

Escaping To Freedom In The Bahamas



*"Flight to Freedom", By James Hutchinson © 1976
Courtesy of the Historical Museum of South Florida*

In the early 1820's, enslaved Africans, runaways, and "Black Seminoles" seeking freedom from slave catchers and plantation masters, secretly worked their way down to CAPE FLORIDA. They met with bold captains of sloops from the British Bahamas who offered transportation across the Gulf Stream. In 1821 as reported by eyewitnesses, some 300 freedom seekers bartered for passage aboard 27 sloops, or chose to sail Indian dugout canoes 107 nautical miles to secluded Andros Island. The construction of the CAPE FLORIDA LIGHTHOUSE by the Federal Government in 1825 effectively blocked the escape route.

Bahamian descendents, some of whom still call themselves "Black Seminoles", live in the Red Bays settlement on Andros. Cuba, Haiti and other islands in the Caribbean region were additional destinations along the Florida Underground Railroad.

BILL BAGGS CAPE FLORIDA STATE PARK takes its name from a visionary Miami newspaper editor and civil rights activist from the 1960's.

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UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
NETWORK TO FREEDOM