



Friends of the Museum of the Everglades

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Keeping History Alive at Our Museum

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The Old Laundry Building



This commercial laundry was built in 1927 as part of Barron Collier's company town. Architect William O. Sparklin of Ft. Myers designed the Frame Vernacular building. The clerestory on the roof was added soon after its completion to let out the hot air. Much of the floor is the original Dade County Pine which is so dense that it is unsavory to termites.

The laundry operation was leased to several people, most notably the Echols and Ayers families who lived and worked in the building. Stories are told that the children were given baths in the washing machines and slept on the tables.

Uniforms for Collier Corporation workmen and linens for the Rod & Gun and the Inn were some of the items that kept this laundry busy. It also took in private laundry and eventually did dry cleaning. According to legend, Barron Collier sent his yacht with his personal laundry, as well as the linens from the Useppa Inn.

The laundry closed during World War II due to lack of staff. In the 1950s the building housed offices for the Collier County Development Board who moved to Naples with the rest of the County offices after 1962. It was also used by the Collier & Long insurance agency.

The local Women's Club began renting the building in 1965 and purchased it in 1972. The Women's Club ran a Thrift Shop and rented a since-removed addition to Susie's Subs & Pizza (now next door). The Women's Club disbanded in 1988. The remaining members led by Pauline Reeves, devoted their time and energy to creating a Museum of local history.



The building was restored to its current condition in 1997 through the fund raising efforts of this group, who become the Friends of the Museum of the Everglades in 1992. The Museum was opened on April 26, 1998, as a part of the Collier County Museum system. The local effort brought statewide recognition when Everglades City was honored in 1998 as "Florida's Outstanding Rural Community of the Year".

The old Laundry Building received a State historical marker in 1972 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.