

BROWN'S TRADING POST

William Henry Brown was not born in Florida, in America, or even born William Henry Brown; but near the end of the 19th century he and his family were invited by the Seminole people to live within the Seminole community and operate a Trading Post. Brown's Trading Post started as a useful local place to buy and sell goods, but would become a hub of the community, a welcome gathering point, a place for travelers to camp, and a site for celebrations.

The future William Brown was born in England in 1856 as Joseph Goodhind. At a young age he joined an English ship as either a deckhand or cabin boy, but jumped ship in Cuba and made his way to Florida. There he worked in the town of Arcadia before making his way to Fort Myers. In 1879 he and Jane Jernigan married, and the couple would go on to have ten children over two decades.

Brown began working with the Seminole people around Immokalee, and by 1885 was making trips out to Big Cypress to trade. By the mid-1890s, he was allowed to move out to the Big Cypress community, building a trading post and home on the western edge of the Everglades, the first such establishment allowed in Seminole territory. Brown's family, and particularly his children, became part of the local community. Frank Brown became a close friend of Josie Billie, and he and his sister Rose learned the Miccosukee language from Billie Conapatchee. Rose credited Doctor Tommie with saving her finger after an accident, using traditional medicine.

The Trading post lasted until 1908, when Brown decided to move back to Immokalee. Briefly the location became home to a chapel and hospital, but the buildings were demolished in 1910 by a hurricane. Now, the location sits near Josie Billie Highway, marked only by a Tribal Register plaque to honor this place of community.

TO LEARN MORE

Visit the Tribal Historic Preservation Office website at stoftppo.com or use the QR code
For more Seminole history resources

