

South Florida History

M A G A Z I N E

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On the Cover: A flight student practices the parachute jump part of the training given Allied airmen in World War II.

South Florida History

M A G A Z I N E

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Editor's Notes

by Stuart McIver

Our new pictorial feature, *Through the Lens*, has been well received. Fortunately, there seems to be no shortage of superb pictures of life in this strange, exotic world at the tip of the peninsula. In our last *South Florida History Magazine* we featured our crime scene. This quarter we are rebounding into a kinder, gentler theme - the music of South Florida.

Actually, very few areas outside of Nashville, New Orleans and the Cajun country can claim a music of their own. Too many forces impact a city or a region to let you wrap it all up in a neat package. This is particularly true in this state where growth is constantly changing the scenery and the players.

One of the earliest musicians in South Florida was a Lake Worth plume hunter named Jesse Malden, a fiddler from Georgia who played "backwoods tunes" in the 1870s. He was soon followed by Uncle John Cleminson, of Jupiter. Uncle John's audience was his team of mules. They pulled the hack carrying the mail from Jupiter to Juno. Author Marjory Stoneman Douglas called him the "fiddling mailman."

Early Palm Beach, before Henry Flagler turned it into America's premier winter resort, was entertained by the dance music of the seven-man Hypoluxo String Band, made up of musicians who lived on or near Hypoluxo Island. Its first violin was young Guy Bradley, who would later become the first Audubon warden killed in the line of duty. Among the tunes they played were *The Girl I Left Behind Me* and *Home, Sweet Home*. The tune must not have made much difference to them. One of their musical mentors advised them, *Time, time, just give them time, that's all they want. It doesn't make any difference what kind of tune you play as long as it has the right time.*

The great Land Boom of the Roaring Twenties ushered in a new era of celebrity composers, musicians and bands, particularly in Miami, where the magic of the name produced such classics as *Underneath Miami's Dreamy Moon*, *Along Miami's Shore*, *While Miami Dreams* and *Miami Moon*. The best known of all Miami songs, *Moon Over Miami*, came later, a



Boomtime sheet music.

hour just before dawn after seeing the famous train in the Jacksonville station.

Later the Florida Keys would become popular with songwriters, particularly after Jimmy Buffett renamed Key West Margaritaville. Other composers would pick up on the musical sounds of the words Key Largo, while bypassing such locales as Cudjoe and Big Pine Key.

In the future cultural historians will look back with fondness on the impact of Gloria Estefan and the Miami Sound Machine on South Florida music. And if they dig past the sounds of the conga into the folk music of the time, they'll also uncover the songs of James Billie, head of the Seminole Tribe and a performer in his own right. His album, *Native Son*, includes the catchy *Big Alligator*, which has received heavy play on country music stations in Clewiston, LaBelle and Okeechobee. The song tells the story of Hul-pah-te-cho-bee, the big gator who swallowed a little boy's dog. Life in South Florida.

child of the depression years.

Other Dade County locales also spun off boomtime tunes, *Coral Gables, I Love You, When the Moon Shines in Coral Gables, Dreams of Fulford-by-the-Sea*, and a foxtrot named *Tamiami Trail*.

One of the most popular of all Florida songs is *The Orange Blossom Special*, a standard for bluegrass fiddlers all over the country. In 1938 Chubby Wise, a struggling cab driver, wrote the song in a half



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Riddle's "Wild Blue Yonder"

His aviation crews prepared U.S. and British Air crews for global war

by Steve Glassman



Cowgirl Emma Marie Vance christens Riddle Aeronautical Institute facility at Carlstrom Field, near Arcadia. John Paul Riddle, wearing cowboy hat, is flanked by two generals.

Among Miami's many early aeronautical establishments was one which could claim among its varied accomplishments: to have trained 2000 British Royal Air Force fliers, up to a tenth of all American World War II pilots, countless airframe and powerplant mechanics, a multitude of aircraft production workers, and the most notorious exotic dancer of the age.

In addition, the same institution ran an all-women flight training base, counted among its employees the national tennis champion, worked twenty-four hours a day overhauling aircraft engines and instruments, and was arguably the most peculiarly South Floridian of all South Florida aviation establishments. This company was not Eastern, Pan American, or National Airlines, all of which had large presences or headquarters in the area. Nor was it either branch of the armed forces, although both recognized South Florida's strategic importance, most notably by locating a \$6 million blimp facility south of Miami. (Metrozoo now occupies the site.) Nor was the institution one primarily interested in manufacturing such as Intercontinent Aircraft Corporation.

Rather it was the Embry-Riddle School of Aviation, whose South Florida corporate presence in the fall of 1939 was the not very imposing one of five employees, two of whom were company officers.

The beginning of this "most peculiarly South Florida" story starts not in Florida at all, but in Cincinnati in 1925 when the 23-year-old John Paul Riddle teamed up with T. Higbee Embry to form Embry-Riddle Company. Embry was a flying enthusiast (he bought the first Waco 9 to roll off the assembly

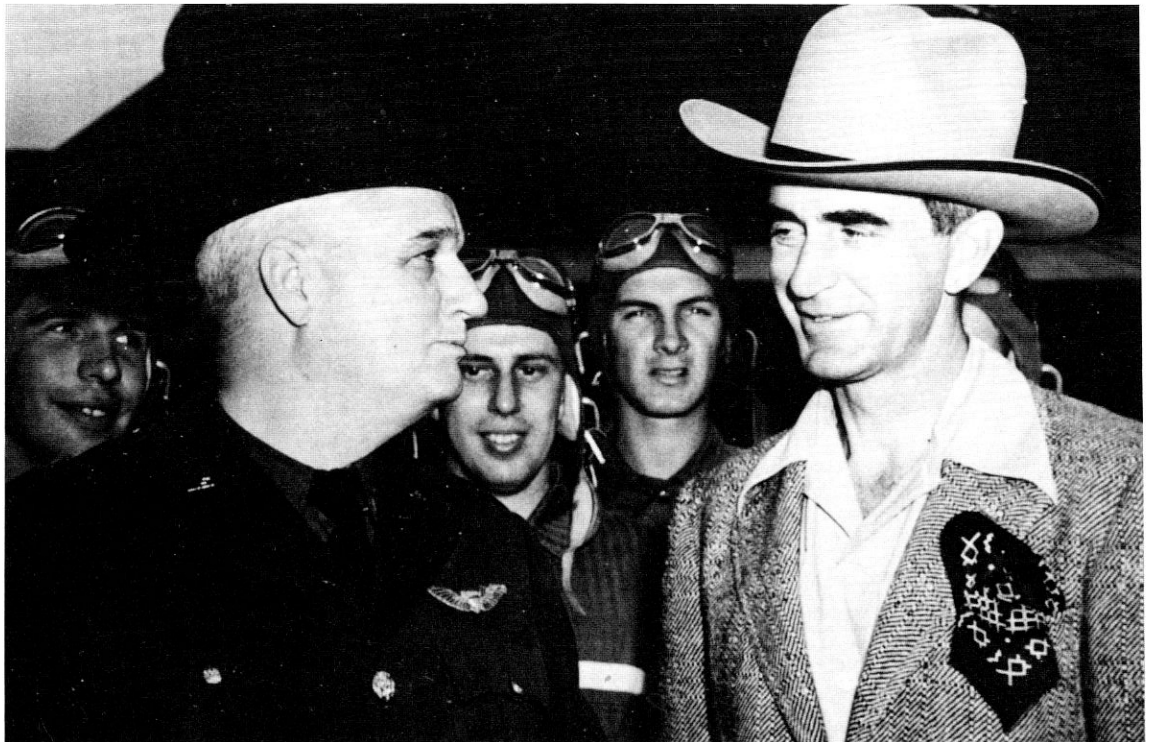
line) and an older businessman with money. Riddle, though born only a year and a half before Kitty Hawk, was long in tooth so far as aviation savvy went. He'd gone through the Army Air Service Mechanics School as well as Army flight school. When he took a "plane into the air," he, in his own words, "knew everything that made [it] tick." After Riddle got out of the Army, he barnstormed with a Flying Jenny that he'd bought for \$250, gave joy rides at county fairs, flew air mail in the upper south and midwest, and taught, among others, T. Higbee Embry to fly.

The fledgling company offered in its first year an impressive list of services: sales franchises for Waco aircraft, air-taxi service, flight school, barnstorming, advertising leaflet dropping, and so on. However, the bottom line of its ledger books was far from pleasing: one Waco sold (to Embry's mother), eight flight students enrolled, one contract for dropping leaflets (most of which—the pilot feared—blew into the neighboring county). But by the second year, when the twenties began to roar, Embry and Riddle's fortunes howled too. They sold more planes than Waco could deliver, had an additional 80 flight students, and had been awarded an air-mail contract (with the lucrative side benefit of carrying passengers).

Prosperity gave Embry and Riddle the opportunity to experiment creatively. Some of their ideas were almost farcical—using homing pigeons to communicate with the ground, for instance. Others such as starting an aeronautical university were a bit visionary but not fundamentally far fetched. The Embry-Riddle flight school was the largest op-

erated from one airport in the country; its ground school instructors, who taught such topics as meteorology, aerial navigation, engines, and rigging, were all registered air-mail pilots with more than 2000 flight hours; the school was one of the first five (out of the 409 in the country) to be certified by the U.S. government. Yet another idea, namely the expansion of their air-mail contracts, was in a sense too good--for Messrs. Embry and Riddle.

By 1929, local capitalists could not supply all the money Embry-Riddle needed. Another fledgling air company, the Aviation Corporation, stepped in with the needed funds. For a time, Embry-Riddle operated its air-mail (and passenger service) on a semi-autonomous basis, but the crunch caused by the Depression led the parent company to insist Embry-Riddle close its flying school. Ultimately, both Embry and Riddle cut ties with what was left of the company they had founded, by then known as the



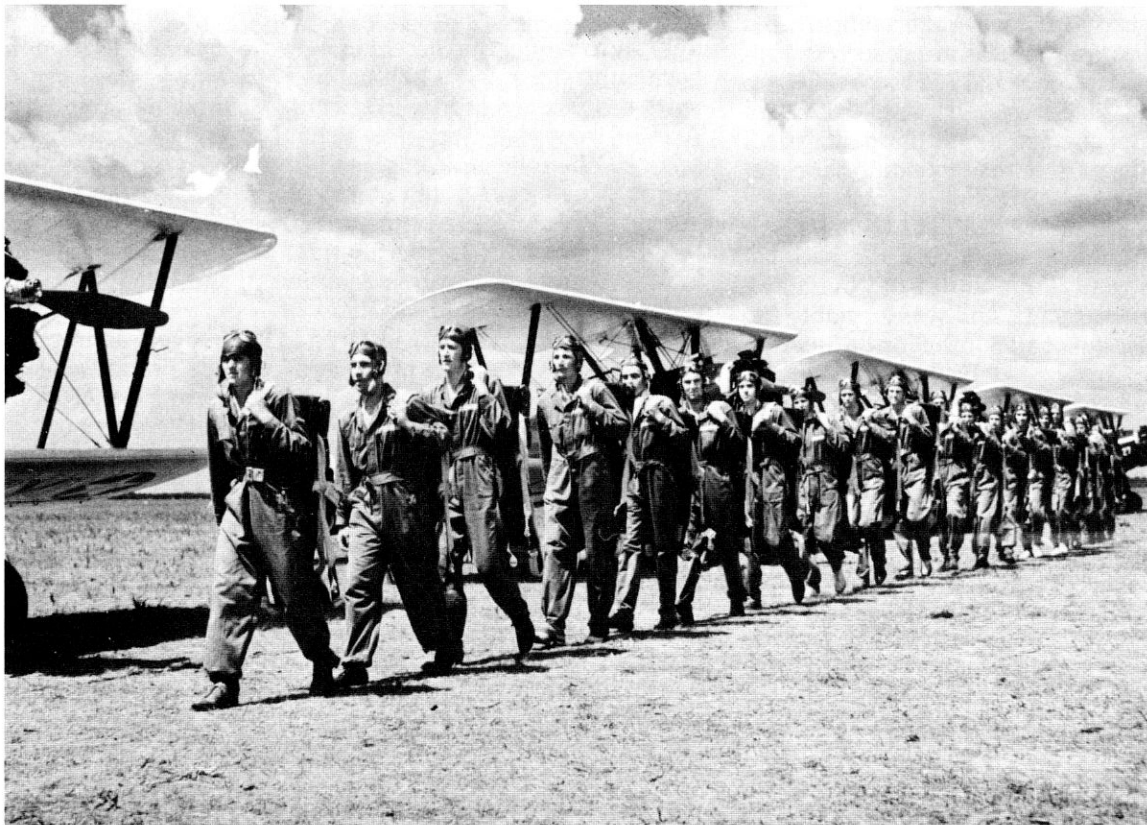
Brigadier General C.C. Brant, commander of Randolph Field, Texas, the so-called West Point of the Air, chats with John Paul Riddle, wearing cowboy hat, as flight cadets look on.

Embry-Riddle Division of American Airways. Embry went to California; Riddle came South.

In late 1939, J. Paul Riddle, showing the sort of forethought that characterized the nation's best leaders of the interwar period, reestablished the Embry-Riddle School of Aviation on MacArthur (then called County) Causeway between Miami and Miami Beach.

At first the name of the institution must have sounded a bit grandiose, even to its founder, since the "base" employed only two flight instructors and one mechanic and had but one pontoon-rigged plane. But Riddle, like the federal government, was not unmindful of the events in Europe (Nazi Germany had invaded Poland two short months before), nor, as an aviation enthusiast, was he unaware of the role air power was bound to play as the war expanded.

And indeed within a month the Embry-Riddle School of Aviation secured a contract from the Civil Aeronautics Administration to train 60 civilian pilots (all University of



Flight students march to their Stearman trainers.



Frank Beeson, left, the first flight student to arrive at Carlstrom, checks in with Len Povey, general manager at RAI. Beeson would go on to become one of the first American RAI alumni to shoot down enemy aircraft and, sadly, one of the first lost in action—in the airwar over New Guinea.

Miami students) and by the following summer the school was committed to teach about 400 more to fly. But Riddle's thinking far outstripped those paltry figures. He had already opened a land-based flight school, where, among others, Tine Davis, one of the Miami brothers who built their father's Miami grocery store into the Winn-Dixie supermarket chain, was a flight instructor. As the foreign wars made the

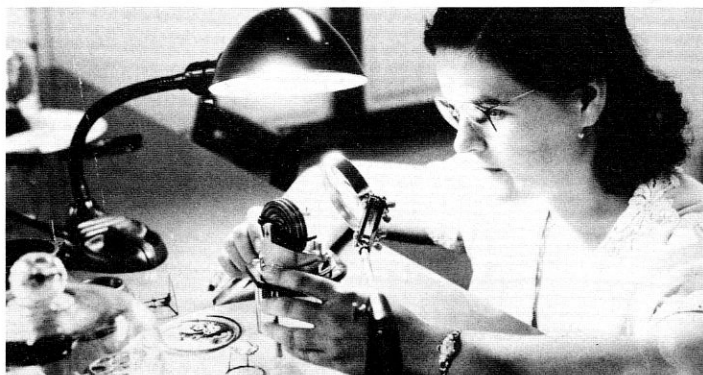
one. It had broken the heart and fortunes of its builder, one Joachim Fritz, an immigrant Bavarian dairyman, who had the misfortune of starting construction in 1925 just as the South Florida real-estate bubble was about to burst. Rather than house the wealthy convalescents Fritz imagined, the building had in the intervening fifteen years been called home by several thousand laying hens, a mushroom grower,

domestic aviation industry boom, Riddle made plans to supply the industry with personnel.

Therefore, he secured one whole wing of the mammoth eight-story old Fritz Hotel at 3240 NW 27th Avenue. Superstitious locals who knew the history of the hotel (one newspaperman claimed, tongue-and-cheek, that the building gave vent to the expression "on the fritz") must have wondered if J. Paul Riddle had fallen under the building's baneful influence. Originally called the Miami Sanitarium-Health Hotel, the building had proved neither healthful nor rehabilitative for any-



"We Keep 'Em Flying" was the institute's World War II photo signature, (depicting left to right) a flight student, an aircraft engineering student, a woman flight instructor, an aircraft mechanic, a flight cadet from Great Britain's Royal Air force and a welder.



About a third of the employees at Embry-Riddle's instrument division in Miami during World War II were women.

and a concrete warehouseman.

However, by the fall of 1940, Riddle had acquired the entire 250,000 square feet of the old hotel except for space left to the Weather Bureau. The structure was rechristened in the minds of Miamians as the Aviation Building, a name that stuck for the rest of the edifice's twenty-odd-year life span. In the meantime, the school spent hundreds of thousands of dollars finishing the building and refitting it for administrative offices, dormitories, the ground school and, most especially, for technical labs. The Aviation Building became the center of Embry-Riddle's technical division, where over 500 students were enrolled by the summer of 1940.

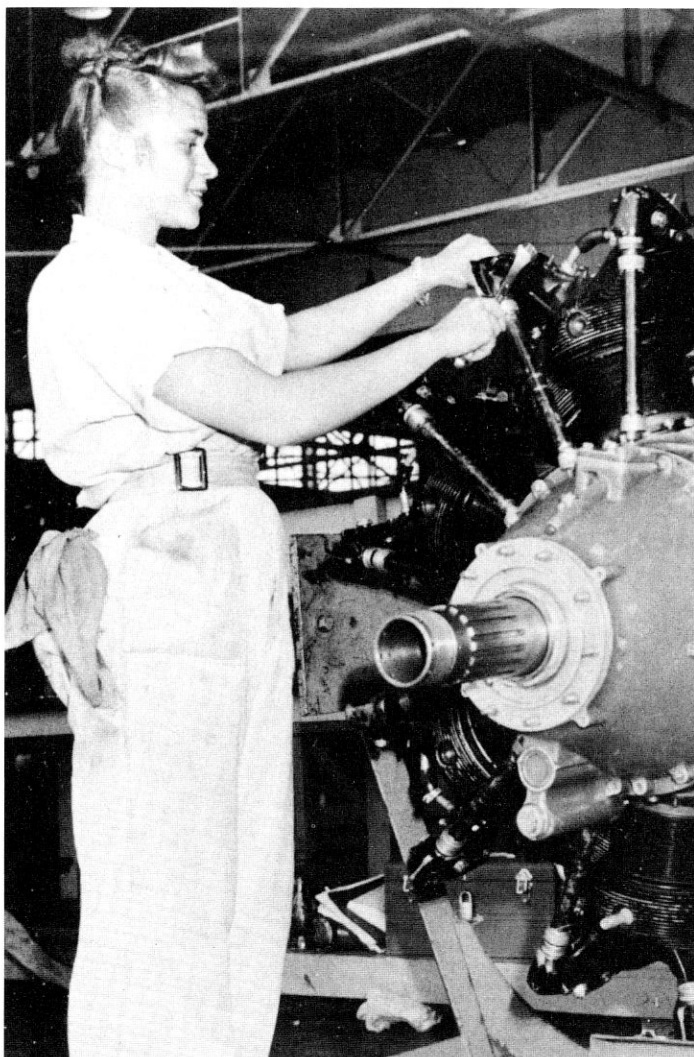
Here Riddle, harking back to his knowledge of what made planes tick, established courses of study in Aircraft Body and Engine Mechanics (equivalent to the modern day airframe and powerplant specialties), Radio Communications and Maintenance, Instrument Technician, Aircraft Drafting and Design, and Welding and Sheet Metal. As the school's 1943 catalog explained, the courses were divided into two sorts, those that a student took to qualify him (or her--both the text and accompanying photos suggested women were welcome at Embry-Riddle) for a job in the booming aviation industry and those that prepared him/her for a career in aviation. For instance, those who enrolled in the sheet metal course could go through a progressive series of three five-week courses. The individual could stop anywhere along the line, for as the catalog explained, *Your subsequent position in the aircraft industry is usually determined by one thing alone--your past experience record. The airplane manufacturers, the Armed Services, and the United States Employment Service need aviation craftsmen right now. If you want to do your part in the present emergency and qualify for an immediate job in the world's most important industry, investigate our 'craft courses.'*

A more far-sighted person--one "who wishes to make a career of aviation"--was urged to pursue one of the specialist courses. Successful completion of such courses as the Aircraft Mechanic and Engine Mechanic (which allowed the graduate to take the exam for the highest CAA rating) was likened to a student's finishing medical school "in a career sense." Naturally, there was an element of hype in all this; after all, Riddle was competing in a tough labor market.

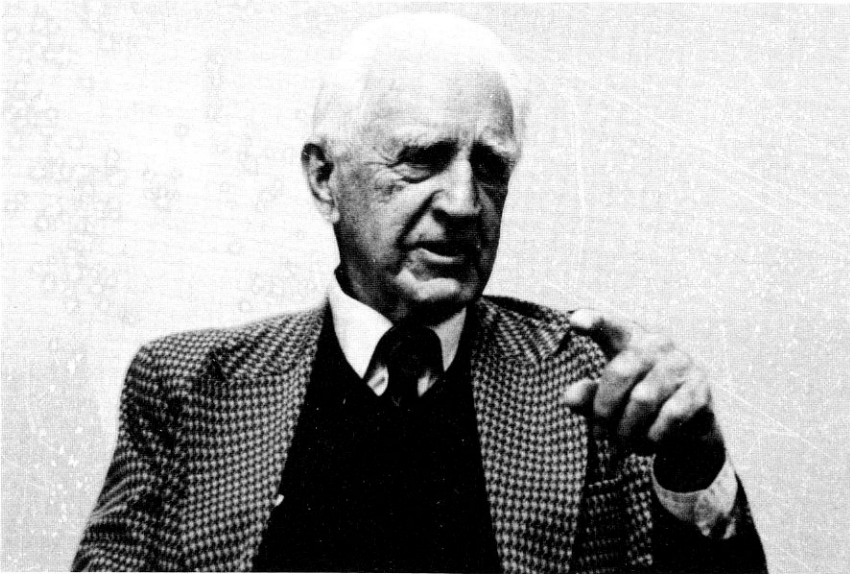
But also there is heartfelt conviction, the conviction of a man with broad experience in the aviation industry --from grease monkey to airline executive--who no doubt could have put his talents to much more lucrative endeavors but who chose to turn his hand to training young persons. This conviction shines through in a statement J. Paul Riddle made earlier in the catalog. "Our first job is," he wrote, "to insure victory, and here at the Embry-Riddle School of Aviation all

our facilities and energies are focused on this objective. We cannot help but realize, however, the vital part aviation will play in peace and in post-war reconstruction. The development of aviation after this war will parallel the growth of the automobile industry after the last war. Entire new continents are opening and people are being forced to shake off centuries of living habits. Not only in America, but throughout the world the aircraft industry will continue to expand. It will undoubtedly dominate the commerce and trade of the post-war world. The question may be asked: 'What about after the war? Won't there be hundreds of thousands of aircraft workers and pilots?' Our answer is: The trained Specialist is always at a premium. There can be no question about the future of America nor of America's aviation. Both are brilliant and secure!"

For the time being, however, J. Paul Riddle's main problem was to keep his instructorships staffed. After all, there were all those tempting offers in the industry itself. And then, of course, there was that perhaps less tempting but even harder force to avoid. The Draft. In February of 1943, his official in charge of physical training, the tennis celebrity Don Budge gave notice that he had succumbed. At the time, Budge was the defending national professional tennis champ having dueled Bobby Riggs for the title the previous summer. While an amateur back in '36, '37 and '38, Budge had



An aircraft mechanic at the seaplane base on MacArthur Causeway, run mostly by women. A newspaperman once said the tool benches were clean enough to make biscuits on.



John Paul Riddle today.

won the national singles title and then had gone on to Wimbledon to collect crowns in both '37 and '38. After that, he turned professional for a \$75,000 guarantee to barnstorm the country playing the likes of Ellsworth Vines, Fred Perry, and Bill Tilden. None of that, however, could prevent his Oakland draft board from reclassifying him, and off to the Army Don Budge went.

Embry-Riddle had hired its first woman flight instructor, Helen Cavis, as early as the summer of 1941. Like Budge, Miss Cavis was something of a socialite and celebrity (her father had been a bigwig in the Tennessee Valley Authority) but, unlike Budge, her position at Embry-Riddle was secured solely on her merits as an aviatrix. Miss Cavis, although only 27 in 1941, had held a commercial pilot's license for six years, being one of the first women in the country to obtain the right to fly aircraft of any type or size. Even in 1941, although over 200 women held private pilot's licenses, only 160 had a commercial rating. Despite the blandishments of the British government which offered her \$150 a week plus a \$600 bonus to ferry bombers from the states to England, she went to work as a flight instructor at the sea-plane base where she taught the likes of Dorothy Ashe (daughter of the University of Miami president), Elaine Devery, Jeanne Small, Clarissa Ellis, Irene Cropt, and Virginia Sheffield to fly. Some of these women students, like Ms. Devery, were training for the express purpose of taking the high-paying ferry-pilot job Cavis turned down. Later, Cavis was transferred to the Embry-Riddle Facility at Municipal Airport as a flight commander where she became primarily responsible for training Navy cadets.

As the shortages, both in labor and material, intensified, Embry-Riddle increasingly developed a grow-your-own mentality. By early 1942, Embry-Riddle began teaching technical classes in the Coral Gables Coliseum and the Instrument Division was housed in the Colonnade Building, also in Coral Gables, in the then-extraordinary luxury of an air-conditioned suite of rooms where the floors were vacuumed twice daily. (The workers were similarly pampered by having soft drinks and coffee at their beck and call while aural stimulation was provided by a radio-phonograph.) Shortly afterward, as Embry-Riddle developed the Overhaul Division to condition military airplane engines once they hit

the 600-hour mark, any facility that could be found was rented.

According to Joseph Horton, the maintenance superintendent, the engines were "carried rapidly around the lot via [an] old Model A" which Embry-Riddle technicians had stripped down and refitted and which "tow[ed] the engines] through the depot with production line efficiency." (Riddle technicians sometimes turned their knowledge to personal gain as well. For instance, Riddle technical student William Parry of Miami reconditioned a 1910 Stanley Steamer to beat the gas rationing.) Likewise, industry's inability to deliver on backlogged orders forced Riddle technicians to design and build engine stands, soundproofing cells, and so on, which, as it happened, were actually superior to the off-the-shelf commercial product.

However, the school's most brilliant grow-your-own stroke came in the way of its ability to train its own employees and instructors. With men liable to the draft or, because of employer

bias, more likely to be offered higher paying production and maintenance jobs, Embry-Riddle became one of the first national institutions to turn to women. In the words of Joseph Horton again, *We discovered that the women who had used their hands in the past, such as typists, seamstresses--those, too, who could play the piano--quickly became adapted to their new work... It is interesting to note the varied backgrounds which have produced these successful workers. There is a president of the Junior League, a show girl, models, housewives.*

For many of the production-line jobs--ultimately more than a third were staffed by women--the workers were given instruction for as little as two weeks before they assumed their duties. However, women were by no means relegated to semi-skilled positions. By late 1942, the sea-plane base on the causeway had become a mostly female operation, where among others Howard Baker, the future Tennessee senator and White House chief of staff, then a fledgling naval aviator, earned his aerial spurs. The base's director was Ruth Norton, a native of Seattle whose earlier jobs included teaching psychology at the universities of Hawaii and Yale, doing anthropological research, and buying for New York and Chicago department stores. Flight instructors included Mrs. Stephen Grant, who had long experience as a pilot, and Mrs. A. J. Bertram, who had trained at Embry-Riddle. Rosalie Burt, a Rhode Island U. grad in nutrition and Gloria Van Riper, a "tall, lush blonde" former New York clothes model worked on the ground crew. These women left a peculiarly feminine stamp on the base--a newspaperman reported the machine shop bench was clean enough to mix biscuits on. But the work they did, training pilots, 60% of whom were destined for the military, was the same Embry-Riddle did at its five other flight-training bases.

Similarly, by early 1943 about 25 women were teaching technical courses at the Aviation Building for salaries of up to \$300 a month. Most had a year or two of college and all were over 25. Some like Jean Gridlebaugh, who taught a course in hydraulic landing gears and who had logged 250 hours in the air, were "crazy about flying and anything to do with planes." Others simply drifted into the job and by virtue of Riddle's "high-pressure training" had become experts in some technical area. In any case, by June of 1944, Embry-Riddle's technical school had trained 6,076 air technicians for the Army

alone, making Embry-Riddle School of Aviation the largest such technical facility in the nation.

At the same time, Embry-Riddle's flight-training facilities were also the largest in the nation, exceeding even the Army's Randolph Field [Texas], the so-called West Point of the air. As noted earlier, the Embry-Riddle School of Aviation had Miami-area bases at Chapman Field, the Municipal Airport and the causeway. However, all these facilities were relatively modest compared to the four additional bases the school ran, three in South Florida and one in northwestern Tennessee. If Riddle had originally intended to operate all or

most of his flight training out of Miami, the telegram he received from Brigadier General Branton November 14, 1940, scotched those plans. *PRESENT SITE NOT ACCEPTED DUE TO PROXIMITY OF AIRLINE STOP IT IS DESIRED YOU SELECT NEW SITE...AND REPORT TO THIS HEAD-QUARTERS AS SOON AS PRACTICAL.*

By the middle of the following month, Riddle had not only selected a new site but gotten Army approval for it, and a few days after that, Riddle's contractor C. F. Wheeler was at work on the so-called Big Prairie near Arcadia, Florida. The Big Prairie was considered one of the world's best training sites for aviators. The terrain was perfectly flat and almost treeless for miles around. In fact, the site had been the Army's first West Point of the air. During the First World War era, such notables as Eddie Rickenbacker and, yes, John Paul Riddle trained there.

However, by the time Embry-Riddle took control of the site all signs of the former Carlstrom Field had vanished. That was just as well - the Riddle organization had planned the field, according to the *Arcadia Arcadian* to "form the nucleus of an air college that will be in existence long after the emergency has passed." Indeed, the design and layout of the buildings, for which architect Stefan Zachar of Miami Beach was responsible, seemed remarkably well planned, given the hurry-up nature of the project. The facility was laid out in a

circle, again according to the *Arcadian*, "so that no one building should be too great a communicating distance from one another, which would make for convenience of both students and instructors in the performance of their duties." In the bullseye of the circle, architect Zachar planned six tennis courts and a swimming pool complete with cabana and beach sand. On either side of the courts and pool were one-story barracks buildings, partitioned into twelve rooms, each having its own bathroom, outside door, and other accommodations for four persons. During the sultry Arcadian summers, air conditioning was to be

thoughtfully provided by prevailing easterly breezes, for which the architect left the east and west walls unobstructed. An administration building, canteen, dining hall and kitchen completed the facility which was designed to be easily- and which shortly was--doubled in size to accommodate, all told, 500 cadet fliers.

The hangars were located along the semi-circle of the perimeter road facing the airstrip. Responsibility for the cadets was divided between civilian and military instructors. The civilian instructors had the say in the air and ground schools, but the military commander, Captain Stanley Donovan, was in direct charge of the cadets. Overall command of the institute was in the hands of Leonard J. Povey, whose earlier credits included organizing the Cuban Air Force and

later standardizing flight instruction for the CAA before accepting a vice-presidency at Embry-Riddle.

On February 16, 1941, a mere three months and two days after General Brant demanded Riddle find a new site for its training field, the stars and stripes--framed by three hastily planted queen palms--was hoisted for the first time over what was designated Riddle Aeronautical Institute at Carlstrom Field. Meanwhile, Contractor Wheeler's subcontractors were completing the wiring and plastering of the complex's buildings. A wing of Stearman PT-17s bi-



One of Embry-Riddle's most famous students in Miami was Sally Rand, America's most celebrated fan-dancer.

plane trainers were flown in from the plant at Wichita, Kansas, some days later. The first batch of cadets were in place on March 22.

By April 5, such dignitaries as Generals Clarence Tinker and Walter Weaver had arrived for the official dedication. Joining them were civilian notables of the stamp of author Rex Beach and radio and stage comedian Fred Stone, both winter residents of nearby Sebring. Arcadians Ed and Billy Welles showed their appreciation by not only staging a free rodeo but inviting the local fourteen-year-old rodeo queen, Emma Marie Vance. Naturally, Riddle personnel--John Paul Riddle himself donning a sombrero--turned out in force, not the least of whom was Sally Rand, the exotic dancer whose fan and bubble dances had caused the entire Chicago World's Fair to do Immelmans and barrel rolls. Sally had given all that up to enroll in an Embry-Riddle tech course in Miami. (Not even comedian Fred Stone's trick of twirling chewing gum, lariat-style, could get the local cowpokes' eyes off Miss Rand.)

However, from a historical perspective even Sally Rand was upstaged by the much more important event that had occurred the day before. Cadet Jack Williamson of Baltimore was ducked fully clothed in the swimming pool; Williamson was the first cadet to solo at the new Carlstrom Field.

The second group of flight cadets to arrive at Carlstrom had the unenviable distinction of having already suffered combat conditions. They were a group of 99 Britishers, most of whom had manned aircraft defenses around London before being selected by the RAF for training in the states. (Even on their way to the states, the Tommies' gray-painted Cunard liner-cum-transport had been the target of the Bismark on the superbattleship's last foray.) The cadets special train arrived at Arcadia many hours late, but the townfolk, including rodeo queen Emma Marie Vance and her cowgirl-clad court, waited up most of the sultry June night with piles of oranges and doughnuts.

The RAF cadets, being proper British gentlemen, were tricked out for their Florida destination in tropical topees and not-so-tropical wool suits. By the way, attire was no minor matter to these hopeful fliers from the land of mist and rain. They had been issued five uniforms. For instance, the RAF flight suit consisted of a heavy, one-piece silk undersuit with a fur-trimmed canvas overall meant to be worn over the regular RAF blue-serge uniform. The boys forsook all this for the U. S. Army Air Corps coverall when on the flight line and, in the evenings, for Khaki shirt and trousers with an overseas cap bearing the brass RAF badge with a white semi-circular flash--the flash indicating cadet status.

Shortly, the American cadets filed out of the mess hall for the last time to their British compatriots' rendering of the traditional RAF song of farewell, *The Long, Long Trail*. In any case, the regime at Carlstrom remained the same. The cadets' day started at five a.m. when they dashed to reveille, after which they were given time to put their rooms in order and eat breakfast. Drill followed for about an hour, then off they went to ground school until lunch at noon. In the afternoons they flew--each averaged about an hour in the air a day--or took instructions in such things as underwater release from the parachute harness. Then came retreat parade, supper, and an enforced two-hour study hall where ground school topics such as Morse code were poured over. Lights went out at 9:15 when the cadets were supposed to be tucked into their bunks in those breeze-cooled dormitory

rooms.

For as rigorous as this regimen was, the Tommies found not-inconsiderable opportunities for recreation. For instance, Pastor Robinson of Arcadia's Trinity Methodist Church introduced Cadet Arthur Prandel and others to such exotic pastimes as "wiener roasts" and Fourth of July rodeos. Entertainment somewhat less spontaneous than a Fourth of July celebration occurred when a busload of RAF cadets was escorted by police motorcycles with sirens blaring into Sarasota. The cadets were matched up with an equal number of Sarasota beauties with whom they took in such local wonders as the Reptile Farm and the Ringling Riding School--all while the *March of Time* newsreel cameras whirred at the supposedly unaware couples. Actually, the good folks of Arcadia had earlier banded together to take the cadets on similar expeditions, and at least once before the Lido Hotel had put the cadets up gratis for a Saturday night.

When the ten week course of study was completed in August, 53 of the 99 RAF cadets were given leave to continue on with flight training by Riddle flight instructors. These cadets were sent on to fields such as Gunter Field, Alabama, for an additional ten weeks of basic training, which was followed by ten more weeks of advanced training at facilities such as Maxwell or Craig Fields. Of the 53 cadets Riddle passed on, only one washed out at basic and another was lost by accidental death in advanced training.

Eventually, all Embry-Riddle's RAF activities were concentrated at a new base at Clewiston. This facility, which was laid out in the shape of a diamond, opened in October of 1941 and was called Riddle-McKay Aero College. It offered RAF cadets basic and advanced as well as primary flight training. Among the 2,000 (all told, 8,000 RAF cadets trained in the U.S.) who passed through its portals was Desmond Leslie, Winston Churchill's nephew who proved to be a chip off the Nobel Laureate for Literature's block. He prepared, single-handedly, an issue of the base's newsletter called "Listening Out." Meanwhile, only a few miles from Carlstrom, Embry-Riddle opened another base--this time the facilities were laid out in an ellipse--at Dorr Field. Eventually, 7,000 cadets passed through the "Dorr-way," making it only slightly less important than Carlstrom in Embry-Riddle and the nation's defense profile. Embry-Riddle Field near Union City, Tennessee, was a likeness of Carlstrom shrunk down about a fifth the size, being able to accommodate only about a hundred cadets.

Back in the twenties, a seemingly more dashing flying buddy of John Paul Riddle has noted somewhat disparagingly that if Riddle lived to 120, he'd have all his fingers and toes. That emphasis on safety was characteristic of Riddle's bases as well. The original Embry-Riddle curriculum in Cincinnati required a fledgling pilot to put in about two years to gain the commercial certificate, roughly equivalent to the instruction the WWII cadets received by going through advanced training in little more than three months. However, even under hurry-up conditions safety procedures were stressed as 21-year-old RAF Cadet H. Bunyar found out when he successfully joined one of the most select of all aeronautical societies, the Caterpillar Club, on August 7, 1941. He safely hit the silk as his \$12,500 Stearman biplane whirled out of control and crashed on the Big Prairie.

When Carlstrom finally closed its hangar doors in the summer of 1945, being among the last nine civilian operated Air Corps training bases to shut down, it held the undisputed record as safest primary flying station in the country.

Key Largo Letter Drop

by Valerie Lassman

The Old Post Office in Tavernier, now vacant and for sale, points back to the unusual and evocative history of Key Largo, the Upper Keys and their early settlers, particularly the Alburys.

The majority of early Key pioneers trace their ancestry back to the island of Eleuthera in the Bahamas, and to the "Eleutherian Adventurers," a group of English families who left London between 1649 and 1650 searching for religious freedom. From London they traveled to Bermuda, then slowly migrated southward to the Bahamas and especially to Eleuthera. During

The Old Post Office in Tavernier was built in late summer of 1926 by Harold Albury. The building, which is 24 feet wide by 36 feet deep, was originally used as the post office, a grocery and as a home for Albury's family.

the American Revolution, another group, the Tories from Georgia and the Carolinas, who refused to bear arms against their motherland, England, also fled and sought refuge in the Bahamas.

When Florida became a United States possession in 1819, colonization of southern Florida and the Keys began in a slow but steady stream. By the 1830s, Key West and Indian Key had the largest population south of St. Augustine. By the end of the Civil War many of the Eleutherian Adventurers and Tories had settled in the upper Florida Keys. Hardy people, already accustomed to the rigors of island life, they hacked their homesites out of the tangled jungle thickets along the coral reefs.

Large plantations and groves began to assume shape from the daily backbreaking labor of these new settlers. They learned to harvest their

crops from both land and sea: fruits and vegetables from the rocky soil; seafood and sponges, and even cargo from wrecked vessels, easily visible in the crystalline waters of the Atlantic.

The pioneers, being island people, were closeknit, devoutly religious, and tenacious in clinging to their own families' lifestyles. Although they were generous and kind by nature, they tended to regard "Mainlanders" as strangers.

The name Conch was applied to these sturdy, ingenious, early pioneers of the Keys. In the Bahamas, from

south third portion, which stretched from the Atlantic to Florida Bay. Permanent settlement came slowly to the Upper Keys, but by 1900 the Careys, Pinders, Bethels, Russells and Alburys had settled down.

William Albury's father built the first house at Tavernier around 1868, but the house was later destroyed by a hurricane. William was born at Cherokee Sound in the Bahamas. His wife, Ada Lowe, was born in Key West but her family originally came from Green Turtle Cay in the Bahamas.

William and Ada migrated north-



which most of the original families came, the conch shell was a source of food as well as a means of communication from one island and family to another. The queen conch shell soon became a symbol of the original Florida Keys families. The name Conch denotes a native or would-be native of the Keys to this day.

Early Conch life was rustic, simple, even picturesque, but it was most certainly not idyllic. Among other hardships, hordes of sandflies, doctorflies, and mosquitoes mortified saint and sinner alike.

As early as 1875, however, Tavernier and its surrounding Keys were producing up to one million crates of pineapples a year, along with Key limes, tomatoes, and melons. A living could be made here, and more settlers came. In 1882, Amos and Eliza B. Lowe came to homestead a land grant of 145 acres encompassing Tavernier's

ward from Key West before 1891 and homesteaded 56 acres in Tavernier. As their family increased, Ada, as was the custom, went down to Key West a week prior to each child's birth. Eleven children were born during the Albury's years on Tavernier: Vivian, Rodney, R. Harold, Merlin, Paul, Lucille, Hazel, Lorena, Florence, Valda, plus an eleventh child who died shortly after its birth.

The Alburys farmed tomatoes on their land, built boats for the family and commercial use and garnered the bounty of the sea for their large table. As their tomato business prospered, they built a tomato packing plant on their property.

When the Albury children arrived at school age, they traveled to the schoolhouse at Planter, just north of Tavernier. The Planter schoolhouse stood on land that is today the site of Harry Harris Park.

As the children reached adulthood, some moved to Miami or Key West, seeking new opportunities. Others, like Merlin, Harold, and Rodney, chose to remain in Tavernier. An Albury family compound comprised of simply-constructed cottages was built near William and Ada's house near the ocean. Their original house has since been replaced by a much smaller dwelling, and the dock where they moored their boats is gone.

Still evident from those active years of raising a large family is the ring indented into the trunk of a large shade tree caused by the rope from which Ada Albury used to hang the voluminous family wash. Their spacious yard was fragrant with Ada's flower beds and cooled by the ocean breezes.

On March 9, 1911, Daniel W. Riley became the first postmaster of the newly established Tavernier Post Office; however, he resigned shortly thereafter on March 31, 1911. The Post Office was not reactivated until January 21, 1916, when Merlin Albury

became the postmaster.

Merlin continued in this position until his brother Harold took office on June 31, 1926. Shortly thereafter Harold built the present two-story building, 24 feet wide by 36 feet deep, for use as the local post office and family grocery, with living quarters for himself and his family upstairs. The second floor included a living-dining area, a wide enclosed front porch facing the street, a kitchen, one bathroom and several bedrooms.

The building was painted white with white shutters and had a small, columned front porch. Towards the rear was a large cistern, and an adjacent two-car garage. The Post Office and the grocery store shared the ground floor.

The structure was solidly built, with a wood exterior and horizontal strips of wood lining the inside walls. The lumber used throughout was Oregon fir. Harold had been fortunate enough to obtain the wood from a sailing ship in Miami harbor that was being held

in embargo by the railroad. In true Conch spirit, he built the post office and grocery entirely by himself. However, he did let his father, William, help install the sixteen-foot posts on the front porch.

Before Henry M. Flagler brought the railroad down through the Keys with the terminus at Key West, the mail was brought by ship to the Planter Post Office, which had been established in December 1891. Because the hurricane of 1909 damaged many homes, the population shifted south from Planter to Tavernier.

When the mail began to arrive by railway its method of delivery was quite ingenious and time-saving for all concerned. As the train neared the station at Tavernier it would decrease speed, and an appointed individual would run alongside the train. Within was a large wooden basket full of the arriving mail. The hoop was pulled down from the train, emptied and an

(Continued to page 26.)



Rear view of the Old Post Office Art Studio; note water tower.

After a hiatus of some 43 years, electric rail transit returned to Miami on May 21, 1984, when the first stage of Metrorail officially opened for business. Although the new system is ultra modern, expensive, elevated, fast, and comfortable, it's still a direct descendant of the little yellow streetcars that rattled and clanged along Miami's streets for more than 25 years.

Miami's first experiment with public transit took place as the city and its 5000 or so residents, both just barely out of the pioneer stage, were preparing to hold a grand celebration in honor of Miami's 10th anniversary.

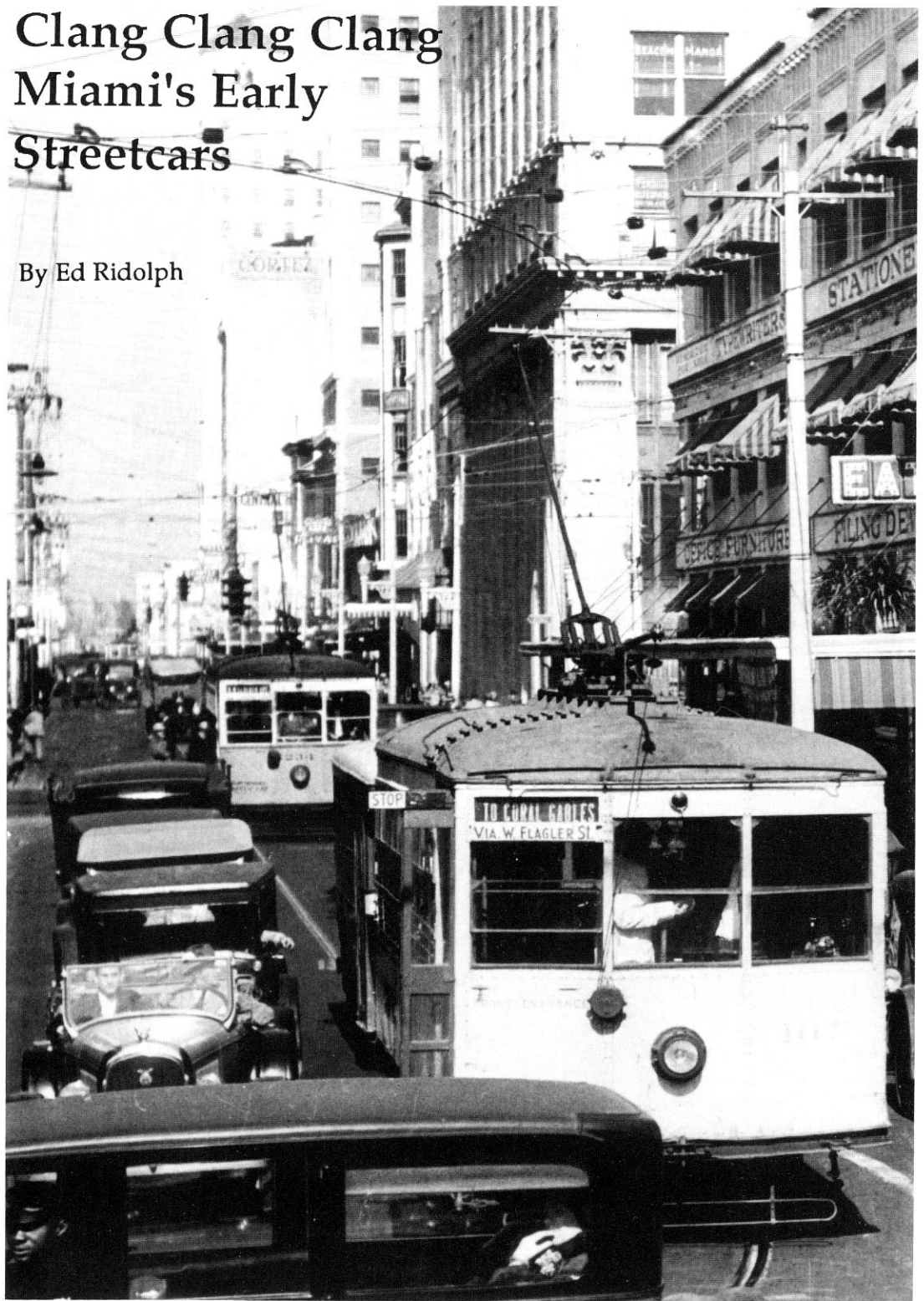
The Tatum brothers, prominent real estate developers in early Miami, held a franchise that allowed them to build streetcar lines over most of the city's then unpaved streets. On July 25, 1906, they sent Miami's first trolley humming over a short route that began near the Florida East Coast Railway depot, then located near present day NE 6th Street, wandered down Avenue B to 12th Street, then headed west to the Miami River. Avenue B was later renamed N.E. 2nd Avenue, and 12th Street became Flagler Street, but both streets were then, as now, principal thoroughfares.

There is some indication the Miami Electric Railway, as the Tatums christened their venture, was later pushed into the wilderness a few blocks west of the river, but early day records are sketchy on this point. Although an extension was opened on Avenue D, for most of its short existence the company had to content itself with running its three cars through what was then Miami's main business district.

Despite the Tatums best efforts, and several abortive schemes to extend the little trolley line in different directions, traffic never materialized to the point where it could become a paying proposition. Service was temporarily suspended at various times, and on September 3, 1907, the cars

Clang Clang Clang Miami's Early Streetcars

By Ed Ridolph



Streetcars in downtown Miami in the Twenties.

quit running again, ostensibly for a general overhaul. Again records become hazy. The company may have sputtered back into operation for a short period in early 1908, but no definite proof exists. It was certainly gone by April 13, 1908, when already in bankruptcy, the few remaining assets were sold at foreclosure to satisfy credi-

tors.

Miami then spent the next seven years without any permanent public transportation. By 1915, though, the population had reached the point where the Tatums, who still held the franchises, were willing to give the street car business another try. This time however, instead of the conven-

tional overhead wire system that powered their first venture, the brothers opted for the storage battery system. This was a rather cumbersome arrangement that required each car to carry a large bank of batteries for its power. It worked, after a fashion, but it would cause an almost unending stream of problems.

On December 4, 1915, the first battery car waddled through downtown, and once again Miami could boast it was at the forefront of the South's progressive cities. The route was somewhat longer than the old Miami Electric line, but it followed the same principal streets.

Early in 1916 a car barn was built on Tatum-owned property at Avenue U and N.W. 6th Street, and from here the line ran down Avenue U (renamed 16th Avenue a few years later) to 12th/Flagler Street. After passing through downtown the cars turned north on Avenue C (N.E. 1st Avenue) and ran out to Waddell, or 14th Street as it became known. In 1918 the line was extended out Biscayne Drive to Everglades Drive, streets that later traded these names for the more mundane N.E. 2nd Avenue and 36th Street. This was the only real expansion in the company's short, troubled history.

Unfortunately, the Miami Traction Company, as the Tatums named this outfit, didn't prove to be any more successful than their first venture. The operation was constantly embroiled in controversy. They eventually owned 11 battery cars, but mechanical problems usually meant no more than two or three were on the street at any given time. They fought with the city over extensions that were supposed to be built, but never materialized. They fought with their employees, culminating in a bitter strike early in 1918. And finally, they simply weren't making any money.

The solution to the myriad problems facing the Tatums came rather suddenly on the night of October 27, 1919. A fire broke out in the car barn, where, as fate would have it, a car parked in the doorway blocked all the others. When the flames died down, only one car was left unscathed. The Miami Traction Company was gone in the proverbial blaze of glory, but now the scene was set for a new, more professional set of players to step forward and try their hand at solving Miami's transportation woes.

In 1913, Carl Fisher began convert-



Map of Greater Miami streetcar system.

ing Miami Beach from a sand covered island into a resort city that would become world famous. Public transit, in the form of some rather primitive buses that chugged across the wooden bridge linking the island with the mainland, soon appeared, but Fisher would eventually recognize his emerging city needed something more permanent.

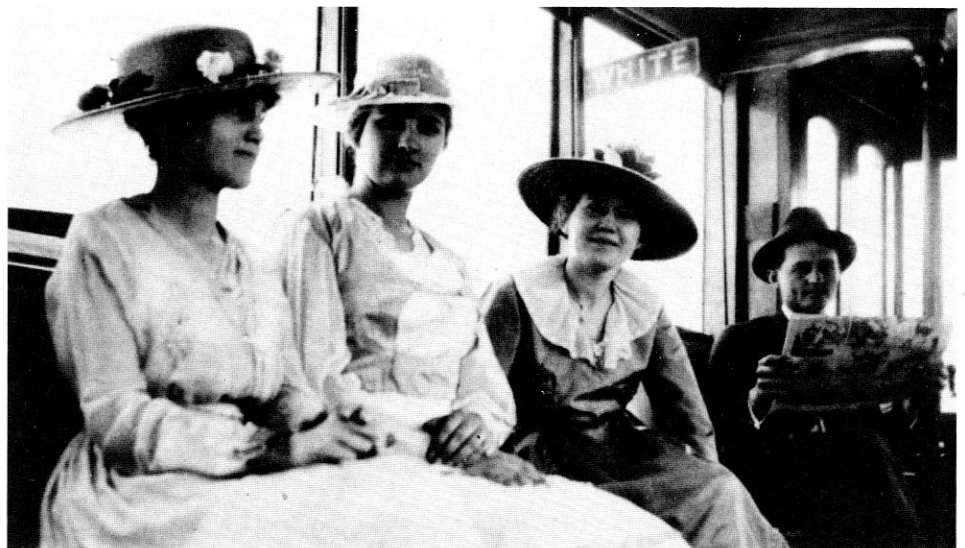
In 1917 the County began building the new causeway across the Bay, and it included a streetcar line. Fisher did some skillful maneuvering to insure his fledgling Miami Beach Electric Company would get the franchise, and in 1919 he began building the rail line that would link the two cities.

The cars used N.E. 1st and 2nd Avenues to enter and leave Miami, then after crossing the causeway, they made a wide loop through Miami Beach, covering Alton Road, Dade

Boulevard, Washington Avenue, and 1st Street. Then new streetcars were ordered to inaugurate service, and a new car barn was built on the causeway just east of the present day FP&L facility.

The first trolley made a trial run between Miami and the Beach on December 14, 1920, and regular service began on the morning of December 18.

The inter-city line became the backbone of the system, but in the early 20s, two local lines were established on the Beach. One went up Washington, Sheridan, and Pine Tree to the foot of the Indian Creek Bridge near 49th Street. The other ran up Alton Road to the Polo fields near 45th Street. This line was unusual in that most of the track, rather than being in the center of the street, was located in the shoulder of the road between the sidewalk and the street itself.



Proper women wore hats on Miami's streetcars.



Streetcars were an integral part of the Miami street scene in the Twenties.

Meanwhile on the west side of the Bay, Miami's dismal transit picture was about to brighten. Following the disastrous car barn fire that finished the Tatum's, Miami found itself with the dubious distinction of being one of the largest cities in the south with no real public transportation system.

The city fathers moved slowly, but by 1921 they had paid off the Tatum's, taken over their franchise and rusting rails, bought eight new streetcars, and were ready to put Miami in the trolley business. However, the city didn't want the day to day headache of actually run-

ning the system, so they leased it to Fisher's Miami Beach company. The marriage was rocky at times, but it lasted over 18 years.

Trolley service returned to Miami on January 7, 1922, when the Tatum's old line out N.E. 2nd Avenue to Buena Vista reopened. Four days later, the clang of the trolley bell returned to Flagler Street as that line reopened.

The city was content with that abbreviated two-route system for several years, but by the mid-20s the Boom and its resultant population explosion made expansion mandatory.

This time city officials were ready, and in just five weeks—between January 11 and February 13, 1925—three new trolley routes went into operation. One went out N.W. 2nd Avenue to 36th Street, another ran on N.W. 3rd Avenue, and still another followed S.W. 6th Street out to 16th Avenue, where it turned north over the old Tatum tracks to run out to 7th Street.

One peculiarity of the N.W. 3rd Avenue line was unique to Miami. In that era, racial segregation on public transit vehicles was absolute. Miami's black citizens were restricted to a few seats in



Streetcars traveled through Miami Beach's residential areas.

the rear of the streetcar, while white passengers occupied the rest. Many of Miami's black residents lived along the 3rd Avenue line, and they comprised most of the line's patronage. To accommodate them, a form of reverse segregation was practiced. On 3rd Avenue cars, the few white passengers were restricted to the first seat. Black patrons could then sit anywhere else in the car they wished.

The disastrous hurricane of September 18, 1926, slowed but didn't stop the expanding Miami trolley system. On November 2, 1926, a new line out N.W. 7th Avenue to 38th Street went into operation, the last car line to open in the city of Miami's six route system. By then the city owned a fleet of 39 streetcars, which would cover the system until its demise.

While events were happening in Miami and Miami Beach, Coral Gables hadn't been standing still. George Merrick began his famous development in the early 20s, and originally he used a fleet of buses to bring prospective buyers out to the property. But he liked the image of permanence a streetcar line gave to a city, and in 1924 he began building one.

The line went west on Flagler Street to Ponce de Leon, where it turned south and ran into the heart of Coral Gables. Opened on April 30, 1925, Merrick's first rail line featured a live band aboard one of the five new streetcars bought for the occasion.

The featured attraction that day, however, was William Jennings Bryan, the celebrated "Boy Orator of the Platte,"



Coral Gables streetcar.

and three-time unsuccessful presidential candidate. Bryan stood in a trolley window and extolled the streetcar as "The Apostle of Democracy." Then he was off to Tennessee and the famous Scopes Monkey trial, and his untimely demise.

A year later Merrick opened another trolley line into the Gables, this one running over Miami Avenue and S.W. 3rd Avenue to Coral Way, which it followed into the Gables. Beginning service on May 28, 1926, it quickly became Merrick's showpiece. Ten luxurious cars, with leather seats, stained glass, and a vivid coral pink paint scheme served the route, destined to become in a few short years Coral Gables last trolley line.

Several other local streetcar routes also served the Gables in the late 20s. Between 1926 and 1931 a line ran down Ponce de Leon to Sunset Road, and another looped around Segovia and Bird Road.

And, for some four months in 1928, a line operated out Bird Road and Ludlum Road to a little remembered depot the Seaboard Railroad built on Coral Way. Unfortunately, the only word that comes to mind to describe the Bird Road line would be "disaster."

On the busiest day in the line's history, 65 passengers were carried. Twice, only nine people boarded the cars all day long. The farebox brought home \$2.65 one day, the best ever. Unbelievably, on two occasions 45 cents represented an entire day's revenue. Admittedly, the territory west of Coral Gables was virtually deserted in 1928, but on this one Merrick's usually reliable crystal ball was a little cloudy. Mercifully, the line died a quick death.

The demise of Miami's trolley systems came about an amazingly short time after millions of dollars were spent building them. Although they carried a lot of people, nearly a million a month in the late 20s, they were soon perceived as slow, obsolete, noisy traffic chokers.

The local lines on the Beach were gone by 1922, and Coral Gables' last trolley rolled along Coral Way on November 5, 1935. It was being pulled back to the car barn by a dump truck, since a surprise hurricane hastened the line's demise by knocking down most of the overhead wire the day before.



A streetcar bedecked in palm fronds and black crepe signaled the end of Miami's streetcar era.

(Continued to page 25.)

Through the Lens

Many performers and composers have contributed their bit to the music of South Florida. May we present a few of the famous and not-so-famous who have cast forth the bewildering variety of sounds that have delighted and occasionally deranged music fans in tropical Florida? The pictures that make up this spread are from the files of the Historical Association of Southern Florida and the Fort Lauderdale Historical Association.



The Spanish American War brought the military marching band to Miami in 1898.

Juliette Lange, a musical comedy star of the twenties, lived in Broward County until her death in 1977 at the age of 95. Appearing in such classics as "Tillie's Nightmare," "Pink Lady," and "Sunshine," she attracted an offer from Cecil de Mille to take her mezzo-soprano warblings into the movies. In addition to her songs, she also brought to Broward County the maleleuca tree, an unfortunate legacy. Lange Park in Davie is named after her.



We're not sure what kind of music this band made.



In the Roaring Twenties developers used pop music and big bands to sell real estate. Paul Whiteman even took his famous orchestra into the Venetian Pool to help George Merrick make a few more sales in Coral Gables.

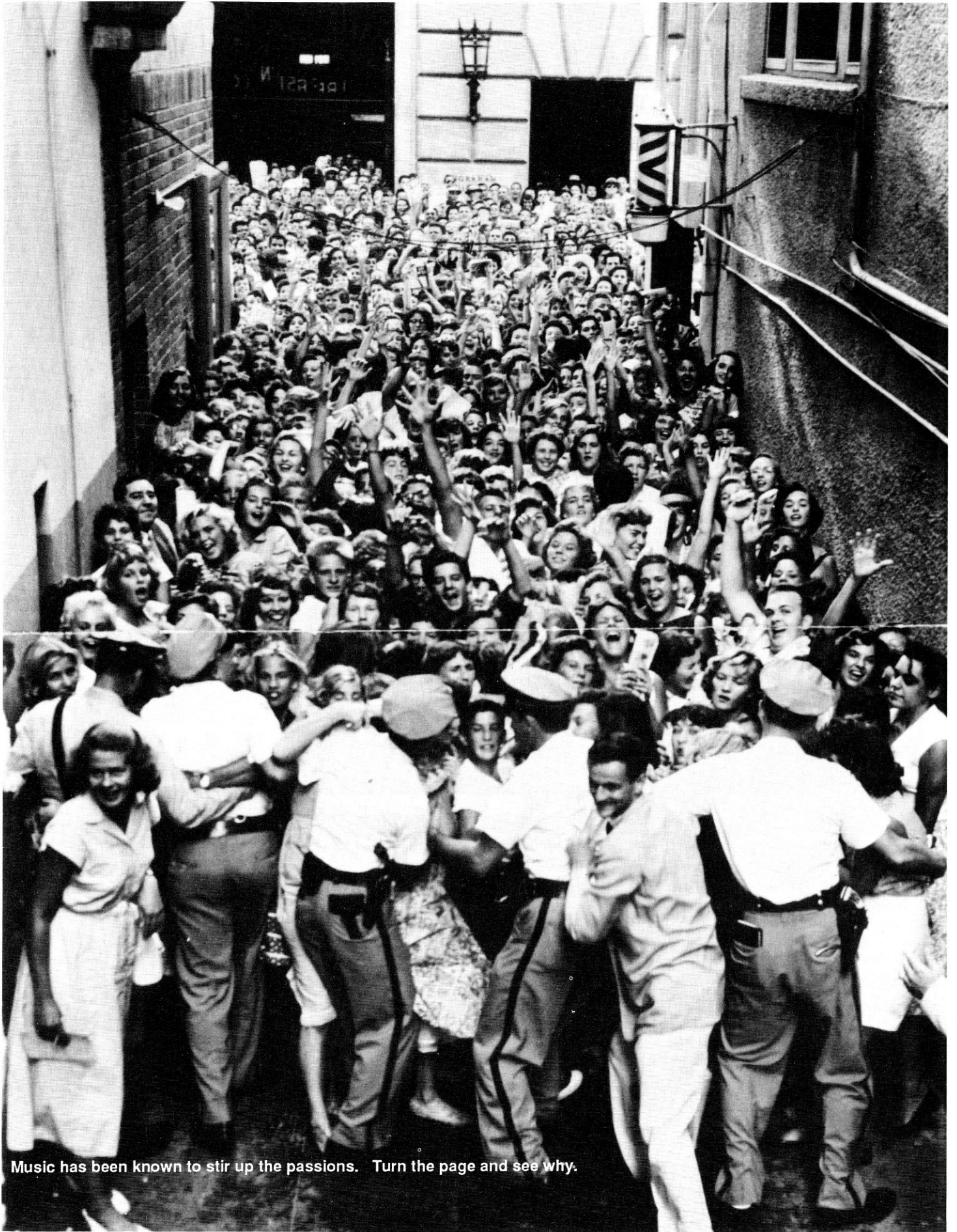


But the "musician" on the far right assured a minimum of complaints.

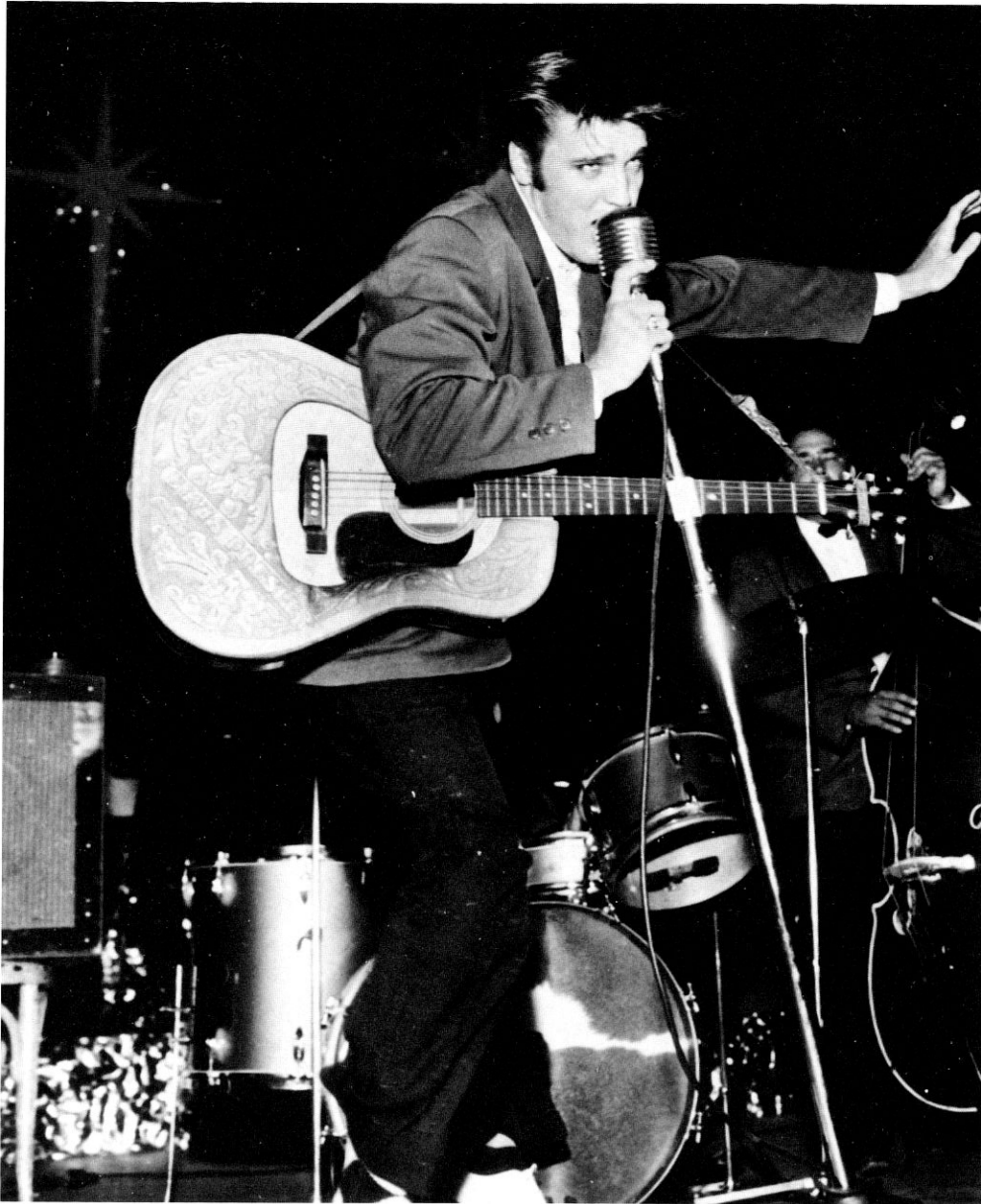
The Columbus Hotel orchestra played the dance music of the 1930s.



One of the most popular entertainers to visit south Florida in the 1930s was Cab Calloway, the man who made "Minnie the Moocher" a household name.



Music has been known to stir up the passions. Turn the page and see why.



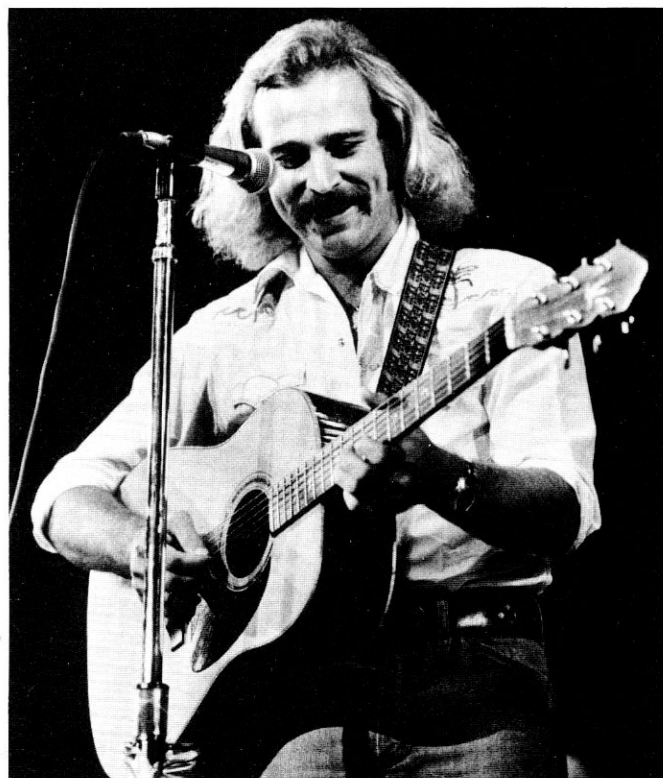
A visit from Elvis Presley guaranteed hordes of fans, some of whom reacted with considerable enthusiasm.





In February, 1964, four working class lads from Liverpool, England, turned up in Miami on their first trip to America. The Beatles appeared on Ed Sullivan's popular Sunday night television show, broadcasting from the Deauville Hotel in Miami Beach. Left to right, George Harrison, an unidentified fan dispensing toy dolphins, the late John Lennon, Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney.

Jimmy Buffett gave Key West a new name— Margaritaville.



(Continued from page 11.)

Even though cadets had flown some 50 million miles and logged over a half million hours in the air, there was only one fatality. By contrast, one fatal accident had occurred for every 63,230 hours logged at the 56 similar schools throughout the country. Although it is impossible to say exactly how many of the 224,331 Air Corps pilots that were trained during the 1939-45 period were Embry-Riddle alumni, the two largest bases, Carlstrom and Dorr Field between them accounted for almost 15,000 cadets.

By April of 1944 the first of Riddle bases closed, the one in Tennessee. By October of the same year, Dorr Field was gone and Carlstrom and Riddle-McKay barely survived the cessation of hostilities in 1945. In 1944 John Paul Riddle himself severed relations with the school, retaining only the Escola Tecnica de Aviacao or Brazilian Division of Embry-Riddle which was then about a year old. However, Riddle's belief in inter-American technical education went back at least to 1941 when Embry-Riddle instituted dual-language instruction for Latin Students from countries throughout the hemisphere. In fact, under the direction of

the Cuban-born Philip de la Rose, Embry-Riddle was the first institution to make a complete translation of American aircraft terminology and nomenclature into Portuguese and Spanish. John Paul Riddle's early belief in the crucial link between South Florida and Latin America—a link that has become more obvious with the years—bolsters the claim that his school is arguably the most South Floridian of the Aeronautical institutions associated with South Florida. Eventually, he employed 650 American instructors in his Brazilian school.

With the departure of John Paul Riddle, plans to institute a permanent air college, as had been promised in the press and elsewhere at the inauguration of Carlstrom Field, seemed dim indeed. They seemed even dimmer after then Embry-Riddle president John McKay—he'd been J. P. Riddle's lawyer, vice president and partner during the war years—died in 1951, leaving his wife as president of the now much reduced Embry-Riddle Aeronautical Institute. At that time the school was operating out of the Aviation Building in Miami with an

enrollment of only a few hundred students.

However, new administrative blood came along in the 1960s in the way of Jack L. Hunt; he'd been Chief Flight Instructor, then General Manager of Carlstrom. Hunt took the ailing school to Daytona Beach where it is now the genuine university John Paul Riddle envisioned, offering graduate degrees in aeronautical engineering, management, and air science and the baccalaureate in a slew of aviation-related fields. Its enrollment of about five thousand students makes it the second largest—after the University of Miami—private university in the state. Not surprisingly, the main campus is laid out in a circle. John Paul Riddle, himself, although 87 years of age and living in retirement in Miami, frequently flies his plane to the campus. He something of a fixture at graduation and at other important events at the institution. An institution he founded (and refounded) and which is now generally regarded as the leading university of its kind in the nation.

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(Continued from page 17.)

On October 17, 1939, the heavily traveled line between Miami and South Beach was replaced by buses. The Miami Beach Railway Company, successor to the Miami Beach Electric, was so anxious to terminate trolley service they began putting on buses only hours after receiving official approval for the changeover, and as the last streetcar crossed the Causeway that afternoon a section of rail was quickly cut out of the line to insure no last minute injunction would force resumption of trolley service.

Officials stated the reserved trolley lane in the middle of the Causeway would be paved over for automobiles

before the 1940 winter season. Today, half a century later, the asphalt still hasn't gone down and shrubbery flourishes where Carl Fisher's streetcars once ran. The 12 trolleys that served the line went south to a new career in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where they ran until 1967, far outlasting the little buses that replaced them.

By 1940 the only trolleys still running in Miami were on the six local lines the city owned. In October the Miami Transit Company got the franchise for a city wide bus system and the trolley's fate was sealed.

On November 14, a gala parade featuring a streetcar decorated in black crepe and palm fronds and escorted

by top hatted pallbearers and a mournful funeral dirge wended its merry way down Flagler Street. Another streetcar, cut down and pulled along the track by two bemused Georgia mules, the University of Miami band, a fleet of new buses, and other assorted curiosities, completed the scene.

But, when the festivities ended, the streetcars didn't. They rolled along for another two days, and it wasn't until shortly after midnight on Saturday, November 16, 1940, that Miami's last trolley staggered into the car barn on S.W. 4th Street. "Wanted to get in that weekend business one last time," a company official candidly explained.

Letters & Corrections

Editors:

... And all the time I was taking my twice-a-day constitutional, passing Al Capone's house going and coming, I thought I was walking on Palm Island!

This was in the 1936 period before the birth of our first child and Bill and I were living at 298 S. Coconut Lane, watching the vessels from the New York berth.

Why did you move Al Capone to Star Island.

Helen Muir
Miami

Dear Mrs. Muir,

Yours was not the only letter pointing out our error in the last issue of SFHM, but it was certainly the wittiest. We apologize and would like all our readers to know that Mr. Capone resided on Palm Island.

The Editors

A letter to HASF's Executive Director

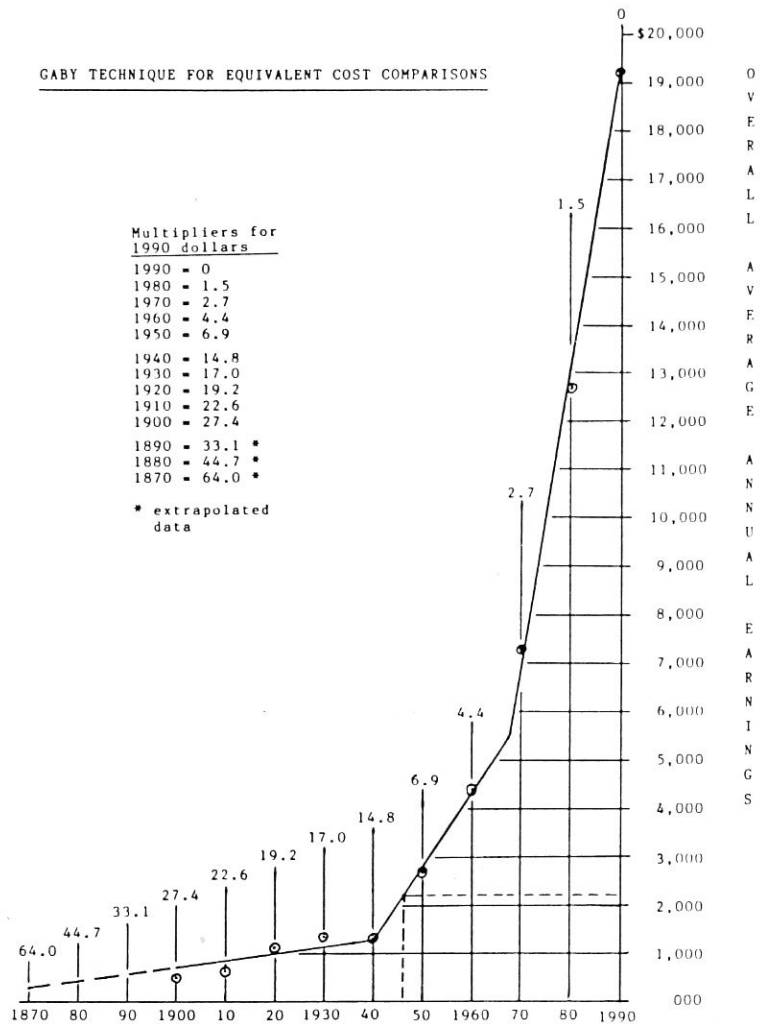
Dear Randy,

The latest edition of *South Florida History Magazine* just arrived on my desk - very impressive. I have been intending for some time to write and tell you so. Please pass on my congratulations to those responsible. The photographs are wonderful.

Ann Henderson
Executive Director
Florida Endowment
for the Humanities
Tampa

Don Gaby, author of *What Would It Cost Today?* from last quarter's issue, pointed out some errors with our presentation of his graph. To clear up any confusion he thought it would be appropriate for us to run it again. We agreed.

GABY TECHNIQUE FOR EQUIVALENT COST COMPARISONS



(Continued from page 13.)

identical outgoing basket was placed aboard while the train continued its journey. The mail was then taken to Harold Albury's Post Office for local delivery. After the demise of the railroad in 1935, this awkward procedure was replaced by delivery from United States mail trucks.

A long-time Tavernier resident, Mrs. Lauretta Sturdevant recalls the days when the mail arrived once a day whenever the truck got there. The oldtimers would gather around the edge of the cistern behind Merlin Albury's house and swap tales. Mrs. Fred Bond remembers waiting on her porch until the mail truck finally arrived.

Daily life on Tavernier continued its calm, leisurely pace until Labor Day, September 2, 1935, when an immensely powerful hurricane struck the Upper Keys and relentlessly pounded the islands with 200-mile-per-hour winds. The massive destruction it left was awesome and the death toll of nearly a thousand was tragic. There was complete devastation of lives, of land, and of personal property.

Harold Albury and his family--his brother Rodney and his wife and two children; Mervin with his wife, daughter, and mother-in-law, Mrs. Susan Peacon; and an unidentified elderly man--rode out the brunt of the hurricane on the second-floor living quarters of the post office. At one point, vividly recalled by Harold, the group heard a steady banging sound coming from the first floor. Fearful for the lives of everyone, a few of the men bravely ventured down the dark stairs to investigate. As gale-force winds violently shook the shuttered windows all around them, their eyes gradually adjusted to the dim light and saw "some white milky stuff" gushing through the double doors on the left rear side of the building. It was sea foam washing against the front edge of the dwelling, churning waters that would surge across the ground floor in a torrential stream and inundate everything in its path.

Albert Nesbitt of Tavernier also recalls that fateful day. His post-World War I cottage was lifted by the force of the waters and floated out on the waves about a mile away, then brought back and deposited on its original founda-

tion!

In the years following the hurricane, Harold Albury continued to serve as postmaster at Tavernier until 1953. He then relinquished the position to his nephew, Everett Paul Albury. The same building continued to serve as post office until 1961. Harold and his family used the upstairs living quarters until 1975, when the building became unoccupied.

For awhile, Catherine A. Nash, who bought it in 1981, converted it into the Old Tavernier Post Office Art Studio. Today, however, it is again unoccupied--and still an evocative reminder of its pioneer past.

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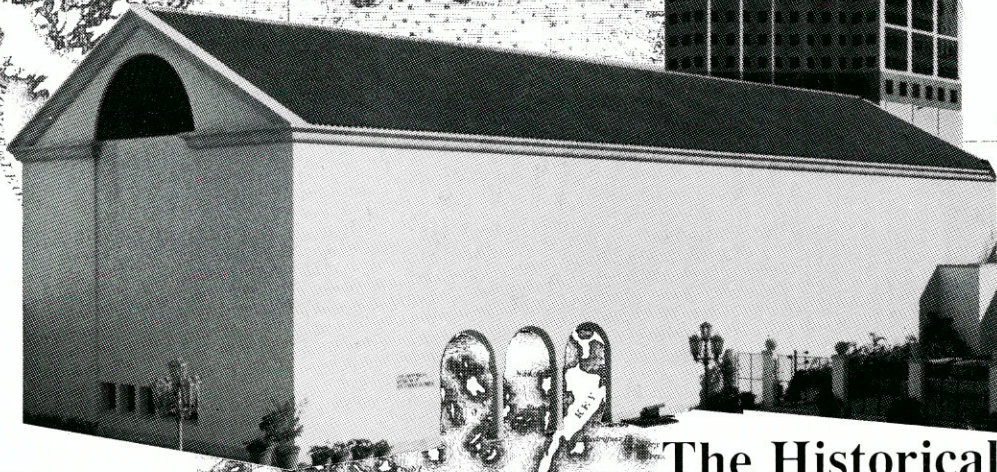
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