

THE DIXIE HIGHWAY

TWENTY-SIX MILES ASPHALT THROUGH COUNTY

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Broward County, Florida, is celebrating this year a decade of county history and progress. Originally a part of Dade County [which stretched] from St. Lucie south, its sturdy pioneer residents have lived in three counties, although under the same roof. By "secession" [the northern portion of] Broward became a part of Palm Beach County and later by legislative enactment, March 1914, [actually April 1915] — just ten years ago — the present county was created, taking its name from the illustrious governor, whose vision of the great future of the fertile Everglade empire led him to take the first official steps looking toward its drainage and reclamation. Four-fifths of Broward County lies in the Everglades now drained by New River and the North and South Canals. In addition 300 miles of other canals and lateral ditches have been added, rapidly placing the muck lands in shape for farming. Vast changes and great developments have occurred in the past decade beyond the fondest expectation of the most ardent booster.

The Dixie Highway rather closely parallels twenty-six miles of Broward's splendid ocean beach, with velvet-like short laterals here and there leading down to the sea. Upon the creation of the new county, one of the first steps

taken by its forward-looking county commissioners was the planting of Australian pine and eucalyptus trees on both sides of the Dixie Highway from the north boundary of the county above Deerfield to the Dade County line, three-quarters of a mile below Hallandale. The Dixie Highway has ever been a source of pride to the people here; it has been kept in the best of condition. The thousands of motorists en route to Fort Lauderdale, Miami, and other points south, find in Brow-

ard County a wide asphalt road, smooth as a floor.

During the past eighteen months Broward County has built fifty-eight miles of oiled roads and boulevards, nine miles of hard-surfaced roads and six large concrete bridges, as well as three steel bridges. Two of the finest of the concrete bridges built appear on the Dixie Highway, one spanning the South Fork, Middle River, and the other the Dania Cut-off Canal to the edge of Dania.

By 1924, when this article first appeared in the State Road Department's magazine, Florida Highways, the Florida Land Boom was beginning, and the Dixie Highway was the busiest road along the lower east coast. Completed through Broward County nine years earlier by an association led by automobile promoter and Miami Beach creator Carl Fisher, the Dixie eventually connected Florida with points as far north as Chicago and Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. As automobiles increased in popularity and availability in the years following World War I, the highway brought thousands of northerners to Florida and was a major factor in ushering in the real estate boom of the mid-1920s.

Despite the Dixie Highway's popularity and significance, its heyday was comparatively short-lived. In 1927, U.S. Highway 1, often referred to as the "Federal Aid Highway" because it was funded partly by the Federal Aid Act of 1916, was completed through Broward County, in some cases bypassing and in others coinciding with the Dixie route.

Beginning on page 38, "A Trip Down The Dixie" offers scenes of the Dixie Highway from Deerfield to Hallandale as they appeared in the late 1910s and 1920s. All photos are from the Historical Commission collections.

There are many points of interest along the Dixie Highway in Broward County from the very northern limits, where one of the five big drainage canals of the county crosses the highway at Deerfield, to Hallandale, where the motorist bids au revoir to Broward County. In winter every depot platform, every siding, every packing house is loaded with thousands of crates of cabbage, beans, potatoes, tomatoes, peas, eggplant, peppers and other vegetables, this being one of the heaviest shipping points of vegetables in the United States during the winter and early spring months.

In Fort Lauderdale, a few blocks to the west of the Dixie Highway, is the village of the proud Seminole Indian, with its thatched huts breathing a hint of the romance of yesterday. A splendid oil road leads west to Davie, the oldest settlement in the Everglades, with its comfortable homes, good schools, ever-productive truck farms and, last but not least, citrus groves recently startling the citrus world with the wonderful fruit produced on the muck lands without fertilizer or cultivation. Penetrating the heart of the business district of Fort Lauderdale, the Dixie Highway crosses beautiful New River, the deepest river for its length in America. It is filled with craft, elegant yachts of all kinds and freighters laden with fruits and vegetables from the Everglade farms along the upper glade canals. Not only does it afford a means of water transportation to the sea and to the upper Everglades, but New River is the delight of anglers from all parts of America; here the mighty tarpon is found at his best, a few miles upstream fresh water trout fishing is good, or, turning the boat in the opposite direction, a few minutes ride to the ocean inlet and there is deep sea fishing and action a-plenty.

Appreciating the magnetic attraction of this abbreviated stream, the original trail makers of the Dixie followed down its south bank lines, with majestic coconut palms, as far as possible.

Below Hallandale the Dixie crosses into Dade County. Years ago the American Fruit Company and the progressive citizens of Hallandale's hustling agricultural community planted hundreds of Australian pines, eucalyptae, oleanders, hibiscus and many other varieties of trees, shrubs and flowering plants along the highway through the town, affording roadside variety.

Nature has indeed been kind to Broward County. The county commissioners of early days in the planting of Australian pines, eucalyptus and other varieties of trees and flowers contributed much to the cause of beautifica-

tion, to say nothing of the stately royal and coconut palms planted by individuals, but there is much yet to be done. For this reason the Beautification Commission has recently been organized by the Chamber of Commerce. It is composed of representatives of all city and county organizations, to further the beautification of the Dixie Highway. The county commissioners have ordered all signs off the right of way. The chairman of the sign removal section of the committee is doing everything possible to remove all signs, both leased and non-leased. Plans are being formulated for additional roadside beautification; protection of the lofty Australian pines from fire; replacing those which have been destroyed, and planting additional trees and shrubs to link up all gaps.

It is the ambition of the Broward Commission to make this the most attractive twenty-six mile vista along the Dixie Highway; many sections especially endowed by nature can scarcely be seen by the visitor for the signs; many a stately pine and live oak is disfigured by a score of faded cloth, wood and tin signs. Why permit the Dixie, the most scenic of National Highways, to remain permanently disfigured when the combined sentiment of the counties along its route can prevent?

The Chamber of Commerce of Fort Lauderdale, which has organized the work of the commission, has adopted the slogan of the Beautification Commission — "Swat the signs and Save the Scenery." The local organization will have the assistance and moral backing of the Florida Development Board and the State Commission. —

The Dixie Highway.



The route of the Dixie Highway through Broward County, 1924. When opened in 1915, the Dixie route linked up a number of existing roads, which explains its numerous twists and turns.

