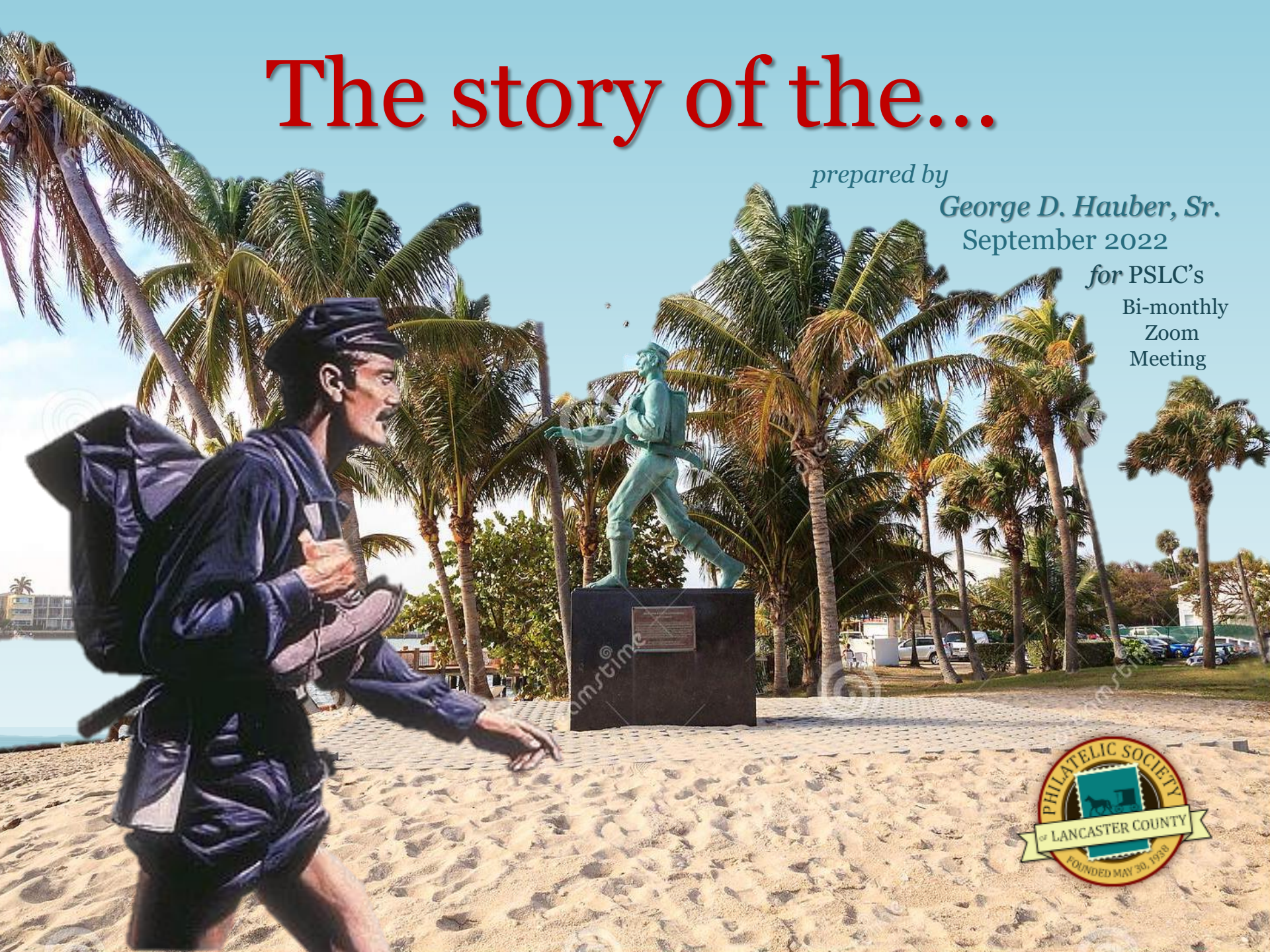


The story of the...

prepared by

George D. Hauber, Sr.
September 2022

for PSLC's
Bi-monthly
Zoom
Meeting



Question 1?

What state does this picture bring to mind?



Question 1?

What state does this picture bring to mind?



California

New Jersey

Texas

Florida



Question 1?

What state does this picture bring to mind?



~~California~~

~~New Jersey~~

~~Texas~~

Florida



Question 2?

*What statue is
pictured here?*



Question 2?

*What statue is
pictured here?*



**Governor
of Florida**

**Friendly
Milkman**

**State
Senator**

**Barefoot
Mailman**

Question 2?

*What statue is
pictured here?*



~~Governor
of Florida~~

~~Friendly
Milkman~~

~~State
Senator~~

**Barefoot
Mailman**



The story of the Barefoot Mailman

In the *mid-1800's*, the stretch of coastline between present-day Palm Beach and Miami (*sixty-eight miles*) remained largely untouched since Ponce de Leon sailed past in *1513*.



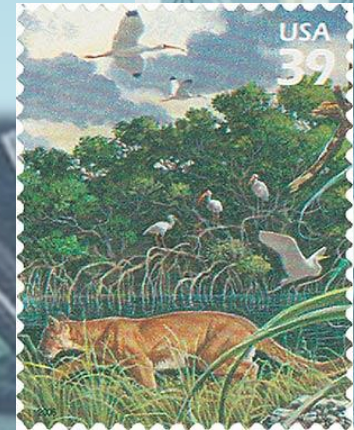
Local *native American tribes* had disappeared
in the early **1700's**,
but it was still wild country
with *cougars* and *black bears* roaming freely
and *alligator infested* inlets and waterways.



UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE®

USPS

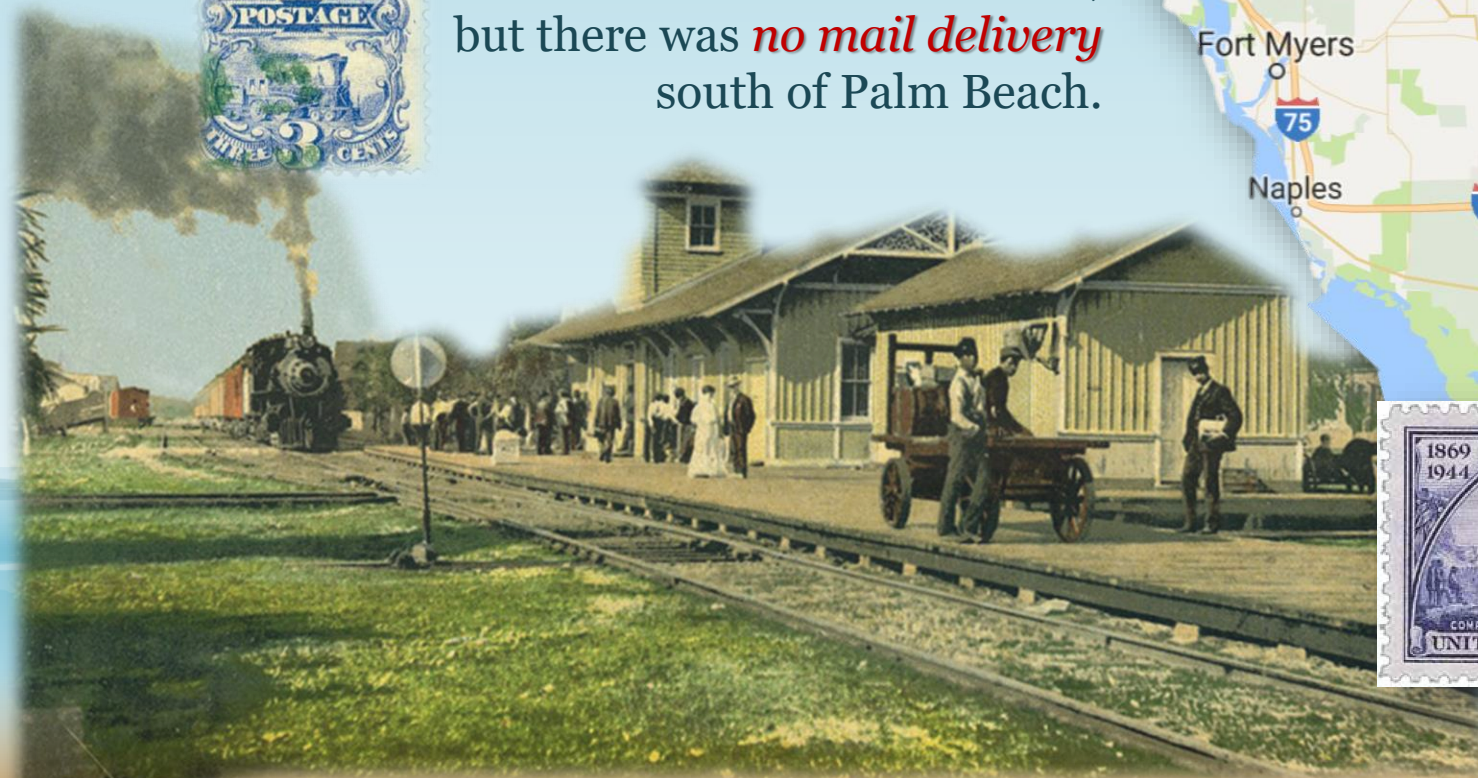
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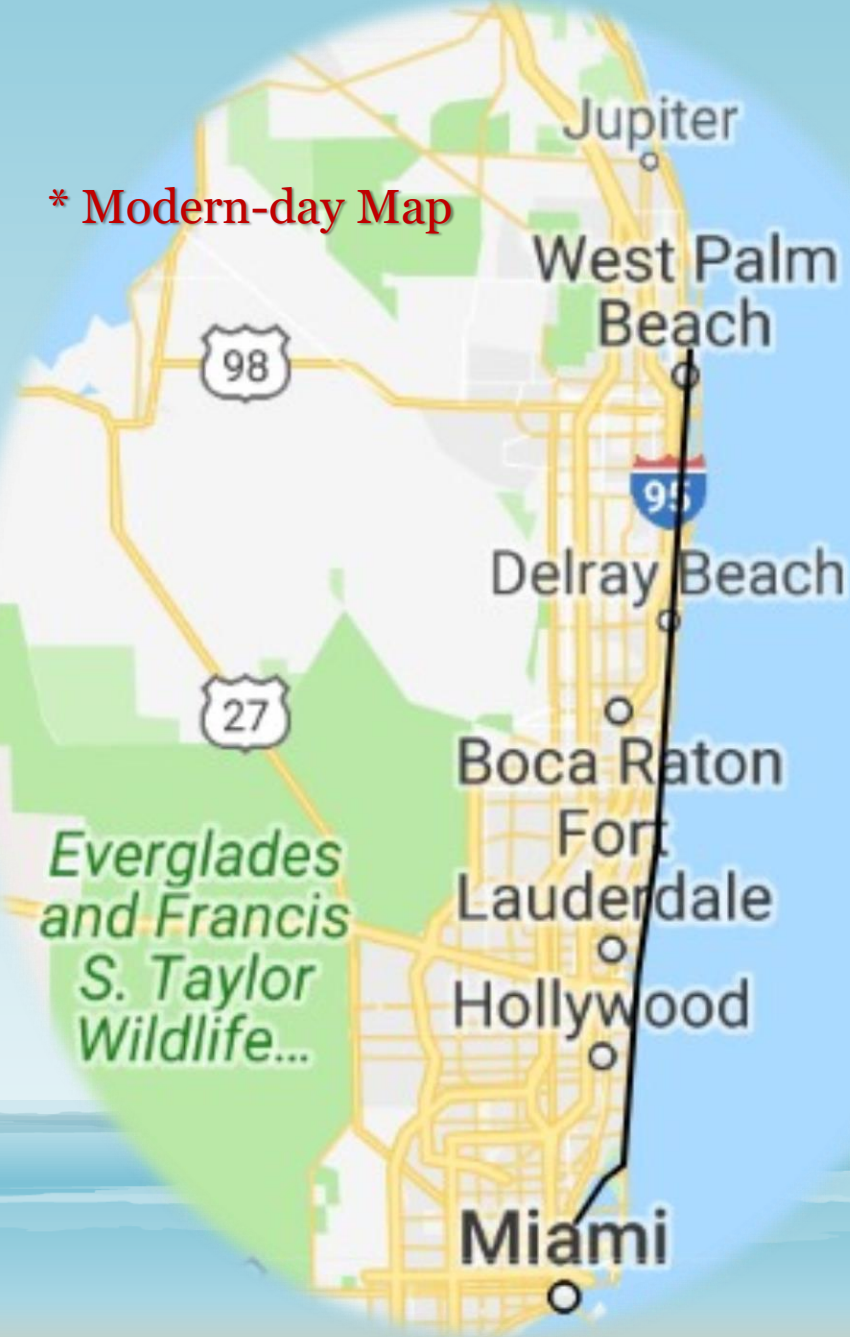
The "barefoot route"

In the early 1880's, the communities around Lake Worth, Florida were at the end of the existing mail routes.

The mail was carried by a series of Star routes from *Titusville to Palm Beach*, but there was *no mail delivery* south of Palm Beach.



* Modern-day Map



A Star route to carry mail between Lake Worth and Biscayne Bay was established in **1885**.

This route involved a round trip of **136 miles** from *Palm Beach* to *Miami* and back.

It took **six days**.



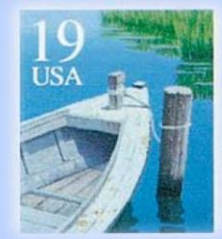
* Modern-day Map



To the south,
Miami and communities
around Biscayne Bay
received mail by a
weekly schooner
from *Key West*.



The mail carrier would *leave Palm Beach* on *Monday morning*, traveling *by boat* to the southern end of the *Lake Worth Lagoon*.





Atlantic Ocean

Riviera Beach

Palm Beach

Lake Worth Lagoon



He would then cross over to the *beach* and walk down to the *Orange Grove House of Refuge* where he would spend the night.



The next day (*Tuesday*) he would continue *walking down the beach* to the *Fort Lauderdale House of Refuge*, where he would again spend the night.



This route was called the "*barefoot route*" because the carriers walked barefoot on the beach.

The mail carriers, and others who had learned the method of walking long distances on a sloping beach without tiring, were called "*beach walkers*".



The *first* barefoot mailman was *Edwin R. Bradley*,
a retired Chicago newsman and a Lake Worth resident.
He won the postal contract in *1885*
with a bid of *\$600* per year.

He and his son,
Louie, took turns
carrying the mail
once a week for
about two years.

His second son, *Guy Bradley*,
would later become famous after his
murder while serving as an early
game warden, protecting the egrets
being poached for tail feathers.



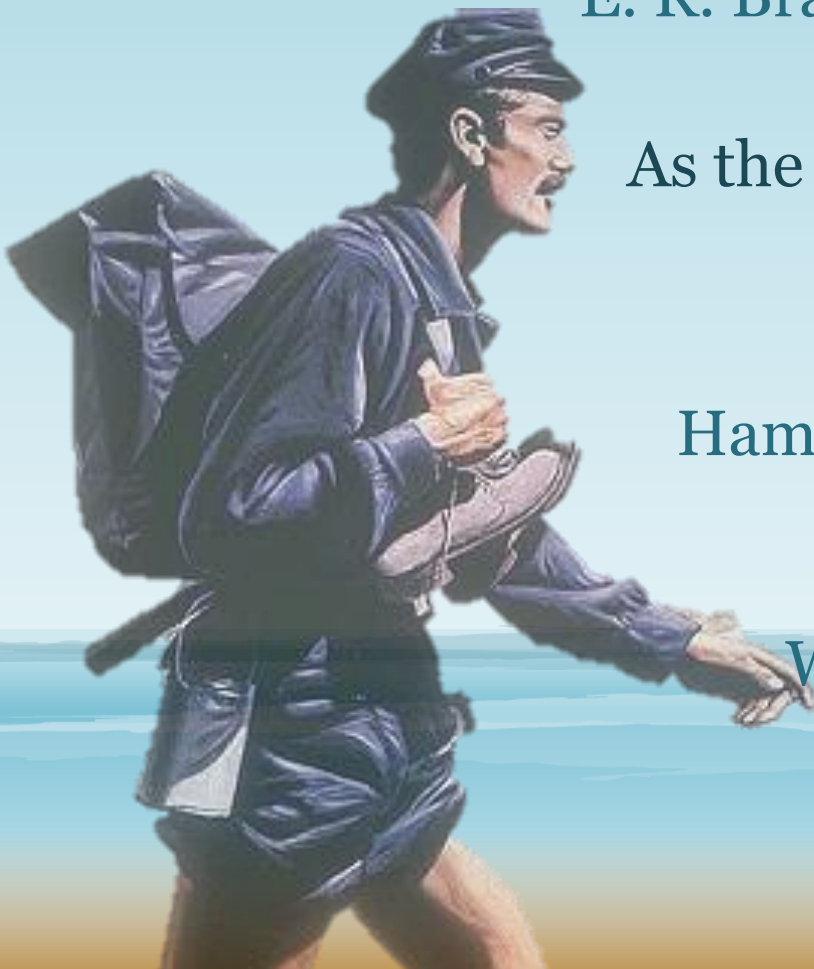
The third, and most famous, of the barefoot mailmen was *James E. "Ed" Hamilton*, who had come to Hypoluxo in **1885**.

Hamilton became the barefoot route contractor when E. R. Bradley quit in **1887**.

As the story goes, Hamilton disappeared while walking *the barefoot route* sometime after *October 10, 1887*.

Hamilton was not feeling well when he passed through town.

When he had not returned at the end of the week, *a search was started*.



Hamilton's possessions, including all his clothes, were found on the north bank of the Hillsboro Inlet, but he *never arrived* at the Fort Lauderdale House of Refuge.



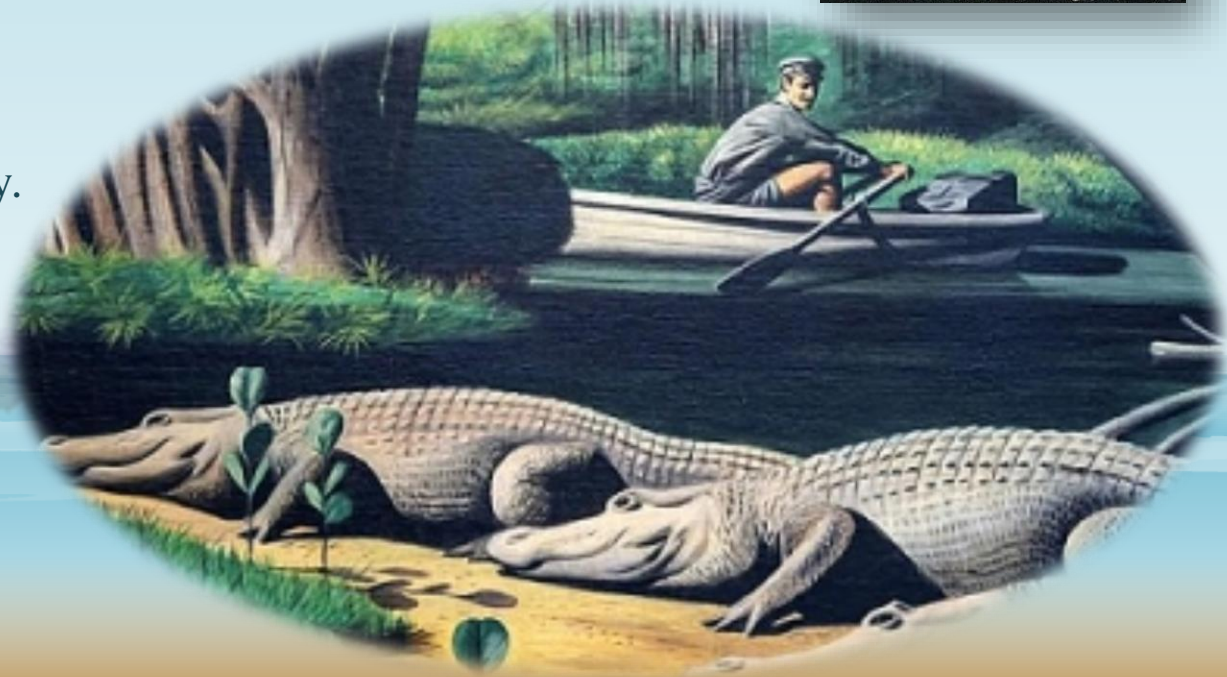
The boat that Hamilton used to cross the inlet was *missing*.

He was presumed to have drowned or been taken by a shark or alligator while trying to swim across the inlet to retrieve his boat from the far side.

His body was never recovered.



Theodore Pratt's 1943 book
The Barefoot Mailman
tells Hamilton's story.



Take Worth



The South Florida Council of *Boy Scouts of America* sponsors an *annual 35-mile, 2-day hike* along portions of the trails used by the Barefoot Mailmen.

The Scouts carry *actual U.S. Mail* and are to be *totally self-sufficient* (except for water) for the entire duration of the hike from

Pompano Beach to South Miami Beach.



Others noted as carriers on
the barefoot route include:

George Charter

Bob Douthit

Dan Kelly

Dan McCarley

Frederick Matthaus

Otto Matthaus

Edward "Ned" Peat

George Sears

and a man known

only as Stafford

**Henry John Burkhardt*

was **the last**
barefoot mailman.



So, that's the story of *the barefoot mailman*

He was one of a cadre of public servants who delivered the mail along the southeast coast of Florida from Palm Beach to south of Miami.

