

# Welcome to The Barnacle Historic State Park!

Just off Main Highway in bustling downtown Coconut Grove awaits a jewel from a quieter time. The park contains one of the oldest houses in Miami-Dade County in its original location and offers a unique opportunity to revisit Old Florida during the Era of the Bay.

## History & Culture

Situated on the shore of Biscayne Bay, The Barnacle was the 19th century home of Ralph Middleton Munroe, one of Coconut Grove's most interesting and influential pioneers. The Florida Park Service acquired the remaining five acres of Munroe's original 40-acre homesite from his descendants in 1973.

Ralph Munroe first visited South Florida in 1877 while on vacation from New York. His next visit to the area was not as pleasant. In 1881, doctors told Munroe that his wife, Eva, had contracted tuberculosis and indicated that a radical change of climate was their best and only hope. Munroe immediately remembered beautiful Biscayne Bay, and at once prepared to take her there. Despite his efforts, illness took its toll. Eva passed away at their camp on the Miami River. Munroe was then faced with news of their infant daughter's death upon his arrival back in New York.

He returned to South Florida in 1882 to visit his wife's grave and to help open a hotel on Biscayne Bay. First known as Bay View Villa, the hotel became Peacock Inn and went on to have a long and profitable history.

Ralph Munroe purchased 40 acres of bayfront land in 1886 for \$400 in addition to one of his sailboats, Kingfish, valued at an additional \$400.

His boathouse was built in 1887 and he lived on its upper floor until his main house was completed in 1891. The house, a one-story structure, was raised off the ground on wood pilings. Its central room was octagonal in shape and Munroe came to call his home "The Barnacle," presumably because it resembled one. It remained a bungalow until more space was needed in 1908. At that time the whole structure, as it stood, was lifted and a new first floor inserted below. The Barnacle survived the disastrous 1926 hurricane and Hurricane Andrew in 1992 with only minimal damage.

Ralph Munroe's principal passion in life was designing yachts. Boats were the major form of transportation in the early days and yachting a popular sport. Many South Floridians commissioned Munroe to design their yachts. In 1887, a group of residents formed the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club, electing Munroe as Commodore, a title he held for 22 years. In his lifetime, the Commodore drew plans for 56 different boats. Micco, the last of Munroe's boats in existence, was displayed at the park until Hurricane Andrew reduced the 101-year-old vessel to fragments. Egret, a replica of Munroe's 28-foot modified sharpie, is now moored offshore.

The autumn of 1894 marked a new beginning for Ralph Munroe. He met Miss Jessie Wirth while on a cruise with friends. They were married that next summer, and began a long and happy home life at The Barnacle. In 1900, Jessie gave birth to a daughter, Patty, who was followed two years later by her brother, Wirth. The family took frequent cruises on the bay and the children learned to sail at a very early age.



### Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Recreation and Parks

### The Barnacle Historic State Park

3485 Main Highway  
Coconut Grove, Florida 33133  
Phone: 305-442-6866

[FloridaStateParks.org](http://FloridaStateParks.org)

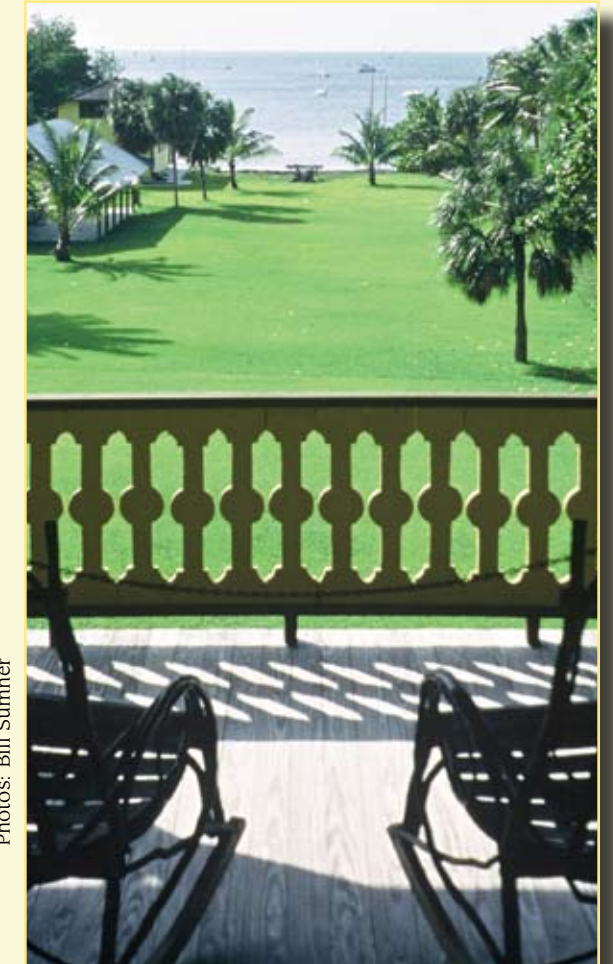
## Park Guidelines

- For your safety: please do not feed or attempt to touch any animals.
- Intoxicants, unsecured firearms, and smoking are prohibited.
- Pets are not allowed in the historic structures. Service animals for those with disabilities are welcome in all areas of the park.
- The park is disability friendly. Should you need assistance to enable your full participation, please contact the park office.
- Many of the buildings and trees are 100 years old. Please do not climb on them.
- Grounds are available for wedding and party rental.
- Open 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., with tours at 10 and 11:30 a.m.; 1 and 2:30 p.m., Friday through Monday and for groups by reservation Tuesday through Thursday.
- Park is closed New Year's, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.
- An entrance fee is required.

## Southeast Florida

# The Barnacle Historic State Park

*A treasured remnant of the Era of the Bay*



Photos: Bill Summer



*...the Real Florida*

**National Gold Medal Winner**

Florida State Parks - "America's First Two-Time Winner"



**FLORIDA  
State Parks**  
*...the Real Florida*



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# Natural Communities

The road into this historic site from busy Main Highway passes through a forest of tropical hardwood hammock. In the 1920s it was an example of the original landscape within the limits of Miami. Today, it is one of the last remnants of the once vast "Miami Hammock." Commodore Munroe preserved the original hammock between the road and The Barnacle, cutting out only a winding buggy trail barely wide enough for one vehicle. As a result, the forest contains many old trees, and left in its natural state, The Barnacle appears much as it did in Munroe's day.



## Directions

From US-1, go east on SW 27th Avenue. Turn right on South Bayshore Drive. Bayshore becomes McFarlane. Continue to Grand Avenue/Main Highway intersection. Take sharp left onto Main Highway.

# Real Fun in ...the Real Florida<sup>SM</sup>

As a seaman, naturalist, and photographer, Commodore Munroe was a man who cherished the natural world around him. It is a fitting legacy that we, too, can share at The Barnacle Historic State Park.

Enjoy sitting in the rocking chairs on the spacious porch used as a gathering place or on a bench under a tree for solitude. **Guided tours** are available to the public Friday through Monday and to organized groups by reservation Tuesday through Thursday. Seasonal activities include **old-fashioned picnics** and **musical events** under the moonlit skies of South Florida. Other seasonal activities can be found at [www.FloridaStateParks.org/TheBarnacle](http://www.FloridaStateParks.org/TheBarnacle).

Become a volunteer and/or join The Barnacle Society to help preserve this historic treasure. Call (305) 442-6866 for more details.



1500s: First Europeans arrive

1813-14: Creek War

1891: The Barnacle is built

1973: Descendants of Munroe sell The Barnacle to the Florida Park Service

## Florida Parks Timeline

BP (Before Present)  
Early Human Habitation

1500-1700

1513-1564: Spanish exploration  
1565-1763: Spanish colonization  
1763-1783: British Territory  
1775-1783: American Revolution

1800

1783-1821: Spanish Territory  
1821-1845: U.S. Territory of Florida  
1845: Florida becomes 27th State  
1861-1865: American Civil War

1900

1920s: Florida Land Boom  
1929: The Great Depression  
1940s on: WWII & Population Growth

2000

1999 & 2005: Florida State Parks voted #1 in the nation

7500 BP: Early Archaic people settle area

1700s: Seminoles move to Florida

1851: Ralph Middleton Munroe is born in New York City

1886-87: Munroe purchases land on Biscayne Bay and builds boathouse

1933: Commodore Ralph Munroe dies