "How to Eat Your (fish) Cake — and Have it Too: Save Rookery Bay," the headline on one pro-preservation ad read. Opponents fought back: "Save Rookery Bay Scare" and "How Much Conservancy?" read their ads' headlines. Naples' reputation as a relaxed place for rich people to spend their time got a new twist when Sinclair Oil took out ads in national magazines congratulating the Conservancy: "The town that put up the fight of its life...for its wildlife," the headline read.

Deltona's plans for Marco Island were never completed. In 1976, the U.S Army Corps of Engineers rejected permits for Deltona to destroy 3,200 acres of wetlands for their project's final two phases. The company took the fight for the permits all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court but lost in 1982 when the court refused to hear its petition. Environmental groups later orchestrated a land swap with Deltona that preserved another 13,000 acres of wetlands around Marco.

In the swamps east of Naples, Gulf American's plans for "The World's Largest Subdivision" were going full steam ahead in the 1960s.



Conservancy of Southwest Florida intern Emily Barks measures the shell of a female Loggerhead turtle while she is laying eggs last week on Keewaydin Island. When the turtle is laying eggs she goes into a trance and is not bothered by lights or by people. Barks and other intern Bonnie Fairbanks call this turtle "Scratchy" because she looks like someone scratched barnacles off of her shell.

Huge tree crushers and dredges were carving 183 miles of canals and 880 miles of roads out of the landscape so high-pressure salesmen could market lots as pieces of paradise. The lots were sold to investors around the world, most of them never setting foot on their inaccessible patch of swamp.

Glossy brochures and full-color advertisements in major U.S. newspapers offered to fly potential buyers to Naples for free on the company's airplanes for a view of Golden Gate Estates from the air.

In 1967, complaints about the company's tactics landed it in front of the state's land sales board, where officials admitted to switching lots on buyers, deceiving investors about the land's value and replatting the subdivision without state approvals. The company was fined \$5,000 and ordered to suspend operations for 30 days and refund purchasers.

Under a pile of investigations and bad publicity, the company sold to General Acceptance Corp., which went bankrupt in 1969, leaving a scarred landscape and a growth management disaster. Collier County created a study committee in 1975 to figure out how to fix the problem but solutions were fleeting.



Conservancy intern Sarah Funck, left, holds a brown pelican still as Ilma Dancourt opens the bird's mouth so Wildlife Rehabilitation Specialist Jonee Miller can intubate it in preparation for surgery to repair a ripped pouch at the wildlife hospital.

Finally, in 1985, Florida added the southern half of Golden Gate Estates, south of Interstate 75, to its list of land preservation projects. The daunting job of tracking down the far-flung owners of 17,000 lots was made more difficult by class-action lawsuits that claimed the buyout was cheating property owners. State land buyers would travel monthly to Naples from Tallahassee to attend tax deed sales and sift through county records to find owners. The pace of the buyout was excruciatingly slow.

In 1991, the Conservancy set up a war room for the buyout and enlisted interns and volunteers to collect title information, type it into proposed sales contracts and mail them off. East Naples resident Lillian Sciacchitano, a volunteer for the Conservancy, did the typing.

"It was a tedious kind of thing to do," she said. "We had to be very, very careful. We didn't want mistakes." The buyout still languished.



Dave Graff, an education specialist at the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, searches for marine life with three other employees at Tigertail Beach on Marco Island on Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2007. The animals found on the search will be used in one of the two touch tanks at the Environmental Learning Center that is opening to the public on Saturday. The National Estuaries Day celebration event will also include boat tours, kayaking, live animals, lab tours, live music, face painting and various presentations at the Environmental Learning Center at the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Admission to the event is free. Employees including Jill Schmid, Christina Panko and Beverly Anderson also searched for marine life at Tigertail Beach and were able to find fiddler crabs, a moon snail, spider crab, crown conch and a pear whelk that will be placed in one of the two touch tanks.

The buyout got a big boost in 1998. With \$25 million in federal money poised to go toward the buyout, property owners settled their lawsuits in return for new appraisals, and the state agreed to drop their usual land-buying rules and pay full value instead. The buyout eventually cost \$250 million and was completed in 2009.

With the land in hand, a \$375 million restoration project broke ground in 2010 in what now is called Picayune Strand State Forest. The project, set for completion in 2017, is tearing out roads, plugging canals and building three massive pump stations to try to mimic the way water used to flow across the land and into the Ten Thousand Islands.

Collier County still is wrestling with the growth management implications of people moving to the sprawling northern half of Golden Gate Estates, but environmentalists had new fights on their hands by the 1990s.

The meetings of the cadre of environmentalists at the bank community room led to the opening of a Florida Wildlife Federation office in Naples in 1994. Often partnering with the Collier County Audubon Society, the office would soon ruffle feathers with a new brand of environmentalism.

"It was a very hostile time back then," said Nancy Payton, who helped open the office and remains the Federation's field representative in Southwest Florida.

With a focus on growth management, the groups fought landowners over the urban boundary line and took legal action along with state growth regulators over whether the county's growth plan complied with state law. Collier County lost that fight. Then-Gov. Jeb Bush and the Cabinet cracked down in 1999, ordering a rural building moratorium until the county came up with a new plan.



A rare photograph shows a Florida panther and her two kittens, taken from an airplane above Picayune Strand near Naples, capturing the trailing kitten mid-leap, as if kicking up her heels in delight.

That plan, hashed out over years, has put thousands of acres of land in preservation around Immokalee and set the stage for the development of Ave Maria. The Conservancy says the plan will allow too much growth and continues to push for changes.

For Payton, one of the plan's most important outcomes was that it forged a partnership between environmental groups and the county's large landowners to work to conserve Florida panther habitat. That plan, too, is opposed by the Conservancy for not going far enough.

Fights over environmental protection are bound to continue in Collier County, but Payton likes the spot environmental groups have gotten.

"We finally made it to the table," she said.

CHAPTER SIX: Building



March 24, 2005: With season approaching it's end, streams of passengers waited in line at the Southwest Florida International Airport security checkpoint, waiting to board flights out of Fort Myers.

One night in May 1983, crews moved Southwest Florida's commercial air service from Page Field in Fort Myers to a new, bigger airport in the middle of the woods.



I-75 Alligator Alley at the toll plaza looking west.

"That was a big move; a big, big move," said Peter Modys, then an operations agent at Page Field and now the Lee County Port Authority's deputy executive director for aviation.

The logistics of moving equipment and airplanes was big enough, but the move was more than a change of address. The new airport opened Southwest Florida to the rest of the world like it had never been before and cranked up the region's economic engine.

On the ground, the widening of Alligator Alley between Naples and Fort Lauderdale — like the railroads and the opening of the Tamiami Trail decades earlier — also created new paths to the future.

In the 1880s, present-day Naples was at the edge of the world. Only small cargo boats connected it to the outside world. Once a day, the Naples Hotel ferried guests, supplies and mail between Fort Myers and the Naples Pier. Hotel guests sometimes complained the boat was a day late or the captain forgot to leave the mail.

The complaining did not get any quieter by the 1920s. The hotel started using a 10-seat Model T with springs sticking out of the cushions to ferry guests between Fort Myers and Naples along a rough shell road, little more than an ox trail. The trip could take four hours.

Back then, the Tamiami Trail stopped in the wildlands east of Naples. That changed in 1928, when county namesake Barron Collier Jr.'s crews completed the link across the Everglades to Miami. Finally, cars could cross the state from Tampa to Miami — going through the heart of Naples to do it. The feat was celebrated with ceremonies in Fort Myers and a county fair in Everglades City.

Fanfare also greeted the first train to pull into the Naples Depot in downtown Naples. In 1927, the "Orange Blossom Special" came all the way from New York City, picking up dignitaries along the way for a celebrated arrival in Naples. The last passenger train pulled out of the station in 1971.



Workers at the newly opened Midfield Terminal walk across the tarmac with the old terminal in the background at Southwest Florida International Airport on May 10, 2005

Before the big day in 1927, the railroad was a key link for regional commerce. In 1913, the Deep Lake railroad delivered grapefruit to Everglades City for shipment by boat to Key West. In the 1940s and 1950s, logging companies used locomotives to carry crews to work in the Fakahatchee and Big Cypress swamps and to deliver logs to sawmills.

The first official railroad to lay tracks into Collier County was the Atlantic Coast Line, which ran all the way to Everglades City by 1928. Along the way, it would stop and pick up shipments of tomatoes headed for Northern markets. The lines also stayed busy picking up clams from canneries on Marco Island until 1942.

Getting to Naples by commercial air service became possible in 1955 at the Naples airport, a former World War II air training base. Naples Airlines provided twice-daily scheduled service, on a seasonal basis, between Naples and Miami. Provincetown-Boston Airlines eventually bought Naples Airlines and, over the next three decades, expanded service from Naples to Tampa, Punta Gorda, Marathon, Key West, Fort Myers and Sarasota.



Opening Day April 26, 1928

Robert West, from left, John Hachmeister, an unidentified man and Attorney Patteau pose on the trail's opening day, April 26, 1928, by a stone archway that marked the boundary between Collier and Dade counties.

PBA and other regional airlines have come and gone from the airport, but its main function today is as a place for private jets to land, an amenity that has brought Naples its own wealthy jet-set, airport boosters say.

In the 1960s, a fight sprung up over a new way to get between Southwest Florida and the state's east coast. Alligator Alley was called the most controversial road project ever built in Florida. The Automobile Association of America, or AAA, which came up with the Alligator Alley moniker as a way to knock the road as a useless project, was its biggest detractor. The group clashed with Collier County about the safety of a high-speed, two-lane road with deep roadside canals on either side — and that would charge a 75-cent toll to boot.

A flurry of lawsuits over the road failed to stop it, and it opened in 1965. Instead of connecting the two coasts, though, the new road was a barrier. It had a reputation for being dangerous and earned the nickname "Blood Alley." In the year before it was widened, 17 people died in crashes on the road.



The sun begins to rise Friday morning over the new Midfield Terminal at Southwest Florida International Airport

A four-laned Alligator Alley, divided by a wide median, opened in 1985, and Naples hotelier Phil McCabe noticed the difference. Naples had mostly been an escape for Midwesterners who could get here easily from the North on Interstate 75.

"That all changed," he said.

With the new Alligator Alley, more Northeasterners, long attracted to the state's east coast, began finding their way to Collier County. McCabe said he could hear the change around town as more Boston and New York accents popped up.

"Transportation has been significant, pivotal, and the interstate has everything to do with that," he said. "Without that we would not have the growth we've had."

The widened Alley opened two years after the bigger Southwest Florida Regional Airport opened in Fort Myers. The new airport had 14 gates, two concourses, escalators and bridges to board passengers. At Page Field, which had just eight gates, passengers walked out to the planes across the pavement through a single door.

A decade after the Southwest Florida Regional Airport opened, it replaced "regional" in its name with "international" to reflect the region's emergence as an international destination, with its top international markets in London and Toronto and Dusseldorf, Frankfurt and Munich, Germany.

Total annual passengers jumped from 1.3 million in 1986 to 7.5 million in 2005, the year the airport moved again, this time into a \$438 million terminal with 28 gates and room to expand to 65 gates.

Ritz-Carlton owner Bill Johnson saw it coming. Johnson was looking for a place to build a new Ritz-Carlton, took one look at the clean, new airport and its passenger capacity and decided Naples was the place, said Ed Staros, who was on the team that brought the Ritz-Carlton to Naples in 1983.

"That new airport really rang his chimes," said Staros, now Ritz-Carlton Resorts of Naples vice president. "He said this is going to be a home run location and he was right."

CHAPTER SIX: Game Changers People whose influence made an impact on the area:

Myra Janco Daniels

Builder of the Naples Philharmonic Center for the Arts. After long, arduous years of hard work and planning, the music and art center opened in 1989.

Frank Mackle

He and his brothers joined forces with other investors, including members of the Collier family, to form the Marco Island Development Corp. and develop modern day Marco Island.

Mary Ellen Hawkins

Former newspaper reporter and state representative for Naples from 1974 to 1994. Sponsored legislation creating Big Cypress Basin District and designating Rookery Bay a state aquatic preserve.

Loral F. "Swede" Gwaltney

One of the early doctors in the Naples area. For 10 years he was the only anesthesiologist at the new Naples hospital. He delivered more than 2,000 babies. After he died in 1990, a fund to provide medical care for the poor was established in his name.

John Pulling

Naples pioneer who built the first Pine Ridge Road using his own money. Airport-Pulling Road is named in honor of his family.

David Robinson

The first president of Edison Community College, he was instrumental in starting a campus in Collier County.

Leonard Rosen

He and his brother Julius were the developers of Golden Gate, advertised as the largest platted subdivision in America with miles and miles of canals and paved roads that caused unprecedented environmental havoc.

Forrest Walker

Naples pioneer and developer of Aqualane Shores, the first waterfront development in Naples. Walker and his sons Lorenzo and Robert did much of the dredging and filling work themselves, with Forrest operating the bulldozer.

Edwin "Ned" Putzell

Naples mayor from 1986-1990. Known for his "Let's Keep Naples Green" program and for improving Lowdermilk and Cambier parks, among other accomplishments.

E. George Rogers

Retired CPA came to Naples in 1953. Cofounded 1st National Bank of Naples and Naples Art Association (with Elsie Upham).

Chapter Seven: 1996-Present

People had been flocking to Southwest Florida for decades. But toward the end of the 20th century, that growth took on a dizzying pace. Homes sold within days or even hours of hitting the market, their prices often marked up tens of thousands of dollars. People left their day jobs to invest in real estate, seeing their chance to cash in. Businesses struggled to hire enough workers. As money flowed in Southwest Florida, few people thought to ask when the bubble might burst — until suddenly, it did

CHAPTER SEVEN: Economy

Permitting technician Michael Portell, center, questions applicants Rosalie and Gene Silguero, owners of GMC Homebuilders, about the residential home plans they were submitting at the Collier County Building Permit Office in Naples in this 2006 file photo. It was the first day of a Collier County School District additional impact fee.

In the hallways of Lee County's planning department, stacks and stacks of development plans sat waiting to be approved. Reviewers practically sat on top of each other trying to keep up with the pace. Homes in Southwest Florida were selling within days or even hours of hitting the market, often marked up tens of thousands of dollars above their original price. Developers scrambled to meet the rising demand. People camped out to be among the first to buy new lots.



At the Lee County Courthouse, an auxiliary room is packed with investors looking to pay rock bottom prices on foreclosed homes. This is John Carney's battlefield, where he bids on properties he will later turn around and put back on the market. Carney said at one point, he'd estimate he's had his hands on about six percent of all the homes in Cape Coral.

It was the early 2000s, and the housing market was taking off across the country. At the epicenter was Southwest Florida, where it seemed everyone was jumping on the opportunity to cash in.

"You could not go to a cocktail party or reception or local golf club and not have somebody talking about the next real estate deal they were getting into," said Shelton Weeks, director of Florida Gulf Coast University's Lucas Institute for Real Estate.

They were teachers, security guards, doormen, college students supplementing bartending jobs by buying a house or two preconstruction — with no plans of ever living in them or paying the mortgage. They left their day jobs. They told their friends and families, and many of them jumped in, too.

The boom followed years of major growth in the region. Collier County's population had grown about 28 percent from 197,055 in 1995 to 251,377 in 2000 and an additional 20 percent from 2000 to 2005, when county estimates put it at 303,893. In Lee County, the population rose 15 percent from 382,829 in 1995 to 440,888 in 2000 and 25 percent from 2000 to 2005, when estimates put it at 549,442.

In those years, the counties had hastened to accommodate the influx of residents, expanding roads, adding schools and approving development that filled out what had been remote, untamed pieces of the county. The explosive growth left county governments flush with funding to pay for infrastructure expansion.

Bonita Springs and Marco Island became cities. Downtown Naples, fading in the early '90s as more people began moving north, experienced a rebirth thanks to Miami architect Andres Duany, who was behind the walkable, mixed-use concept of the area. North Naples and Estero became bustling communities. In Estero, a university emerged from swampland; Florida Gulf Coast University's first employees cut through the wilderness with a machete to assess the university's future location. Domino's Pizza founder Tom Monaghan had recently announced plans to bring his Catholic university, Ave Maria University, to former tomato fields in Collier, and to develop a surrounding town.

But what happened in the housing economy posed a new challenge: recruiting and retaining people to man the expanded infrastructure, when many could no longer afford to live within the community.

By spring of 2006, Lee home prices had soared to a median price of \$281,000; Collier to \$505,000 — out of reach for many professors, teachers, firefighters, police officers, nurses and other middle-class workers.

Their employers — the city of Naples, the School District of Collier County, the county fire and sheriff's departments and Naples Community Hospital — wrung their hands about how to handle the problem. They banded together to call for more affordable housing.



Denise Brunal-Hicks, hugs her daughter, Samantha, 18, right, as they stand next to the curb full of their belongings. Brunal-Hicks had been foreclosed on and was being evicted from her home after spending thirteen years at the residence. Her only option: to take her two children to temporarily live in a spare room at her brother's place across town

Meanwhile, salaries began increasing as competition for workers became cutthroat. In an attempt to lure employees, some restaurants offered signing bonuses to recruits. At Cedar Bay Marina on Marco Island (now a yacht club), employees were offered medical and dental insurance, 11 paid vacation days and free boat rentals.

"You remember seeing people with trucks that said, 'We're hiring,' with phone numbers on the trucks because there just weren't enough workers," said Naples city clerk Tara Norman.

Weeks, the FGCU professor, heard from employers who asked why graduates were turning down job offers. The answer? Better offers from the construction industry, then starved for employees to complete the constant work.

"All those other places where those graduates would have normally gone would say, 'Wow, we just offered somebody \$35,000 for a starting salary and they turned us down,'" Weeks recalled. "Well, they turned them down because they got an offer from a construction company for \$45,000."

And they needed the money: Even neighborhoods aimed at mid-level income brackets were snapped up and resold for higher prices. Apartments became sparse in the region as their owners converted them into condominiums, leaving residents with the options of purchasing a condo or leaving.

"What if the workers leave?" asked a Daily News story published in April 2006. "Who will serve the dinners, do the dry cleaning, bag the groceries, fix the pool screens, change the hotel bed sheets, care for the sick, build the homes ... Will paradise be lost?"

In handling the affordable housing issue, county commissioners in 2006 sparred over whether to focus on middle-class or lower income workers. Eventually, they offered incentives to developers willing to set aside parts of their projects for low and mid-level incomes.

But it didn't matter.

Because just months later, the region was facing a complete reversal of its fortune. There were too many homes on the market. Too many homes built; too many still under construction. Sometime between 2007 and 2008, the bubble had finally burst.

"It's like when we were kids and we played musical chairs," Weeks said. "At some point the music stops and everyone looks around like, 'Holy cow, what do we do now?'" n n nThe people still standing — those who still owned property they had planned to flip, as well as developers with projects still in construction phases — were stuck.

People began dumping their properties. Some that were under construction were never finished.



A stream of traffic merges off the Corkscrew Road entrance ramp onto a congested Interstate 75 running through Estero in 2004, not an uncommon sight at the time.

"As the prices started to drop, it was like, 'Well, we won't get what we have invested in here, so let's back out,'" said Rick Burris, principle planner for Lee County.

One of those homes sits near Burris's: "The one behind me just sits there," he said. "I think the last time I saw workers actually working on it was in 2006."

Foreclosure filings skyrocketed. In Collier, they rose from 733 in 2006 to 3,267 in 2007 to 7,872 in 2008 to 8,203 in 2009, before beginning to fall.

"You had the beginning of the end starting in 2007, 2008," Collier Clerk of Courts Dwight Brock said. "And 2009 was when the bottom fell out."

In Lee, filings for those same years went from 2,372 to 13,592 to 27,854 to 21,310 — still comparable to a "pretty good size city," Weeks notes.

In the preceding years, few people realized the market was in a bubble. The mantra at the time, Weeks said, was that this time was different: All the baby boomers were going to come to Florida to retire, keeping demand high and budgets flush with funding.



Kara Heaslip, a realtor with Prime Real Estate of Naples, celebrates after her name is called during a raffle where she won a round of golf for four people on the Treviso Bay golf course. Lennar Corp. - a homebuilder headquartered in Miami - hosted the event Thursday evening for about 900 area realtors in an effort to showcase new developments at Treviso Bay. Lennar purchased Treviso Bay housing development at a foreclosure auction in November

Developers, investors, economists — they all believed a cooling down was years out.

"For a long time it was just almost as though the growth wasn't going to stop — it just kept going and going," Norman said. "And then like everybody else we woke up one morning and said, 'Wait a minute, our revenues are not what they were.' We had to wake up to that."

The money pouring into government shrank. Unemployment grew. The construction industry, long a major force in Southwest Florida, was hit especially hard, giving credence to long-standing calls for economic diversification, which Weeks said had quieted some during the boom.

People began asking how bad things could get.

"The answer turned out to be pretty darn bad," Weeks said.

Many people whose livelihoods were tied to construction or development lost their jobs or their homes. Some went back to school; others picked up part-time jobs and dipped into savings accounts, hoping things would turn around quickly enough to avoid lasting effects.

In many cases, that didn't materialize, Weeks said. Many of those families left.

"Some of those folks, the last thing they did was drop the keys for the house off at the banks," he said.



A December photograph reveals work at the Treviso Bay clubhouse to be at a standstill, the incomplete clubhouse bordering the golf course. The development has now gone in to foreclosure.

Southwest Florida's economy began recovering and moving in an upward direction about a year, year-a-half ago, Weeks said.

The number of homes on the market is decreasing, with many being purchased by end users, he said. Prices are more in line with the median salary in the area.

But the slowdown of development in the area has left county and municipal governments scrambling for a new revenue source, Weeks said. During the boom cycle, government grew dependent on the tax revenue associated with growth, and used it to fund infrastructure expansion.

"While the growth caused some of the problems, it was also paying for part of the solution and that has also left us with some problems as we move forward," Weeks said.

And the cyclical nature of the market means a future downturn is likely, Weeks said. That downturn won't be as extreme, though, because what happened in 2007 was the result of a culmination of factors, such as loosened credit standards, the expectation that housing prices would continue increasing and government programs that encouraged home ownership, he said.

And efforts to diversify the economy, in hopes of avoiding a similar issue in the future, are at the forefront. Weeks called it one of the most important challenges facing the area.

More than a year ago, a nonprofit, internationally-respected institution courted Collier officials in hopes of developing a research institute and surrounding medical center. The now-defunct Collier County Economic

Development Corporation championed the project, calling it an opportunity to bring high-paying, knowledge-based business to the community.



Employees from Arthrex step away from work to gather in front of the Collier County Commissioners to show their disapproval of Jackson Labs potential move to Naples. The Commissioners assured all residents in attendance during their regular session that no decisions had been made about Jackson Labs, but that they were seriously investigating what benefits it might have on the county.

The Jackson Laboratory initiative eventually failed, as many residents were unhappy with the project's \$130 million price tag, which would have been paid using taxpayer dollars.

Still, said Tim Cartwright, who was chair-elect of the EDC when it announced plans last September to close, the company's interest in the area proves wrong what he says concerned many in the area: the idea that Collier could not attract such an opportunity.

"I think it gave us a glimpse of what we could do," he said.

The challenge, he said, is uniting all segments of the community in support of diversification, when parts of the community — as has been the theme for decades — want to limit growth and keep Collier county and Southwest Florida the way it was when they arrived.

"That's just, to me, not the right kind of thinking," he said, adding that an economy cannot survive on simply construction and tourism.

"Can it get by in the short time? Yeah, during boom cycles."

CHAPTER SEVEN: FGCU



A Feb. 2012 aerial view of the Florida Gulf Coast University campus.

Tara Williams wanted to go to a university that offered smaller class sizes and a physical therapy program. And, being the "baby of the family," she wanted to stay close to her hometown of Estero. If she had graduated from high school just one year earlier, her wish-list wouldn't have been achievable. Southwest Florida didn't have a university of its own. But the opening of Florida Gulf Coast University in 1997 changed that, and Williams became one of the first students at the fledgling school.



Florida Gulf Coast University students load and unload buses traveling between student housing and academic buildings in 2011, in Fort Myers. In the last 10 years, FGCU has grown from the smallest university in the state to an estimated student body of 12,600 projected to reach 20,000 within the next five to 10 years.

"FGCU really was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students in this area," she said.

Before it opened, Southwest Florida's higher education offerings included Edison State College, Hodges University (then called International College) and Southwest Florida College. The three served mostly nontraditional students.

Eventually, Southwest Florida's higher education offerings would become slightly more diversified with the 2007 opening of Catholic institution Ave Maria University in Collier County and with the 2000 legislation allowing Edison to offer limited baccalaureate degrees.

In 1990, when the state Legislature began to discuss creating a 10th state university, lobbyists for Southwest Florida pointed out that local students seeking bachelor's degrees were forced to leave the area. Often, they didn't return after graduation.

"We were exporting our high school graduates who would go to college and not come back," said Susan Evans, then executive director of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce. "We were losing a lot of valuable people who would be our future."

Legislators took note and in 1991 chose Southwest Florida as the location for the university. Landowners across the county offered potential sites, and in 1992 a swath of swampland owned by Ben Hill Griffin was selected. Evans, hired by founding President Roy McTarnaghan as one of the university's first employees, remembers the land in the then-small town of Estero was "complete wilderness."

Alico and Corkscrew roads were there, but there was no other infrastructure and no other roads. Evans and other employees who visited the campus in 1993 and 1994 followed a consultant who used a machete to cut a path. Wild cows roamed the land.

"It sounds like pioneer days," Evans said. "And, in a lot of respects, it was."

Just four years later, the first students arrived on campus.

The brand new FGCU had three academic buildings and about 2,500 students. Faculty and students shared the campus with deer, wild pigs, wild turkeys, bobcats and alligators — which appeared frequently enough that one professor, during the university's first year, set up a seminar on "Living with Alligators."

There was no athletic program, and, during Williams' first year, no dormitories. She and her roommate were among the first to sign up when the dorms opened the next year. Williams sat on the committee that designed Alico Arena. Her classes were small, and her program had only 15 students who all studied together.

When she graduated, she shook hands with the president, and he knew her name.

"I mean, nobody can say that," Williams said of that experience.

In 15 years, FGCU has grown dramatically and had a profound impact on the surrounding area.

The university's presence helped usher in Miromar Outlets and Gulf Coast Town Center. The land surrounding it filled out with golf courses and neighborhoods.

A study released in 2011 by an FGCU professor found the university's impact in Southwest Florida in the 2009-10 academic year was \$345 million in overall expenditures, 3,119 jobs created and \$144 million in labor income.

The university's enrollment has increased yearly, hitting about 13,000 in 2012. FGCU's program offerings and the number of buildings on campus have gone up at a dizzying pace. It now boasts Division I athletic programs.

Though the university was originally intended to cater mostly to older, nontraditional students through online and weekend classes and less of a focus on sports and a brick and mortar campus, its purpose has shifted. It has become a more traditional university, where about 79 percent of students are enrolled full time.

"We've got a large influx in population in Southwest Florida, and now we've got a place that we can go to college and stay close to home and get that great college experience, but also I can take my laundry home on weekends," said Christopher Smith, who works with middle and high school counselors across Collier County.

These days, Williams — who changed career paths and became a teacher at Three Oaks Middle School in Estero — barely recognizes her alma mater.

"To grow up in this area and think it was just a swamp 15 to 20 years ago and see what it's become," she said, "it really is amazing."

CHAPTER SEVEN: Hope for Haiti



Clergy, missionary workers and medical professionals hold a candlelit mass at a mass gravesite of earthquake and cholera victims outside of Port-au-Prince on Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2011, in Titanyen, Haiti. The group of clergy, missionary workers and hospital staff from St. Damien Hospital and other associated programs gathered at the mass grave on the eve of the anniversary of the Jan. 12 earthquake.

The phone calls started coming in minutes after the first reports a 7.0-magnitude earthquake had struck Haiti, devastating the small, impoverished country and killing an estimated 300,000: How can we help them? When can we go there?



Born three months premature, Bereka Valcin is fed drops of baby formula as an initial treatment for her dehydration and malnutrition at a triage set up near a refugee camp at the Don Bosco Center for Learning in the suburb of Carrefour in January 2010. Hope for Haiti nurses and doctors flew from Naples to work at various assignments throughout the earthquake-ravaged country alongside other missionary doctors.

Elizabeth Davison, executive director of Naples-based Hope for Haiti, told the callers she was working on it. She told the guests who had arrived for a dinner party to cook their own meals. She spent the rest of the night on the phone and on the computer, checking on the organization's employees in Haiti and making plans to help.

And within three days of the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake, a Hope for Haiti team of doctors and nurses arrived in Port-au-Prince — the first American medical team on the ground in the area.

"I took them to the Naples airport, and I felt like I was sending them to Vietnam or something," Davison recalled. "They brought a sheet or a pillow with them, slept outside and worked until it got dark, with no electricity. They worked with what they had and they saved untold lives."

The team arrived to find hundreds of thousands of injured and dying people with undressed and often infected wounds that had been unattended for 48 hours, pediatrician Steve Shukan said. They faced difficult decisions of who to help first and how.

"What happened there is something none of us were ever trained for," Shukan said. "You're not trained for 300,000 dead and 300,000 dying, no electricity and no light. And you do the best you can."

Knowing lives were being saved kept the doctors and nurses going, he said. He recalled one little girl with a stomach sticking out like a watermelon. A local doctor had told her family she could not be saved and should be taken home and left to die. The Hope for Haiti team diagnosed it as a blockage in the child's stomach and found a surgeon who drew out fluid, returning her stomach to normal.



Louisiana George, 65, prays about the death of her children outside the ruins of the national cathedral in Port-au-Prince during a mass service on Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2011. Thousands of Haitians attended the mass to commemorate the anniversary of the 7.0-scale earthquake that devastated the area last year.

"You live your whole life and some people don't have a chance to do this. The baby could have been put in a corner and died," Shukan said.

Five hundred miles away, in Naples, the earthquake reverberated with community members, many of whom knew local Haitians with friends or family in Haiti. Stories of fundraisers and benefits abounded in the area.

Hope for Haiti, started 20 years ago by Naples resident JoAnne Kuehner, saw its donations skyrocket, with calls coming from 137 countries as far away as Australia. Davison was on the radio in Mexico and in Beijing. The coincidence of a Hollywood telethon named Hope for Haiti brought in calls from people expecting George Clooney to answer the phone.

In a typical year before the earthquake, Davison said Hope for Haiti shipped \$8 million to \$10 million worth of supplies. In 2010, that number increased to \$30 million.

Immediately after the earthquake, the organization's employees and volunteers put in 20 hour days. Their families flew to Naples to help. The organization added eight new phone lines and three new computers.



Earthquake survivors protest, demanding food in the streets of Port-au-Prince in the weeks following the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that hit Haiti on Jan. 12, 2010, killing and injuring hundreds of thousands.

"People say, 'How did you know how to get ready for an earthquake?'" Davison said. "Nobody prepares you for it. You just take all of your life experiences, put them together, do what you think is best. We were just jumping up and trying to accomplish whatever we could to help our friends in Haiti."

Hope for Haiti has grown "tremendously" in the two years since the earthquake, Davison said. Once a small office with a couple of employees, it now has an office twice as large and 10 full-time employees.

"And really, the support from the community continues to this day," Davison said. "What the earthquake did was bring to life the plight of the people in Haiti. The earthquake was just a terrible disaster, but the way that they had been living — we had been here for 20 years trying to get people to listen."

CHAPTER SEVEN: Oil Rig Explosion



Fire boat response crews spray water on the blazing remnants of BP's Deepwater Horizon offshore oil rig April 21, 2010. An explosion on the rig killed 11 workers and caused the worst offshore oil spill in the nation's history.

Reports of oil-slicked beaches and dying birds filled the national and international news. Online, videos showed gallons and gallons of oil spewing unabated into the Gulf of Mexico, 24 hours a day.

It was April 2010, and the explosion of Deepwater Horizon, a BP-operated oil rig, had led to millions of gallons of oil spilling into the Gulf in the largest accidental marine oil spill in the history of the petroleum industry.

For nearly three months, the leak could not be capped. Oil continued to leak into the ocean, devastating marine and wildlife habitats and animals.

Not a drop of oil ever reached Collier or Lee county shores, but still the spill had consequences here.

Though only Florida's Panhandle ever saw oil, many tourists assumed the entire Gulf had been compromised and canceled trips to Southwest Florida. Their absence affected the entire economy, starting with resorts, vacation rentals and restaurants, and then impacting the industries tourism supports.

Nearly \$282,000 in tourist development taxes were lost in Collier County.

Sandy Pine, owner of a Naples-based resort rental service, cringed at the never-ending reports of oil-slicked Gulf beaches that didn't specify where the oil was located.

"You'd hear nothing but birds covered with oil," said Pine, owner of Sandy Retreats. "You can't imagine how we felt — please turn it off, please."

Phone calls to Pine's office dropped off, she said, and business fell as would-be visitors went elsewhere.

"In Europe and in other states, they just considered the whole Gulf like a pool of oil," Pine said. "So why come here? Why not go to Miami or Fort Lauderdale?"

To combat misconceptions about the oil's location, Collier County's tourism director, [Jack Wert](#), said county officials dipped into Collier's emergency reserve, spending more than \$100,000 to tell potential visitors that area beaches were oil-free.

"The only oil on Southwest Florida beaches is suntan oil," advertisements declared. Wert said without that campaign the impact could have been worse.

"It's hard to imagine how bad it could have been," he said.

The county attempted to recover some of its lost dollars but did not receive any of a \$25 million grant BP gave to the state in 2010, though Lee County was granted \$500,000 for marketing campaigns.

In 2011, both Collier and Lee counties joined a suit against Transocean Ltd., the owner of Deepwater Horizon, seeking \$450,000 and more than \$1 million, respectively, for lost tourist taxes and emergency advertising. The results of that suit remain to be seen.

In the aftermath of the spill, from June 2010 to August 2011, hundreds of residents and business owners, including Pine, lined up outside a BP claims office in Naples. As of late February, 10,817 claims totaling \$117.9 million had been paid to Collier County residents and business owners; those claims will continue to come in until August 2013 under an agreement between BP and the Obama administration.

Pine eventually received nearly \$100,000 and said she does not know if her business could have recovered without it. She said it survived because local businesses cleaned the pools, maintained the lawns and kept doing services for her properties, despite knowing she wouldn't immediately be able to pay them.

She used the money from BP to repay them. By 2013, she figures her business will have fully recovered and people will have begun to forget about the disaster.

Wert thinks the area and its visitors have recovered. Collier has virtually overcome all of its losses, he said.

"For the most part, the consumer is very resilient — they don't really remember this stuff," Wert said. "It's pretty much gone away for us."

"Look outside," Pine said. "People will always come here."

CHAPTER SEVEN: Game Changers People whose influence made an impact on the area:

Christiaan W. Duvekot

Developer of the Lely area of East Naples. His parent firm donated land for Lely High School and the branch campus of Edison Community College.

Andres Duany

Architect who was the mastermind behind the redevelopment in Naples' Fifth Avenue South in the 1990s.

Lavern Gaynor

Daughter of Dellora and Lester Norris who has continued their philanthropic legacy.

R.H. "Dick" Goodlette

Former county commissioner and civic leader. He is the "Goodlette" in Goodlette-Frank Road.

Ben Hill Griffin

Donated acreage for Florida Gulf Coast University.

John Hachmeister

Naples pioneer and photographer. Many of the early photos of Naples now at the Collier museums and Historical Society were taken by Hackmeister. Along with William Pulling, he also was responsible for planting many of the early palm trees around Naples.

E.A. "Doug" Hendry

Became sheriff in 1956 and began building the six-deputy force into a modern law enforcement agency. His Junior Deputy program for young people won praise locally and drew a personal letter of commendation from J. Edgar Hoover. Hendry retired in 1975.

George Hunt

Director of the Collier Development Corp. He played a major part in saving Palm Cottage and constructing the Collier County Museum. He directed the moving of residents of Caxambas to the new town of Goodland and planned the community of Pine Ridge. He was one of the founders of the Board of Realtors and the Conservancy, and president of the Naples Civic Association. A section of the County Museum is named for him and Dr. Earl Baum.

Seward Stokely Jolly

County judge and influential jurist who served from 1936 until his death in 1959. The bridge to Marco Island was dedicated to him in 1991.

William G. Price

Immokalee civic leader and banker. Active for many years in numerous organizations including Collier County Housing Authority, Boy Scouts and the Immokalee Foundation.

Miles Scofield

Headed the building and planning committee of Naples Community Hospital for 17 years. Charter member of the Naples Airport Authority.

Lillie Nish Williams

African-American community leader. She was a Naples resident for 59 years and the first black business owner in Naples. She established the Macedonia Baptist Church.
