

# The Seminoles and Miccosukees and the Transformation of the Florida Everglades – The Role of Rev. James Lafayette Glenn

## 1. Background

Following the Seminole War that pitted the Seminole Tribe of Florida against the U.S. federal government in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Seminole Tribe found itself in a precarious position.

- The Seminole Tribe found itself in a tricky financial situation because of a lack of economic diversification, and rampant poverty was not uncommon when Glenn assumed his role.
- The Seminoles had recently taken residence at the underdeveloped Dania (now known as Hollywood) Reservation around the 1930s following the start of the Great Depression.
- Starting in 1933, John Collier became Commissioner for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and pioneered the “Indian New Deal”, which focused on Indian self-determination.

## 2. Methodology

Figure 2. Seminole family navigating the Everglades circa 1905-1915

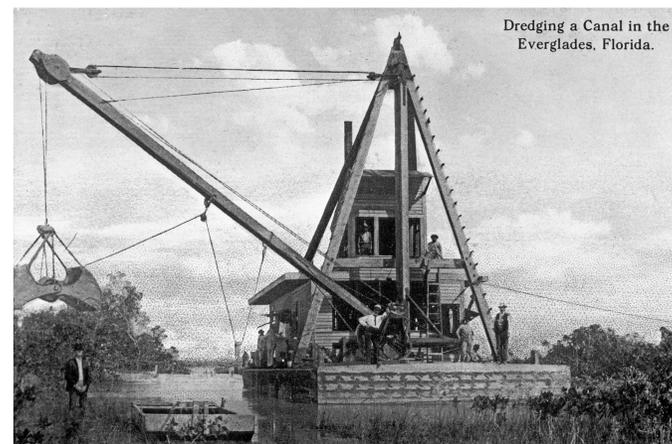


This research is narrowly focused on Rev. James Lafayette Glenn and more specifically his work among the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

- A literature review was conducted to best analyze various sources from differing origins.
  - Because sources on James Glenn are far and few, any source with keywords such as the name “James Glenn” combined with other keywords such as “Seminoles” or “Everglades” were thoroughly analyzed.
- Said sources were pulled from databases such as JSTOR, Reclaiming the Everglades Collection, etc.

## 3. Results

Figure 3. The creation of a canal in the Florida Everglades



- This research yielded a more complete profile on Rev. Glenn in context of the transformation of the Florida Everglades, most notably:
- Glenn had ties to Barron Collier, who noticeably not only encouraged but financed the drainage of the Everglades.
- Glenn actively undertook efforts to secure land for Seminole reservations which resulted in the establishment of the Brighton Reservation.
- While filled with good intentions, Glenn suffered from bouts of paternalism and was oriented towards the survival of the Seminole Tribe regardless of their connection to the Everglades.
- Glenn was more concerned about the day-to-day problems of the Seminole Tribe (rampant, alcoholism, widespread poverty, etc.) than the relationship that the Seminoles had with the Everglades.
- There is no evidence or mention of Glenn ever lodging a protest against the drainage of Everglades to serve Seminole interests.

## 4. Discussion

While this ongoing research offers a more full profile of Rev. Glenn, it is also limited by the small number of records that mention Glenn. However, closer examination of Glenn should be followed up by:

- A reevaluation of Barron Collier’s role in the drainage of the Everglades
- Sentiment of the Seminole Tribe towards leaving their domicile because of the transformation of the Everglades.
- The examination of a wider issue of paternalism among “Indian agents” assigned to federally recognized tribes.
- The role of other known Seminole Tribe activists in the migration of the Seminoles away from the camps around the Tamiami Trail.

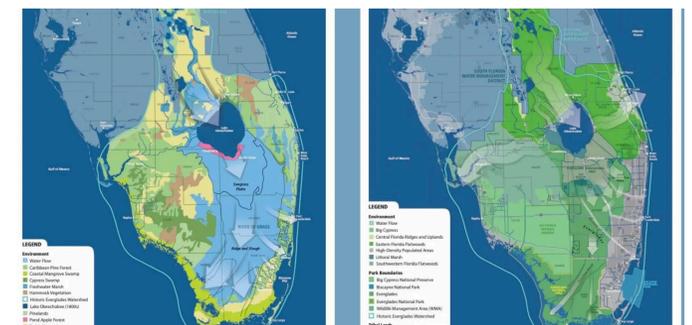


Figure 4. Map depicting the status of the Florida Everglades before and after the drainage

## References



Scan to view references



Figure 1. A group of Seminoles in an exhibition at the New York World’s Fair in 1939

## Abstract

The connection between the indigenous people of Florida and the Everglades is a long and complex one that is characterized by several conflicting interests and factors. This research focuses on the relationship between James Lafayette Glenn, who was appointed as Special Commissioner (informally known as an “Indian” agent) to the Seminole Tribe of Florida in 1931 until his removal in 1935, and the Seminoles in the context of their connection to the Everglades. The research seeks to clarify the lack of nuance and scholarly analysis of the relationship between individuals such as James Glenn and their role within the transformation of Everglades in relation to the Seminoles and/or Miccosukees. This research will expectantly show how James Glenn served as a complex figure in the transformation of the Everglades. Using this research, I will highlight the importance of the Everglades to the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and attempt to clarify the history of how their relationship with the Everglades changed through the efforts of the federal and state government.