

# TIGERTAIL'S BRIDGE



The Tamiami Trail began construction in the early 20th century, designed to allow easy travel for Americans through the Everglades. But in order to cross the Everglades, they hired Seminole guides to find the best path. These Seminole pathfinders saw how the highway would cut off the traditional canoe routes used by the Seminole people to travel between their camps. The road that would give Americans the freedom to travel across the Everglades would be the end of that same freedom of movement for the Tribe.

It was for this reason that in 1919 a construction crew arriving to work on the trail were met by Jack Tigertail and over one hundred other Seminole. Tigertail himself was incredibly popular in the growing Miami and Hialeah community. Two years before he had led a search party for one of the trail's survey teams, and two years from then his likeness would be made into a sign over 30 feet tall welcoming travelers to Hialeah. Still the lessons of the past endured, and the Miami Herald reported that each Seminole present was armed with a rifle or shotgun. It was a show of strength to back a straightforward request.

A representative spoke with the foreman, explaining how the road and canal would disrupt Seminole travel. What they asked for was simple: a bridge at that spot that would allow the Tribe to move about as they always had. The request was granted, and the commission planned and built the Bridge at that spot, 12 miles west of Miami, near where the Miccosukee reservation is now. Unfortunately, by the time it was finished the canals built to drain the Everglades had already done their work. The region had been drained, and travel by canoe was no longer possible north or south of the Trail.

**To see more Seminole History Stories visit the THPO website at [www.stofthpo.com](http://www.stofthpo.com)**

#### Photo

Jack Tigertail on Canoe, the Everglades, Florida, 1910  
 Photo by Julian Dimock  
 Courtesy the American Museum of Natural History

