A Brief History of "Colohatchee"

For those of you only familiar with our dog park and boat ramp by that name, we should probably begin with "where was ***Colohatchee***". Well into the **late 1920s** "Colohatchee" described a large farming community—ultimately encompassing most of what is now Oakland Park and Wilton Manors.

The derivation of the name is somewhat murky. It is clearly of Seminole origin. Popular history has long repeated that the word was an adaptation of an early settler's name, **Collier**, added to the Seminole word for river, "hatchee". This was supposedly in recognition of Collier allowing the Seminoles to forage in his orange grove. But dates become a problem. Collier did not arrive until **1893**; and only then began planting his orange grove. However, the Seminoles had a permanent camp on the river nearby as early as **1870**. Our more recent research/documentation, including experts in Seminole language and quotes from a Seminole elder, find that the "Colo" portion most likely refers to some natural feature of the river, like the color of its water or its glistening shells. So the Seminoles likely named the **river** Colohatchee early-on; not later as the homeplace and orange grove of a newly-arrived white settler (a la "Collier's place by the river").

Regardless of the derivation, it appears the Colohatchee name for the area was embraced, early-on, by Henry Flagler and his Florida East Coast Railway. Historian Norman Malcolm notes that a train station named "Colohatchee" was in place in **1896** for the opening of Flagler's extension of the FEC to Miami. In **1903** we find the first *published* reference to an FEC Railway freight depot at Colohatchee.



Photo illustration based on typical FEC depot

The first official designation of Colohatchee as a settlement came with the filing of a plat in **1910** for a subdivision of some 500 lots; running from the North Fork to the South Fork of the Middle River and from Dixie Highway to now N.E. 6th Ave. The depot would have been adjacent, on Mahannah Road (now N.E. 24th St.), at the current site of **The Metropolitan** apartments.

The depot was a major shipping hub for the area. As early as **1913**, for example, well over 100 train carloads of produce were shipped. The depot was also a social gathering spot for the ever-growing local farm community. It was a venue for picnics, holiday events, and even church services. By **1916**, the community had grown enough to charter the **Colohatchee Woman's Club**, with 20 members. Its clubhouse (now the site of the Pride Center) replaced the depot as the social hub.

But by **1929**, "Colohatchee" began to fade. In that year the depot building was moved north to become a passenger station at Floranada/Oakland Park. By **1936** the Woman's Club had also sold their assets and moved to Oakland Park.

More details? Download ***History of and "slices of life" from the Colohatchee settlement*** at **https://tinyurl.com/Colohatchee**

©Wilton Manors Historical Society Digital Collection