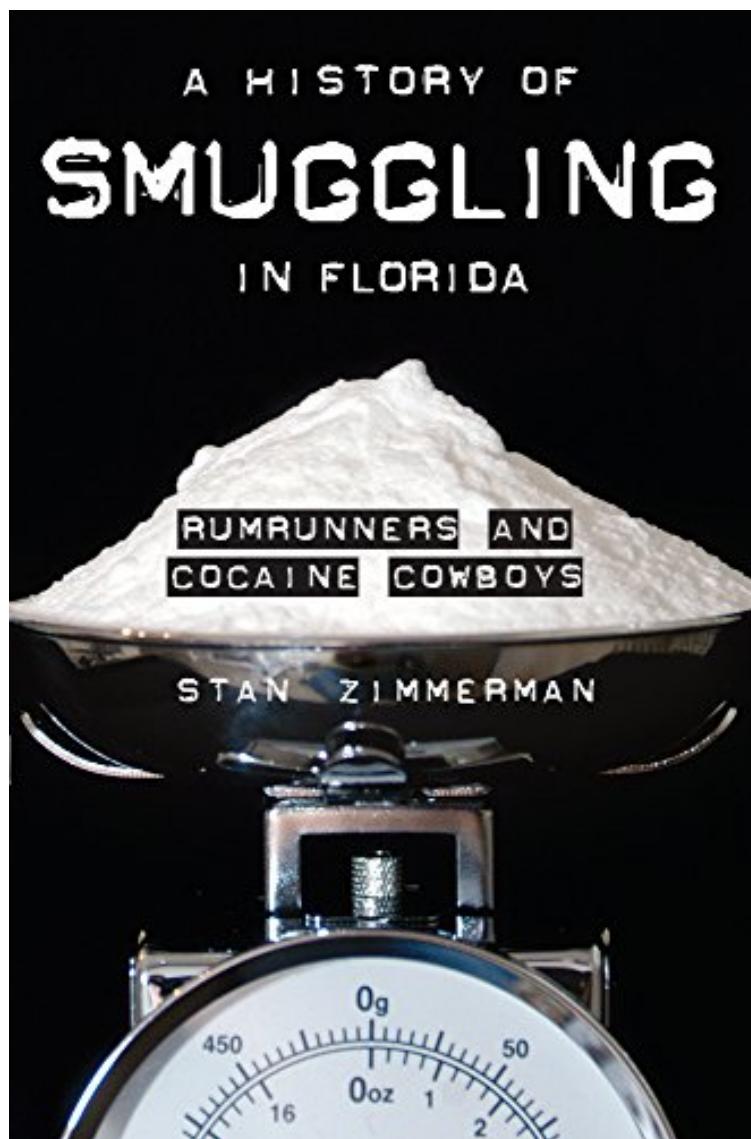


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A History of Smuggling in Florida: Rumrunners and Cocaine Cowboys

Stan Zimmerman

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Think you're a smuggler? With that box of Cuban cigars or those unclaimed duty-free souvenirs from last summer's trip to Paris? Untaxed and untraced commerce-call it contraband-is a trillion-dollar-per-year global business. New technologies to discover and curb smuggling are met by equally well-equipped perpetrators, determined to stay below the radar. With its long coastline, hundreds of remote landing strips and airports clogged with sun-seeking tourists, Florida is a superhighway of smuggling. It is easy to move illegal goods like weapons, drugs, slaves, exotic birds and flowers; all while avoiding the best efforts of U.S. and international customs authorities. Who does this smuggling? Well one Florida governor and the wife of another, for starters. Hardscrabble commercial fishermen, Spanish explorers, Mafia mobsters, crew chiefs for fruit pickers, respected attorneys, just about everybody in Florida is a smuggler. Smuggling touches every major episode in Florida's history; it's discovery and settlement, the Seminole Wars, and the Civil War were shaped by smugglers. The state's repeated land booms-including today's-are heavily influenced by smuggler profits. Today's business economy is warped by the manipulation of smugglers laundering their profits. Stan Zimmerman means neither to vilify nor glorify these entrepreneurs. Nor does he intend to leave any stoned unturned or suitcase unopened. With stories of drug runners and prostitute pushers along side the exploits and follies of Florida's elite, we are able to see why throughout its long history, Florida has always been a true "smuggler's paradise."