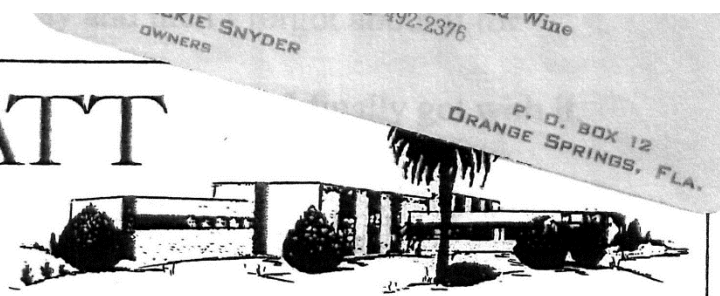


THE KILOWATT

Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Keystone Heights, Fla.



Rain Won't Stop Us BUT Lightning Will

When someone painted the sign "Rain Won't Stop Us But Lightning Will", he probably had never heard of a Cross Florida Barge Canal. In the near future, ferry service across the Oklawaha River at Orange Springs will have to give way to the construction of the canal that will tie the St. Johns River on our east to the Gulf of Mexico on our west. This Orange Springs ferry, as it has been called for over 85 years, has offered easy access for sportsmen and nature lovers to the northwest corner of the Ocala National Forest.

The history of this ferry dates back to 1882. There was no other way to get to the northern section of the National Forest then. The first ferry was poled across. The ferry operator had a long pole that would reach the bottom of the river. He used this pole to push across the swift Oklawaha. Many times they would land on the opposite side farther down river than was planned.

As time passed on, someone got the idea of stretching a cable across the river to serve as a guide. For years it was pulled hand-over-hand from bank to bank.

The next means of propulsion was a gasoline engine rigged much like it would be in an inboard motorboat. For the past several years it has been powered by an outboard motor. Even



FERRY CROSSES river to pick up car approaching from forest side of Oklawaha River. (Note signs on bank of river.)

though the ferry is large enough to hold two automobiles, a small 3.5 hp outboard motor will carry it to the opposite shore in a couple of minutes.

The Orange Springs ferry has not outlived its usefulness. About 4:00 P.M. any week day during school time, an auto or two will appear on the forest side of the river. They do not want to cross; they are waiting for the school bus. The bus brings the children to the ferry; they board the ferry and cross the river to be driven by their parents to their forest homes.

Opening day of hunting season in the forest is probably the busiest day of the year for the ferry. It is not uncommon for 200 or more cars and trucks to take this short cut to some of the best hunting areas in the Ocala National Forest.

The dollar fee to cross on the ferry is probably one of the best buys you

can find. Without the ferry, a trip of 32 miles is necessary to get to the heart of the northwest forest area. The trip would take you south from Orange Springs to Ft. McCoy, east across the bridge at Eureka and then north up the dirt, and often nearly impassable Forest Road No. 77. The distance from Orange Springs across the ferry to this same area is 2.5 miles.

If you want to take a trip on one of the last ferries in Florida, you better hurry. It is anticipated the entire area around the ferry will be flooded before the end of the year.

The loss of the ferry will be felt by many. But many more people will enjoy the new recreation area created by this canal. Boating enthusiasts will have many accessible boat ramps to the canal. They may cruise to either of Florida's coastlines, or fish in the newly formed lakes and reservoirs which will offer fine, new fishing grounds.

AUGUST, 1968

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