



# **Death in the Everglades: The Murder of Guy Bradley, America's First Martyr to Environmentalism (Florida History and Culture)**

*Stuart B. McIver*

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"This is a fascinating account of the Florida plume hunters, the devastation they wrought, and the slow, painful progress--exemplified bravely on the hunting grounds by Guy Bradley--of the bird protection movement that ultimately succeeded."--Oliver H. Orr, Jr., Library of Congress (retired), and author of *Saving American Birds: T. Gilbert Pearson and the Founding of the Audubon Movement*

"A moving account of a raw frontier and a hero who lost his life trying to enforce the law."--Paul S. George, editor, *Tequesta*

Death in the Everglades chronicles the demise of one of 20th-century Florida's most enduring folk heroes. The murder of Guy Bradley represents a milestone not only in the saga of the Everglades but also in the broader history of American environmentalism. This fascinating biography of his abbreviated but eventful life is emblematic of the struggle to tame the Florida frontier without destroying it. As Stuart McIver unfolds the story behind this famous but little-known crime, he also provides a window into Florida history during the creation of modern South Florida.

Born in Chicago in 1870, Bradley moved to Florida as a young boy in 1876. Nineteen years later his father became associated with the developer and railroad magnate Henry Flagler, and in 1898 the family moved to the isolated coastal village of Flamingo. Situated on the southeastern fringe of the Everglades, Flamingo was a flash point in an emerging ecological battleground that drew the Bradleys and other pioneer families into a conflict later dubbed "the Plume Wars." At the turn of the century, the mass killing of egrets and other plume birds for feathers to adorn women's hats was a serious concern among the nation's growing cadre of environmentalists, especially among those who belonged to the Audubon Society, a conservation organization founded in 1886.

In 1901, at the urging of Audubon Society leaders and the American Ornithologists' Union, the Florida legislature enacted a bird protection law that provided for the hiring of local game wardens, and a year later Guy Bradley assumed the dual role of Monroe County's game warden and deputy sheriff. For the next three years, from 1902 to 1905, Bradley matched wits and sometimes weapons with an array of plume hunters and other nefarious characters, some of whom were strangers but many of whom were friends or acquaintances of the warden or his family. In the end, Bradley was shot and killed by Walter Smith, a man he had known for nearly a decade. How this murder came about, what happened to Smith and others left behind, and how Bradley's demise and subsequent controversies affected the environmental movement are intriguing questions that frame McIver's richly textured narrative.

With the instincts and skills of a master storyteller, McIver--long one of Florida's most historically minded journalists--has recaptured a tale for the ages, a story of personal sacrifice and collective awakening that altered the course of the state's natural and human history. Bradley should not be forgotten, and this book should not be overlooked by anyone seeking a full understanding of how the Everglades became a treasured but imperiled place.

Stuart B. McIver was a prolific journalist who also wrote numerous books, more than 500 magazine articles, and documentary films, for which he also worked as producer.

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