

"KILLER WATSON"

Grandma Carroll's version -

① Just before the 1910 storm broke, about October 10th no doubt, the "Killer" Watson trouble came up. T.J. Watson lived on one of the islands below Marco and he often came up to Ft. Myers and different places to get people to work for him. It was said that many times they were never seen again after they went down to work for Watson.

At this time it seems that Watson's "nigger" had come up from Chatham Bend "scart to death" with the news that Watson had killed "Big Sis". Big Sis had worked for Watson for some time and when she insisted on having some of the money that was coming to her, Watson killed her, or had her killed.

It seems that Jim Cannon and his son, Dana, were going to the Clam Bar when they found Big Sis floating in the water near Watson's house. They stopped and pulled her partially out of the water, enough to recognize her, when a voice from the shore yelled "I'll rake care of that" and although they didn't see anyone they took out for the Clam Bar right then.

So Granddad Carroll, Gene Johnson, Sam Williams, Jack Collier and perhaps others, took the schooner "Falcon" and carried the negro to Ft. Myers to hold him and a witness. It was while the "Falcon" was on this trip that the 1910 storm broke.

② On their way back they met the sheriff who was on his way to get Watson, and they told him they had taken the nigger to Ft. Myers, and that he might as well go on back and let them finish it and they would report to him. So they (the men) went on to Marco as soon as they could.

Watson came up to Chokoloskee Island, and the men there told him to go get Cox, who was his buddy, and who they understood was the one who Watson had had kill Big Sis Smith. Watson went off and in due time they saw him coming back, but alone. When he got near he held up a bloody hat and said "I've killed him and threw him overboard and here is his hat". Then he reached for his gun - or so the men thought - and they drew their guns and killed him.

Then they took him to Rabbit Key, rolled him in a blanket and buried him with a rope tied around his neck, and the other end of the rope tied to a buttonwood tree.

This sentence always bothered me - I couldn't understand the reason for the rope. Tonight in typing this, I asked Ernest what this meant and he explained it thus: There was no-one to claim the body immediately, although Mr. Watson had a couple of sons somewhere in this section. Rabbit Key was a sand key, instead of shell and so better for burying. The blanket was tied around the body, and the end of the rope