



Phone 863.465.2571
123 MAIN DRIVE ★ VENUS, FLORIDA 33960

To: Highlands News-Sun

From: Archbold Biological Station

Date: July 14, 2017

Author: Archbold Biological Station

Richard Archbold and the Glades Electric

Archbold Biological Station founder play key role in founding electric co-op

Richard Archbold was a world renowned explorer, conservationist and philanthropist. He spent his life travelling to new uncharted regions, learning about previously unknown plants and animals, and using his resources to further understanding about the natural world. With the onset of WWII in 1939 Mr. Archbold had to put his explorations on hold. As a result he began a search for an area in the USA that could be his scientific base of operations.

This search eventually led him to Highlands County, FL where he established Archbold Biological Station in 1941. Fred Lohrer, Archbold's Librarian mentioned that "Richard Archbold's earlier life experiences, growing up on a southern quail hunting plantation called Chinquapin near Thomasville, GA and organizing complex overseas expeditions, enabled him to create a tightly run, efficient, yet welcoming place for staff, students, and researchers alike and also instilled in him a strong responsibility to help the surrounding community." During the time that he lived in Florida [1941-1976] he was active locally. He was a founding or participating member of a variety of Highlands County and Lake Placid Civic Associations. He spent time and money on firefighting equipment and crews which were used to fight many local fires. In Mr. Archbold's lifetime he was known in Highlands County for many of these initiatives but, if you asked an old-timer about "the man on Red Hill", there is one community achievement in particular that they would probably mention first and foremost. It is very likely that they would know him as one of the men who helped bring electricity to their homes.

When Archbold first moved here in 1941 most of the area did not yet have access to electricity. He made rural electrification a top priority. In his mind it was crucial that all families in the area had access to safe, affordable, reliable electricity.

Though the mechanism to start a rural electric cooperative had existed since the 1930's Highlands County residents had not had any luck working with the Federal government to create one. It was no secret in the community how Mr. Archbold felt on the subject and according to Ralph V. Wadlow the first Secretary-Treasurer of Glades Electric Cooperative, "local people went to Archbold for help and he responded by prodding the federal government into providing the needed assistance to form the Glades Electrical Cooperative."

Creation of the Cooperative began in earnest in 1944 and according to Fred Lohrer's account, "Richard Archbold was a leader in this effort and one of the founding Directors. In the early days of the Cooperative he personally traveled through Highlands and Glades counties signing-up residents for membership." He received the "30-year Director Service award" on December 4, 1975 for service in the "Florida Rural Electric Cooperative: Director, 1945-1975." He was the very first Vice-President as well and served as either President or Vice-President of the Cooperative until his death.

Occasionally annual meetings of the Cooperative included a raffle, where some expensive items were up for grabs. Archbold was known to enjoy spinning the basket and drawing out numbers for the winning tickets. He hosted several of these annual meetings at his Biological Station.

When Archbold died on August 1, 1976 his life was commemorated by an obituary in the Lake Placid Journal. In addition to accolades about his exploration and his life devoted to science, there was one interesting line that speaks to how the community felt about him. Miriam Beck said he was, "the man whose efforts brought rural electrification to the remote ranches of Lake Placid and who drove his Cadillac through the sandy roads to read meters."

Like many residents of Florida then and now Richard Archbold was a transplant from another state. Few who move can say they did as much for their adopted home as he could say. He created a world-class research station, which continues valuable ecological research decades after its founding. Scientific exploration, understanding and interpreting the natural world, and conserving the habitats of Florida for the future are the key components of Archbold Biological Station's mission. This is Richard Archbold's great legacy, but he also left behind a legacy of civil service to our community.

This civic duty that he represented so well is still on display in many ways today. Perhaps the most shining example of this is the continued existence and growth of the Glades Electric Cooperative. Parts of Glades, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties are still supplied electricity by the Cooperative, over 70 years after Richard Archbold helped local residents to create it.

Photo 1: An outdoor mural in Lake Placid, by Keith Goodson, portrays an early Glades Electric truck with Glades linesmen bringing electricity to a rural home. Photo by Archbold Biological Station.



Photo 2: Richard Archbold on the Caloosahatchee River in 1945. Photo by Leonard J. Brass.

