

South Florida History

M A G A Z I N E

Vol. 18, No. 4

Fall 1991

A QUARTERLY

PUBLICATION FOR THE

MEMBERS OF THE

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF

SOUTHERN FLORIDA, THE

FORT MYERS HISTORICAL

MUSEUM, THE COLLIER

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HASF, 81-31-3

The River of Grass, some 60 miles wide, flows south from Lake Okeechobee into Florida Bay. In its shallow waters grow the sawgrass that led the indigenous people in the area to call it "grassy waters."

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South Florida History

M A G A Z I N E

Published quarterly by the
Historical Association of Southern
Florida
101 West Flagler Street
Miami, Florida 33130
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Printed by

Swanson Printing

South Florida History Magazine is a journal of popular history published quarterly by the Historical Association of Southern Florida.

Receipt of *South Florida History Magazine* is a privilege of membership in the Historical Association, the Ft. Myers Historical Museum, the Collier County Museum, and the Key West Art & Historical Society.

The Historical Association of Southern Florida is a non-profit cultural, educational and humanistic institution dedicated to providing information about the history of south Florida and the Caribbean, and to the collection and preservation of material relating to that history. Association programs and publications are made possible by membership dues, gifts from private sources and grants from federal, state and local agencies.

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mission from the Association is required. Inquiries and contributions are encouraged and should be addressed to the Editor, *South Florida History Magazine*, Historical Association of Southern Florida, 101 W. Flagler Street, Miami, Florida 33130. All materials should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

The Historical Association disclaims any responsibility for errors in factual material or statements of opinions expressed by contributors.

This publication has been financed in part with Historical Museum Grants-in-Aid Program assistance provided by the Bureau of Museums, Florida Department of State. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of Florida Department of State, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Florida Department of State.

Swanson Printing inc.

Your Publication Specialist

Printer of

South Florida History

M A G A Z I N E

2134 NW Miami Court

573-7770

Editor's Notes

by Stuart McIver

The reenactor is a special kind of historian. Like college professors and authors, he digs deeply into books, documents and old photos. What he produces, however, is not a book or scholarly paper, but rather a performance on a battlefield, arrayed in authentic military attire and armed with accurate replicas of period weapons. There's one thing that's never authentic--the ammunition. Reenactors use only blanks.

Every year these dedicated 3-D historians garb themselves in hot, heavy uniforms and plow through the dust and dirt to reenact battles from wars fought on American soil. The Civil War, of course, is the leading supplier of battles, followed by the Revolutionary War. Many Florida reenactors are now bringing the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) to life.

Reenactors back up their fascination with history, not just with hours spent studying battle accounts, oiling their weapons and drilling to prepare for their roles, but also with their pocketbooks. A Civil War outfit can cost a reenactor \$900. Travel to battle sites adds more expense.

A serious lot, these reenactors, but they have been known to come up with some

pretty sharp tongue-in-cheek humor. Overheard at a reenactors' meeting, "The French and Indian War is the new rage," said one. "Yes," said his friend, "it's the fastest growing war in the country."

Try to catch a reenactment when you can. It's an excellent, and entertaining, way to learn more about your heritage. The premier Florida reenactment is the Civil War Battle of Olustee, to be held on February 16, 1992, at the Olustee Battlefield State Historic Site, about 20 miles east of Lake City.

The best of the Seminole War reenactments is the December staging each year of the massacre at Dade Battlefield State Historic Site, near Orlando. In this battle more than 100 U.S. soldiers were killed, including their commander, Major Francis Dade, for whom Dade County is named.

In *South Florida History Magazine* we can't play out a Civil War battle with live action, but again, in this issue we can offer you a glimpse into some engaging and varied aspects of South Florida's rich history.

Two prominent Miamians, attorney George "Rocky" Harper and architect Raul

Rodriguez, were forced to flee Cuba as children. Ellen Kanner tells us of their disrupted Havana childhoods and their flight to Florida.

Dr. Arthur E. Chapman, of Coral Gables, gives us a picture of the start-up of a Miami company in the days when Magic City residents were first treated to the wonders of the telephone.

One of southeast Florida's grandest matriarchs, Mrs. John "Bessie" DuBois, of Jupiter, is the subject of a story by Jane E. Neibch, of Palm Beach Gardens. Miss Bessie herself has written four short books on the Jupiter area.

As director of the Fort Myers Historical Museum, Patricia Bartlett is in a strong position to ferret out tales of Caloosahatchee Country, such as her folksy tale about Peter O. Knight, a major west coast figure.

And, finally, in our photo essay, *The Visual Record*, we are taking a look at the Everglades, before and after the creation of Everglades National Park. There is no subject more vital to the future of South Florida than the vast river of grass called the Everglades.



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Jupiter pioneers traveled by boat

by Jane Niebch

Bessie DuBois sat in a red-cushioned, Victorian rocking chair. White-haired and soft-spoken, she still had a twinkle in her blue eyes at 84.

She came to the DuBois House, an historic landmark of Jupiter, to talk about the old times. The cedar house on top of an Indian shell mound was once the only house around. One hundred years ago the DuBois family built a house where they could watch the boats go by on the Jupiter Inlet. It was the place where Bessie's husband was born.

Wide-eyed children spending a week at the DuBois House to learn history were seated Indian style on the hard red-painted pine floor as Bessie's listeners. They felt warm from the muggy, stifling air heated by the morning sun. Yet, their discomfort was as it should be, because Bessie brought them back to the days in 1914 when she first arrived in Jupiter.

This is how it was

Bessie remembered when there were only 300 people in Jupiter, and only two of them owned cars. Her thoughts flowed like the river that once swelled and snaked right along the base of the Indian mound. Bessie remembered brushing the mosquitoes off the guests who came through the doorway. She motioned with a hand-made palmetto whisk broom that hung on the door knob of a white painted cupboard within arm's reach. "This was how it was. And it wasn't often you got a bath," she reminisced. "You washed the best you could in the wash basin and waited for Sunday when Dad would take you out to the lake to get good and clean."

A steamship took Bessie and her family from New Jersey to Florida when she was 11 years old. "Oh, how wonderful the trip aboard the steamship was," she exclaimed with a smile. "The family traveled on Flagler's railroad to Jupiter where Papa bought 50 acres for a homestead from Mr. Hepburn."

The first day of school stood out in Bessie's recollections. "Mama made us dress in our best clothes. My brother Jack even had to wear a collar and a necktie." When she arrived at school, much to her dismay all the children wore their playclothes and many were barefoot!

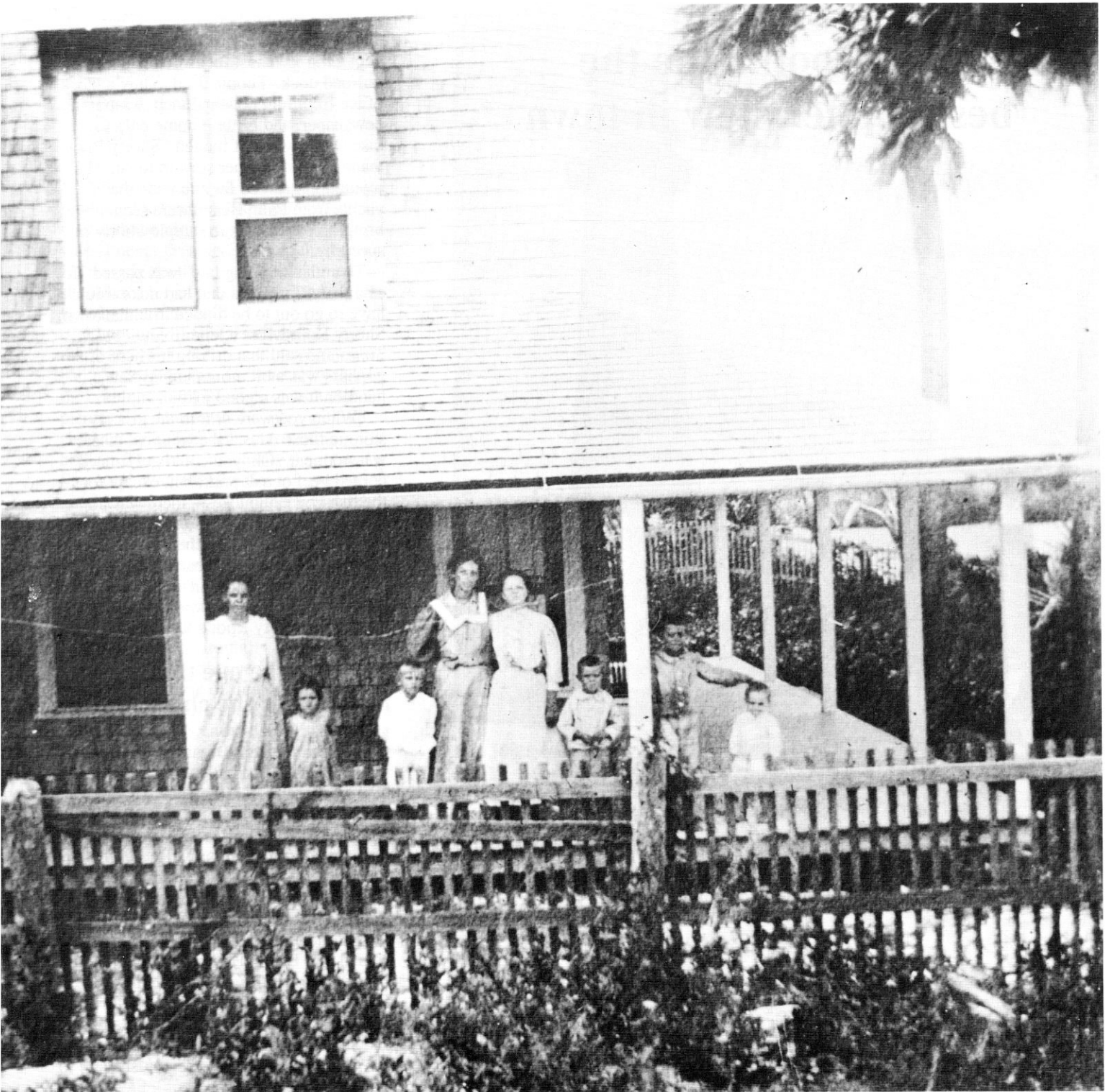
Their boat nearly capsized

The children all went to school by the school boat. Bessie had to ride with her 10-year-old brother in his boat. "I'm sorry to tell you, but, they wouldn't take us because we were Yankees," she said. But one day the wind was blowing very hard. Their boat nearly capsized near the widest place on the Loxahatchee River at Pennock Point. It was Charlie Carlin who saw what was happening and rescued the children. The word got around the town and the school boat began to pick up Bessie and her brother.

The school boat was named *The Maine*, for it was once a lifeboat of the battleship *Maine*. When the battleship *Maine* blew up on February 15, 1898, the Spanish-American War began. "Dr. Blanchard ran the boat," she told us. "The boys used to throw a fishing line over the stern on the way to school and troll for mackerel."

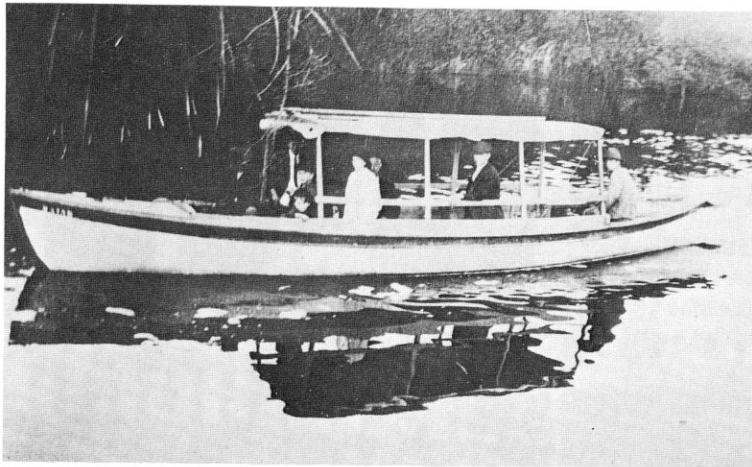
Everybody in Jupiter had a boat. Only a Mr. Sims, who had come from Panama and recently had worked on the Panama Canal, had a car; and Charlie Carlin had a car. When someone died and had to be buried up at the cemetery they had a boat funeral. "It was a sight to see all the boats parading up to the cemetery," reflected Bessie.





The DuBois family on the porch of their home on the south side of Jupiter Inlet.

Shorty Root made the best gopher stew in town



In the watery world of Jupiter, children were transported to school not by bus, but by the school boat, *The Maine*.

Florida State Archives

She said she doubted that any one of us had ever tasted gopher stew. "A gopher," she reminded the children, "is a land turtle." Bessie DuBois had them believing it was the most delicious treat. There was a man by the name of Shorty Root, who kept a big ice chest for fish down off the railroad dock. People used to buy a block of ice from him now and then, wrap it in newspaper, and bring it home only to discover it was half melted. Shorty Root made the best gopher stew in town. His reputation grew so far and wide that yachts from Palm Beach were seen bringing passengers to sample Shorty's specialty.

Then the "dipping law" was passed. It said that all animals that had ticks would have to go out to be dipped in Indiantown. Shorty Root wrote a letter to the *Post-Times* and said that driving his herd of gophers was a bit more than he can handle. It was a good joke in Jupiter.

"When you were sent to the grocery store in those days," she went on, "there was no meat. Oh, you could get canned corned beef or salt pork, but, except for the fish you caught fresh, there was no meat."

Once in a while a butchered cow would come in on the railroad car. The cuts of meat would be laid out in the sun on palmetto leaves. There was no ice at all, except for Shorty Root's ice chest.

You find the one that has a mole under the chin

Up the river from Bessie was a lady who had a hound dog that had puppies. "When she was ready to give them away she sent word to Papa," she recalled. "Papa had a little ceremony when it came time for choosing a puppy. He said, 'You find the one that has a mole under the chin. If there are four hairs sticking out of it, that's the smartest puppy of the litter.'"

Jack picked the smartest puppy and named him Dash. He loved that puppy. He rolled with it, hugged it, slept with it. They were inseparable. One day the puppy dragged some meat off the table and ate it. Bessie's father told the boy that the puppy would have to be punished. The little boy understood but it broke his heart.

When her father took the dog out on the porch, he had a big stick in his hand. The yelping and howling coming from the porch made a terrific noise. Then Bessie peeked through a window and saw that her father was holding the dog all right, but was whacking the floor of the porch and doing all the yelping himself.

Bessie met John DuBois when she was 11 years old, although they didn't get married until she was 24. Bessie played with his sister Anna, and both girls attended school downstairs in the new classroom for fourth, fifth and sixth grades. There were three sixth-graders.

I never dreamed that I would marry him

"When you finished the sixth grade, you graduated to upstairs," she said. "John was with the big boys upstairs. Big he was. I never dreamed I would marry him. He was six-foot-four. The teacher said she'd have to get on a step ladder to put a tie around his collar."

"One thing I know," said Bessie, "is that what you folks are calling sea lice we had a different name for." Every year, at the end of school, Bessie's class had a picnic. They swam in the inlet, and the children would get bites all over their bodies. They'd itch so badly they'd run a fine comb over their bodies to give it a good scratch. "We called them jellyfish spawn," she said.

Bessie told us that all four of the DuBois children were born right there in the house. Mrs. Kitching, the midwife, would drive up her cart, pulled by two oxen, and deliver babies. There wasn't a hospital for miles around.

The Jupiter lighthouse was the topic of many stories. One of Bessie's favorites concerned the hurricane of 1928. The lighthouse had recently discontinued using kerosene lamps and replaced them with electric lights. Luckily, they left the old lamps there. When the electricity went out during the storm, they couldn't turn the mantle, the hood over the light. Captain Charles Seabrook climbed up inside the lighthouse and turned the old kerosene lamp by hand. He said he felt the lighthouse swaying as much as 17 inches. "It took some courage to do that," remarked Bessie.

The children listened, their eyes transfixed on the white-haired lady with blue eyes that still have a twinkle in them. The children bought the booklet, "The History of the Jupiter Lighthouse", which Bessie wrote in 1960, and asked for her autograph. Only when they asked her to sign next to the picture of the lighthouse did they learn that Bessie can no longer see. Each child took her delicately aging hand and guided it as she scrawled Bessie DuBois across the sky. □



HASF, 369 E

The Jupiter Lighthouse — a beacon on the southeast Florida coast since 1860.

Why did Peter Knight leave?

by Patricia Bartlett

Despite being a somewhat isolated city, Ft. Myers has had strong ties with many other Florida cities in the past--favors given and returned, families moving back and forth, that sort of thing. One of those cities is Tampa. This story goes back over a time, but I think you'll agree that maybe Tampa still owes Ft. Myers a little something, because of what we gave them. We gave them Peter Knight.

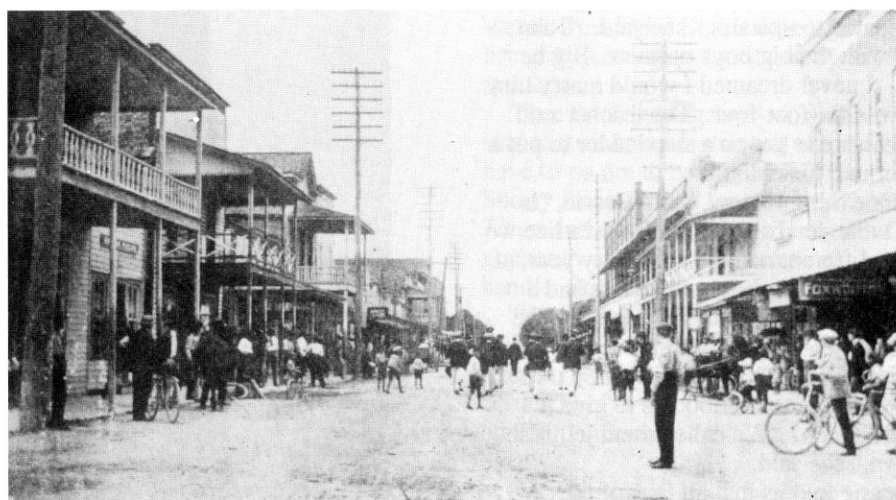
During the Spanish-American War—which we knew was going to happen even before the President of the United States, because Punta Rassa received the telegraph message about the sinking of the battleship *Maine* first—we sent some of our boys into battle in that war. They went from Ft. Myers to Tampa for processing. Tampa took good care of our boys, even billeting them in the fancy Tampa Hotel, now the Henry B. Plant Museum.

We wanted no part, in any way, of yellow fever

During the yellow fever epidemic of 1887, those who tried to escape the disease by leaving Tampa and heading southward were disappointed when they got to Ft. Myers. We set up a quarantine, not wanting to take a chance on spreading the disease by letting in any strangers.

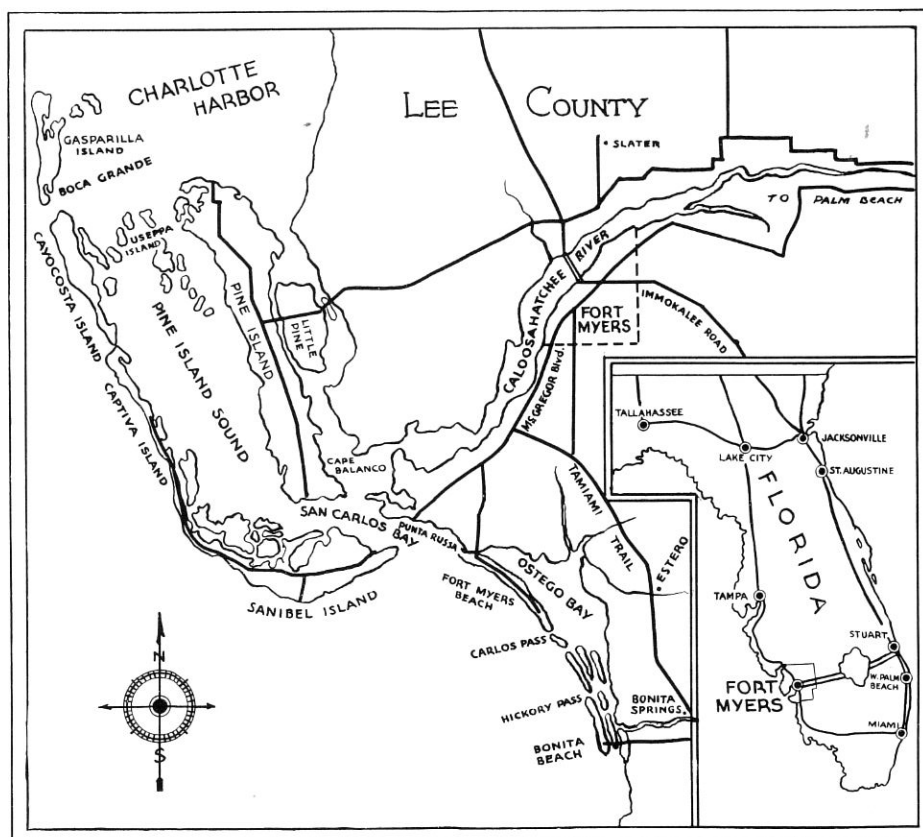
Of course, that was before we knew that you got yellow fever from the bite of an infected mosquito; then we thought that you just had to be near someone who had the disease, and naturally, we wanted no part of it. You'll find the name "Yellow Fever Creek" on some old maps of Ft. Myers. We changed that name as soon as we could—we wanted no part, in any way, of yellow fever.

The real meat of my story begins in 1885, when the steamship *Speedwell* pulled up to the Caloosahatchee River's



Florida State Archives

Downtown Ft. Myers at the turn of the century — when Peter Knight lived in the southwest coast town.



Map of southwest Florida



Florida State Archives

A 1947 photograph of Thomas A. Edison's Ft. Myers home

Hendry Street dock, and off marched a fine-looking young man, dressed in frock coat, congress gaiters and silk top hat. This young man was fresh out of law school, had his degree, and was coming to Ft. Myers to set up his practice.

His mother operated a small hotel opposite the courthouse. She had written her son, Peter O. Knight, and said there were no lawyers in the town, and that he'd make a good living if he'd move down here.

When Peter stepped off the boat that June day, his mother greeted him with open arms, and took him to the Keystone Hotel. Peter was no "do-nothing lawyer." He dug right in and set about becoming a real part of the town. He started the town's first band, along with nine other assorted horn-blowers and drum-beaters. At first they practiced at the Keystone, and then moved to the far end of the Hendry Street dock after requests from townspeople. Soon the band was good enough to play at wed-

dings and parties. There wasn't much competition.

Peter also was part of the group that persuaded a casual visitor, one Stafford C. Cleveland, to set up his newspaper right in Ft. Myers. Cleveland let himself be talked

Peter was no 'do nothing lawyer'

into staying and began the *Ft. Myers Press*.

Peter played a part in another "recruitment" for the town. This time it was a northern inventor, looking for a spot for a winter lab. Peter did his best to talk Thomas Edison into setting up shop in Ft. Myers. He walked Mr. Edison around and pointed out that Ft. Myers needed just three things—better and more people; plenty of good water (our water was sulfur water back then and smelled like rotten eggs), and cooler summers.

Edison laughed, of course, and said that Hell needed the same things. But Edison got a good deal from Sam Summerlin, son of the man Summerlin Road in Ft. Myers is named for, and that's how Edison got his start here.

There had been some talk about incorporating Ft. Myers as a town, and Peter was the one who called the meeting to vote on the idea. Some 35 men agreed on incorporation that August night in 1885. The vote was unanimous. They wanted Peter for the first mayor, but he couldn't serve. He couldn't even join in the vote—he was only 20 at the time!

Peter did serve as our town's second mayor, and while he was in office, took Edison's offer of free electricity for city lights to the town council. You may have heard another story, that the offer was turned down because the town council thought the lights would keep the cows awake, but the simple truth is that the

town didn't have the \$700 needed to install the poles and wire; so they declined his offer. There just wasn't much money anywhere in this area, and that led to the favor that I said Tampa owed us.

There had been some grumbling about us being part of Monroe County for a number of years. Key West was the county seat, and it was just too far away. The only way to get to Key West was by boat. The round-trip took a full week.

We picked the name Lee County, for Robert E. Lee

After our school house burned down, and the county officials said we'd been careless and didn't merit a replacement schoolhouse for an entire year, the grumbling increased. Peter was part of that

meeting too, and he was there when forming a new county was discussed. We picked a name, too, Lee County, for Robert E. Lee.

Lee County was created out of Monroe County, just as we had requested. When it came time to set up the offices for the new county official, Peter's name was suggested as county attorney. After all, he was the only attorney around, and he sure knew everyone here. Unlike the mayorship of Ft. Myers, the county attorney position paid—\$200 a year!

It looked as if Peter was getting the job he wanted with a salary, and maybe some prestige as well. But, when the local cowmen heard of the salary Peter would get, they strode into the courthouse and made themselves heard. They said the county couldn't afford the salary that had been offered to Peter. They bucked and kicked

so much that the job was eliminated, taken away from Peter, even before he got a single paycheck.

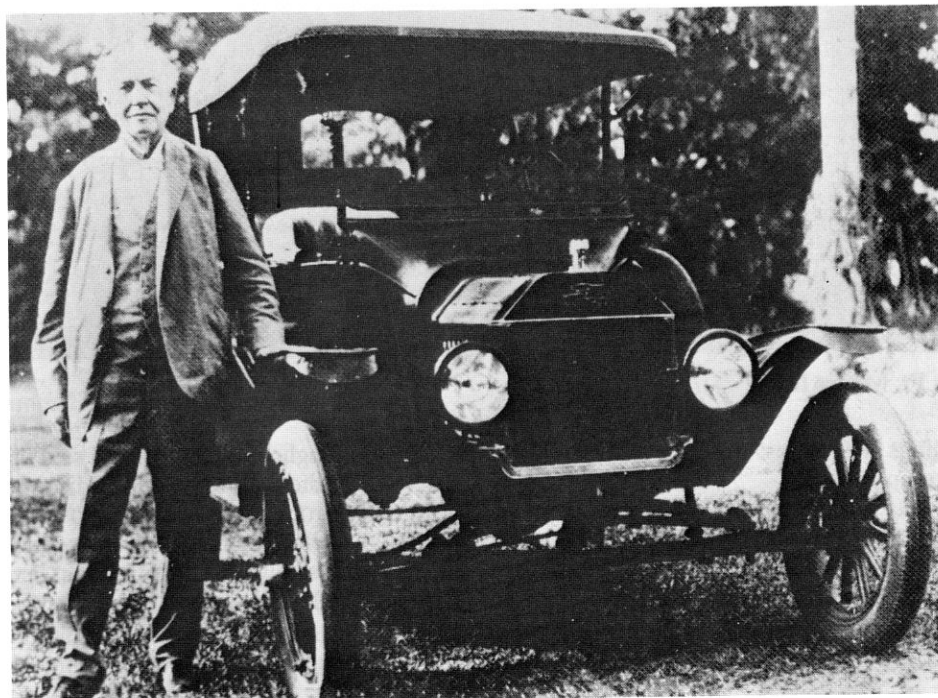
I don't know exactly what went through Peter's head after he was told about the job. I've been told he borrowed some money from a friend. He did pack his bags, and he took a steamer to Tampa. He didn't have any problems settling in.

Peter just lengthened his stride

In Tampa, Peter just lengthened his stride. He continued his community-minded ways, and became president of Tampa Electric among other things. He never ran for any sort of office, and said that he could be more influential as a private citizen.

As time went on, he became more and more important. Peter was soon very highly regarded in Tampa, and as a matter of fact, they named the Peter O. Knight Airport for him.

We gave Tampa a mighty fine citizen in Peter O. Knight. Don't you think they maybe owe us a little something? □



Florida State Archives

Inventor Thomas Edison was particularly fond of the automobile given to him by its builder, his friend and Ft. Myers neighbor, Henry Ford.

The River of Grass still flows



HASF, 1989-011-13428

Deer living in large herds have adapted to the watery world around them in the Everglades.



At Cape Sable lies a bewildering maze known to nineteenth century travelers as the "mangrove wilderness."

The Visual Record

by Stuart McIver

What is the Everglades? A freshwater marsh, a swamp, a lake, or a vast inland sea? Or possibly even a river, a very slow-moving river? Early explorers or soldiers in the Second Seminole War weren't exactly sure what they had found. The indigenous people's name for it was Pa-hay-okee, Grassy Waters. Marjory Stoneman Douglas came along in the twentieth century and decided to call it a river. After all, it was a sheet of water flowing south, just barely, from Lake Okeechobee into Florida Bay -- different from all other rivers, but still a river. She used the designation in the title of her book on this most fascinating and mysterious of all South Florida natural wonders, *The Everglades: River of Grass*.

Her definitive book, published in 1947, became the handbook for those who would save the Everglades from the pressures of man's encroachment. The military saw the Everglades as a barrier, hampering any orderly pursuit of the Indians across the state in the Second Seminole War. Later, others saw it as a challenge. Drain the Everglades, they said, and fertile farmland will come forth to make South Florida the winter vegetable capital of America. As simple as that, they thought. It has turned out to be anything but simple. Drainage, starting as far back as 1906, has left the lower peninsula with baffling environmental problems that threaten the future of the Everglades National Park.

In this issue *THE VISUAL RECORD* presents a series of pictures of the Glades and of the park, which was founded to preserve the Everglades for future generations. □



HASF, 1989-011-13318

HASF, 76-148-8



The Everglades is dotted with a number of small tree islands, called hammocks, a word used by early indigenous people for the fertile islets.

HASF (Matlack 162-50)

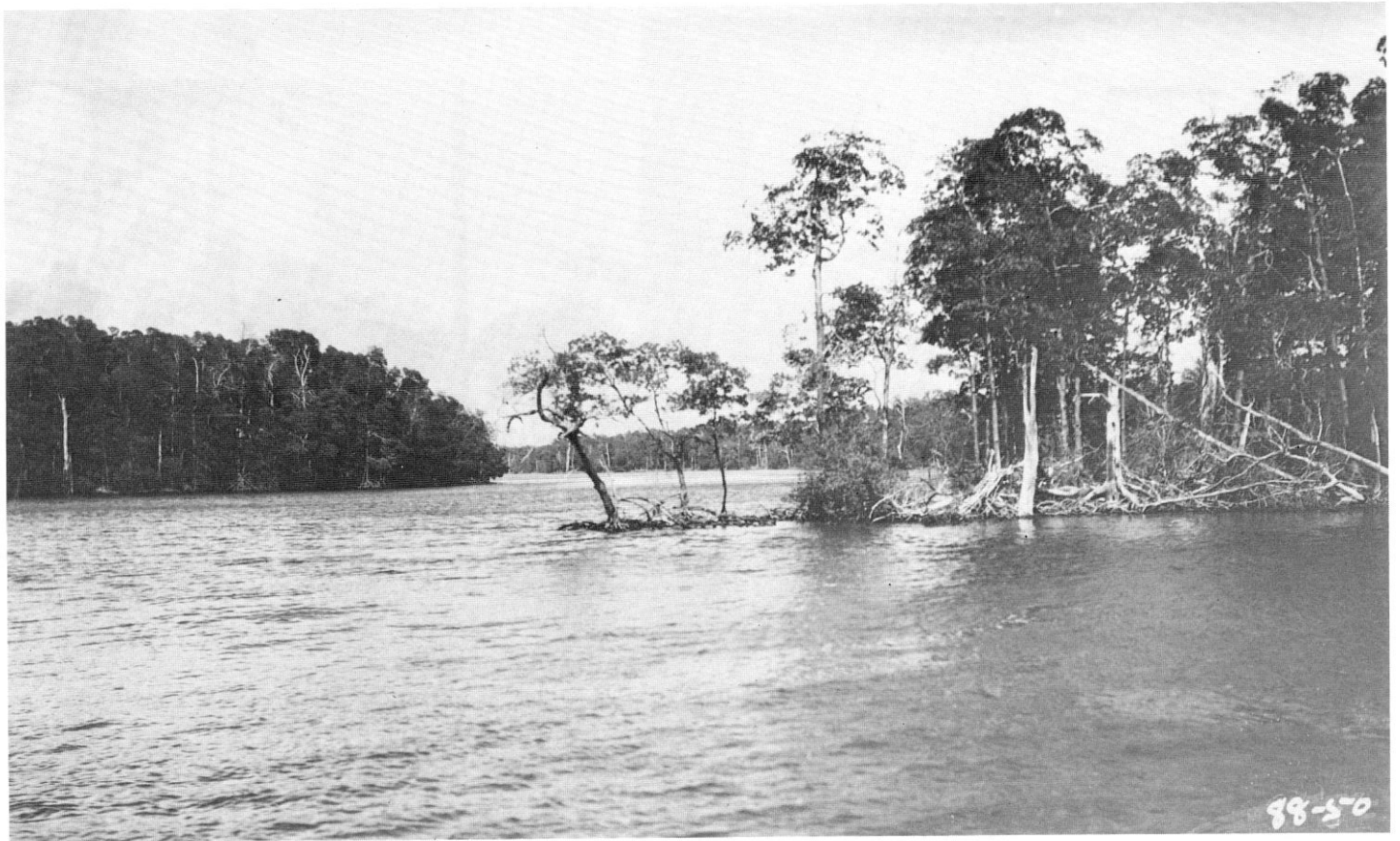


The Waddell Grove dominated the Cape Sable waterfront around the turn of the century. James A. Waddell of Key West acquired 1,120 acres in 1884 and planted the land heavily in coconut palms.

In 1915 the home of the Flamingo patriarch, Uncle Steve Roberts, was converted into the Roberts Hotel, Cape Sable's premier hostelry. Four bedrooms upstairs housed regular or transient guests. Extra mattresses on the floor took care of overflow guests. A 1926 hurricane destroyed the hotel.

HASF, 78-120-1





The ominously named Shark River rises in the western Everglades and flows through Ten Thousand Islands into the Gulf of Mexico.



HASF, 77-26-6



Flamingo, a fishing village, housed an assortment of fugitives from society, including moonshiners, smugglers and illegal plume hunters. Audubon warden Guy Bradley, who lived in Flamingo, was killed by a plume hunter in 1905 on nearby Oyster Keys.



After the end of the Second and Third Seminole Wars, Miccosukee Indians retreated to remote camps in the Everglades and Big Cypress Swamp.



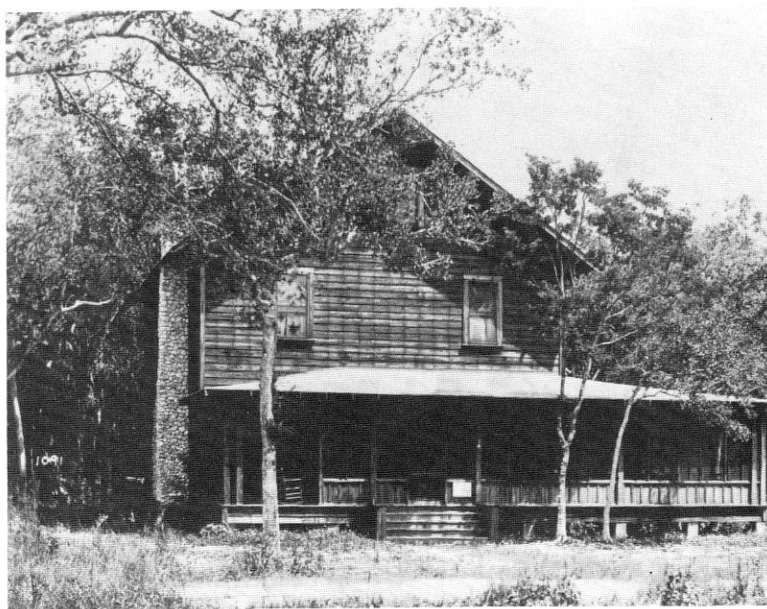
HASF (Mallack 443-50)

Royal Palm Lodge, which sat on a mile-wide hammock, could be regarded as the start of Everglades National Park. Miami clubwomen, led by Mrs. Mary Barr Munroe, wife of novelist Kirk Munroe, persuaded Mary Lily Kenan Flagler, widow of railroad tycoon Henry M. Flagler, to give 1,000 acres around Paradise Key to the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs. This property became Royal Palm State Park and later Everglades National Park.



HASF, 1989-011-13391

Moonshining was a popular outdoor sport at the Cape, even before Prohibition. Sugar cane was used to make a powerful potion known as "Cape Sable Augerdent," a corruption of the Spanish phrase for "water of life."



HASF, 1975-23-145



HASF, 1989-011-13329



HASF, 81-105-3



HASF, 1968-1-37

Opposite page:

Top: When drought grips South Florida, the danger of fire in the Everglades always looms. Fires are a part of the natural cycle of the Glades.

Left: Concerned environmentalists gathered at the Collier County town of Everglades on December 6, 1947, for the dedication of Everglades National Park. The principal speaker was President Harry S. Truman. Just behind the President's right shoulder is Governor Millard Caldwell. At the far left is Senator Spessard Holland. Second from President Truman's left, in the front row, is one of the park's staunchest supporters, John Pennekamp, of *The Miami Herald*. Just to his left, in a dark suit, is a young Senator Claude Pepper.

Right: Charlie Brookfield, South Florida representative of the National Audubon Society, machete in hand, stands beside the waterfront grave of the murdered warden Guy Bradley on East Cape Sable.



HASF, 1989-011-13397

In late 1955 Seminoles cleared boat trails at Halfway Creek on the west side of Everglades National Park. On December 15 of that year park naturalists began conducting guided boat tours on these newly cleared trails.



HASF, 1989-011-13311

Camps still remain in the Glades and the Big Cypress Swamp. Not all are as cluttered as this one.



HASF, 1989-011-13297

More than 1 million people visit Everglades National Park each year, many of them to walk the Anhinga Trail at Taylor Slough near the Florida City entrance.

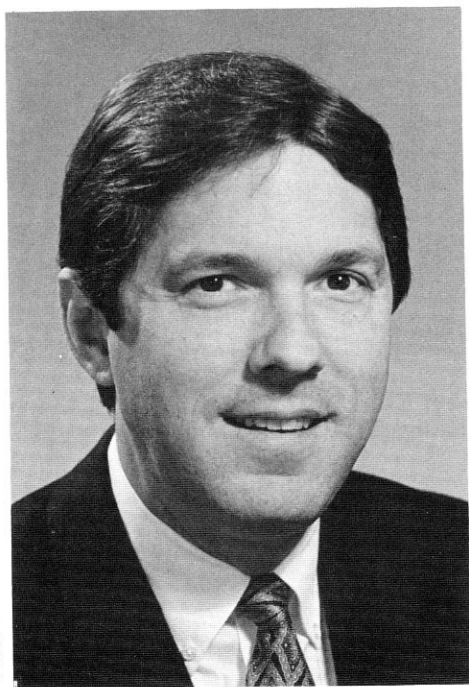
CUBA & FLORIDA:

Exploring a personal connection

by Ellen Kanner

Raul Rodriguez and George "Rocky" Harper, two officers of the Historical Association, are modern personifications of the historic connection between Cuba & Florida — the topic of the October 2, 1991-January 19, 1992 exhibition in our temporary gallery. Ellen Kanner relays their stories to us in the following articles.

Raul Rodriguez



© Ray Fisher

Raul Rodriguez today

Raul Rodriguez is an elegant, warm man, a man at home anywhere; yet he feels he has no home

Gracious and well-spoken, a successful Miami architect with a family of whom he is proud, Rodriguez sees his life as clouded by the fact that he and his family left Cuba 32 years ago. He still feels what he calls "the tragedy of the exile."

The Cuba Raul Rodriguez recalls from his boyhood is a place bustling with life, full of beauty.

"There was a lot of neoclassical style, and Havana had a boom in modern architecture. Growing up in Havana is the single biggest reason why I'm an architect today," Rodriguez says.

Rodriguez recalls growing up "in an environment where the United States was accessible, where you went to consume."

His parents, Raul Sr. and Esther Rodriguez, travelled yearly to New York and Miami on shopping trips. Esther had gone to school at Miami Beach's St. Patrick's School with Desi Amaz.

Raul Sr. worked for his father, Ramon Rodriguez, owner of the Partagas cigarette factory. Like most businesses at the time, the factory was approached by a faction plotting against Castro. Although Batista was formally in power, Castro controlled the country by means of guerilla tactics. Raul was urged to contribute to the anti-Castro group.

Raul and Esther Rodriguez were on vacation in Miami in 1958, without their three sons, when the plot was discovered.



HASF, 1989-011-4308

Rocky Harper

George "Rocky" Harper calls himself an American Cuban

He listens to radio programs both in Spanish and in English, and is comfortable with both. A partner with the law firm of Paul, Landy, Beiley and Harper, P.A., his features are not Latin. His eyes are blue, he has no accent.

"I have no cultural conflict," says Harper.

Harper's father, George K. Harper, is an American who was born in Cuba. Harper's mother, Lenore Elizabeth Pardo, is Cuban. As a boy, he attended Ruston Academy in Cuba, which was 100 percent bilingual.

"I grew up as one of 10,000 Americans in Havana," he says, "My family and I felt close to both cultures. We spoke Spanish and English at home. We had as pure a bilingual upbringing as you could have."

He recalls Havana as a "cosmopolitan, sophisticated, ancient city with tremendous amounts of history, culture, beautiful colonial architecture, and yet with a small-town atmosphere."

Rock 'n' roll and baseball, two of America's contributions to the world, were popular in Cuba when Harper grew up. In his teens, Harper acted as DJ on Sunday afternoons for the radio show, "Teenage Turntable," and played the American Top 40.

At the mention of the word 'baseball' Harper brightens

At the mention of the word "baseball" Harper brightens. "I love the lore of baseball and its mystique," he says, "Baseball is incredibly popular in Cuba. That's all we had, there were no other sports."

In the late 1950s Harper served as substitute batboy for the Triple-A International League when they played Cuba. The American teams needed an English-speaking batboy, and when the regular batboy was unavailable, Harper at ages 15 and 16 acted as batboy for legendary players like Satchel Paige.

Boys my age would just disappear

Although most of Harper's memories of growing up sound innocent and all-American, the reality of living in a country of political turmoil was always there.

"You couldn't avoid the political situation," Harper says. "We tried to stay out of it, but we couldn't. I remember my mother was carpooling somewhere and drove into a gun battle. One night, I dropped a date off at her home around 11 p.m. and was stopped by the police of the Batista regime. They wanted to know what I was doing. In those days, boys my age would just disappear."

Harper's father owned several businesses, including a cattle ranch and rice mills. These were taken away by Castro, as part of his agrarian reform. Two days after his high-school graduation in June of 1960, Harper and his family left Cuba for Miami.

Powerful waves from the Atlantic pound the Havana seawall along the Malecón.

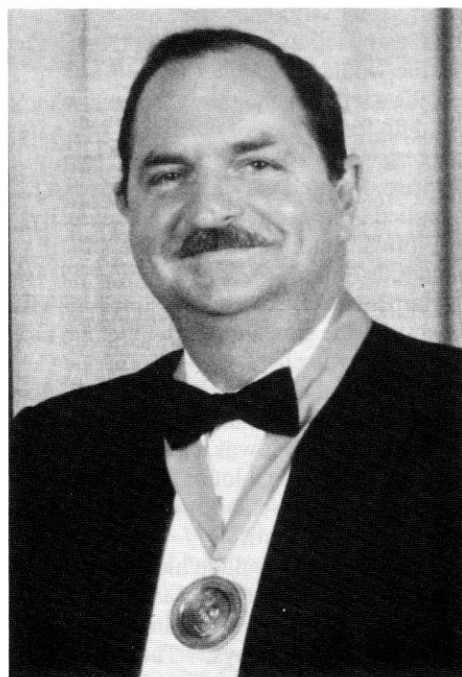
Ramon Rodriguez realized his son could face arrest under the growing Castro regime but felt the impact of the incident would all blow over in time.

"He suggested that my parents should take an extended vacation and then everything would be all right," explains Rodriguez. "This was not acceptable to my mother. My parents realized they would be unable to return home. My mother insisted her parents bring us over immediately."

Trapped by circumstances

Raul and Esther did not flee Cuba. On the contrary, trapped by circumstances, they were forced to take action. As a result of their decision to move the family to Miami, Raul, who was then 11, and his

Continued on page 24



George "Rocky" Harper today

Courtesy of George Harper

"There was nothing to stay for," says Harper. "At the time we left, though, we thought we'd be gone for about six months. When things cooled down, we'd be going back. I had been prepared for leaving home, anyway, because I was going to start Georgia Tech in the fall. The difference was that we came here in June, not August."

On the flight from Havana to Miami, Lenore Harper urged her children to be calm and quiet, not to cause a disturbance. Police were everywhere, and indeed, pulled one man off their flight, without giving a reason.

"There was a tremendous feeling of relief when we landed in Miami," Harper recalls.

Harper's older sister, Jean, went back to Duke University when the family arrived here. George Harper, his mother and his two younger brothers stayed with his great-aunt, Margaret Squier, who had a home in North Miami. The three boys shared their great-aunt's attic. Harper's father made repeated trips back to Cuba, to try to salvage the family possessions and businesses.

"It was a losing proposition," Harper states. "In December of 1960, he left Cuba for good. We lost everything."

The family fought to endure, and George and Lenore Harper were anxious to provide a good education for all four of their children.



Courtesy of George Harper

Rocky Harper, at right, perches on the arm of a chair in Havana with his sister Jeanie and his brother Ricky.

"My father is one of those people who decided he wasn't going to be defeated. He put all four of us through college at once. He borrowed and borrowed to do it. He just paid off the last of the loans seven or eight years ago."

Harper knew he could never return

In the fall of 1960, George Harper started school at Georgia Tech. Harper and his father had chosen the school because it had the best curriculum for what Harper planned to do — go back to Cuba and work for his father's business after college. After the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, however, Harper knew he could never return.

"When our family business was swept away, I lost direction," he says. "I didn't do so well in undergraduate school. All my life I knew I'd be working for my father, and then that was taken from me."

Harper's parents moved to Puerto Rico, where his father became involved with a rice milling group. His mother taught and later went on to become a principal at a school in Puerto Rico. They lived there for 20 years and are now living in a town in the mountains of North Georgia.

'I think you can't go home again'

After graduating from Georgia Tech in 1964, Harper served in the Navy for two years. He married his wife, Jeanne in 1966 and tried to figure out what direction his life would take.

"We sat down and thought about what we'd do for the rest of our lives. My wife suggested law school for me, and to my surprise, I scored very high on the LSAT. I applied to law schools at the University of Florida, Emory and the University of Miami."

Harper chose UM, and was pleased with Miami for the education provided him and with the city itself.

"It wasn't until I got back to Miami that I discovered my Cuban roots," he says. "I realized how rich it was, culturally. It bounces back from a lot of adversity. I don't think my wife and I would live anywhere but Miami."

Harper does not include himself among the many who would return to Cuba to live, given the chance. "I think you can't go home again," he says. "The Cuba of 30 years ago will never be again. And I'm



Courtesy of George Harper

more pessimistic than most. I think as bad off as the people are there, it's going to get worse. The people won't soon rise up. They're afraid. It's a despotic situation. Those of us who live on the outside, looking in, can't possibly put ourselves in the position those people are in."

George Harper and his family have recently had a rare opportunity to go home again. Friends of the family were in Cuba for the Pan American Games, and on a day off, took a risk and made films of where Harper grew up.

"I hadn't seen those homes in 32 years. In my grandfather's house now is a huge picture of Che Guevara. My grandfather would not be comfortable with that — and he's been dead for 20 years."



Rocky's at the wheel as his family and friends gather at Arroyo Arenas, Cuba, in November 1945. Pictured from left to right and front to back are: Rich Harper, Enrique Eddy, Roger Stewart, Jim Benson, unidentified, Rocky Harper, Jeanne Harper, Lourdes Valentiner, Judy Benson, Colin Stewart, Bill Skilton, Buddy Vanteniner, Elena Eddy, unidentified, unidentified, unidentified, Harry Skilton, and Judy Culver.

Harper's old home in Cuba is now a school for revolutionaries. All that was familiar to him is strange now, and the beautiful city he loved has fallen into disrepair.

"I mean, it's falling apart. We saw pictures of buildings which were held up by poles."

When Harper reads about the Cubans who have fled their homeland on home made rafts, he says his first response "... is a human one. I feel pity, I feel sorry for their suffering ... but I admire their courage to do something about an intolerable situation."

He hopes that, when Castro falls, it will mean an increased exchange between Cuba and Miami.

Miami is the place to make it happen

"There are 10 million people in Cuba, and that market is untouched. Miami is the place to make it happen. I can see businessmen making the commute between Cuba and Miami. Miami's closer to Havana than it is to Orlando. And there are tremendous opportunities."

Although he admits visiting Cuba out of curiosity is a possibility, Harper feels his life is best realized here. As for his two sons, who attend FSU, "They're American. The younger generation of Cubans who left are acclimated to the land they live in now."

Harper likes living in multicultural Miami, likes flipping from Spanish to English radio stations.

"That way, I get different viewpoints. If you ask," says Harper, "I consider myself more Cuban than American, but who I am is based on both cultures". □

Continued from page 21.

Raul Rodriguez

eight-year-old brother, Alejandro, made the crossing from Havana to Key West on the SS *City of Havana* in September 1959. They came with Esther Rodriguez's father, Lorenzo Beltran. Raul's youngest brother, Frankie, was only three, and could not come until he got a passport. He did not join his family here until November 1961.

Miami was a safer place than his old home had been

After he was reunited with his parents in Miami Beach, Raul looked around and was not impressed. He observes, "It was a smaller city with less traffic. It was resort-like, less sophisticated than Havana. Miami Beach was slower-paced, more relaxing, but to a child of 11, it was a less interesting place."

It was, however, a safer place than his old home had been. Even as a child, Raul had been aware of unrest during the time Batista was in power.

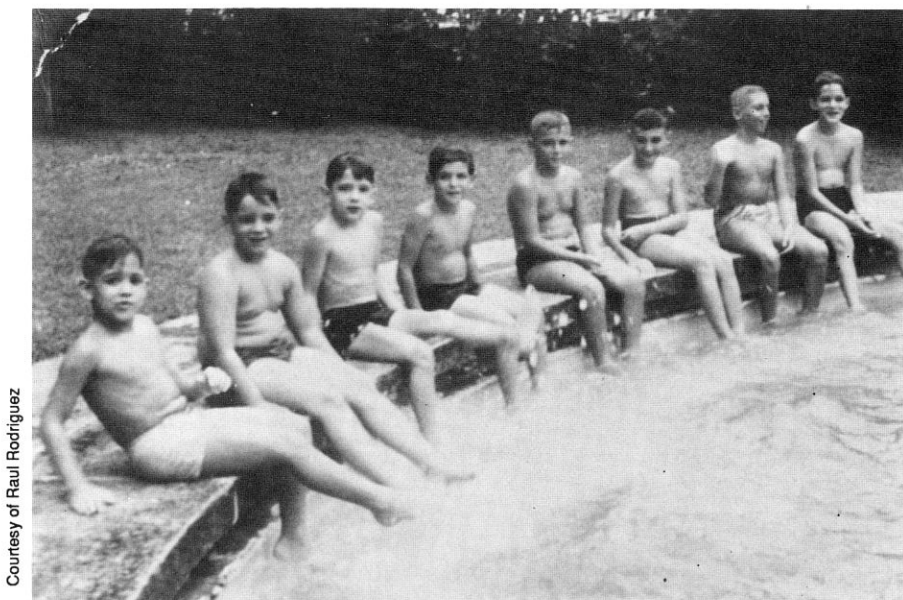
"My generation grew up in fear of the political situation in Cuba. In 1957, an attack on the palace was perpetrated by a group of students," he says. "I was only nine at the time. I was at school when it happened. Things were out of control, and I was very frightened."

Eleven-year old Raul was not sure why he was with his family in Miami Beach. He was looking forward to getting back to Cuba in time for the new school session, looking forward to seeing all his friends again.

He is quick to count himself among the lucky

On Thursday, September 10, his father told him he would not be going home again. To this day, he still "gets that feeling," that wrench, when the calendar tells him September 10 has come. On the following Monday, September 14, Raul started school at St. Patrick's School, the Catholic school his mother had attended before him.

He is quick to count himself among the lucky. He was with his family, and making the academic adjustment was easy for him. In Cuba, he attended the Phillips School, which was bilingual, and he was fluent in English. He did so well his first year at St. Patrick's, he ended up first in his class.



Courtesy of Raul Rodriguez

The Rodriguez family hosted Alejandro's birthday party by the pool at their Miramar residence in Havana. Pictured from left to right are: Alberto Raurell, Jose Nour, Alejandro Rodriguez, Waldo Reboredo, Jorge Otero, Sixto Aquino, Alberto Ortero, and Raul Rodriguez.

"That," he adds with a grin, "was a real shocker for the nuns. I still have the medal."

His parents worked hard to succeed, too, even though they were ill-prepared for what they would come to do. Raul Sr. only had experience working at his father's cigarette factory. Esther, who wed Raul when she was 18, had never worked.

They were, however, "good-looking kids who spoke English and dressed well." They gravitated towards the garment industry in New York, and became employees at Saks Fifth Avenue. Esther is still with Saks at Dadeland, handling the 5th Avenue Club, which her son defines as "a shopping service for big spenders."

Although the Rodriguez family has been successful in this country, Rodriguez does not subscribe to rags-to-riches stories or the myth of Horatio Alger.

I benefitted by the gift of responsibility and the sense of worth it gave me

"You hear of people who say, 'Oh, I arrived in this country with only five dollars in my pocket.' You came with more than five dollars," he says. "You came with a mind, with a tradition, with goals."

Because his parents worked, much responsibility within the family fell to Raul, the oldest son. In Cuba, he had led a very protected childhood, but now he worked with his 70-year-old grandfather.

"Together, we were one whole adult. I could speak English and get around, my grandfather was mature and had judgment. Together, we could . . . get things done. I benefitted by the gift of responsibility and the sense of worth it gave me." There was much, though, that Raul missed of his old home. One of his great loves, baseball, was taught to him by his family's chauffeur, Giraldo.

"It sound funny to say you miss a chauffeur, but he was my second father," he says. "He always looked out for me. I didn't learn about baseball in America. He taught it to me in Cuba. Suddenly, when we came here, he became inaccessible."

The loss of family and friends and the change in lifestyle was difficult for the whole family. One way they coped with having less was by learning to share. Raul and his two brothers all grew to be the same size as their father, so they shared their clothes.

"It wasn't unusual," Raul recalls, "to put on a pair of shoes and have them be warm, because someone else had just been wearing them. The dichotomy, the pull between Cuba and the United States is

HASF, 1989-011-4368



The Prado leads to the harbor, beyond which is El Morro Castle.

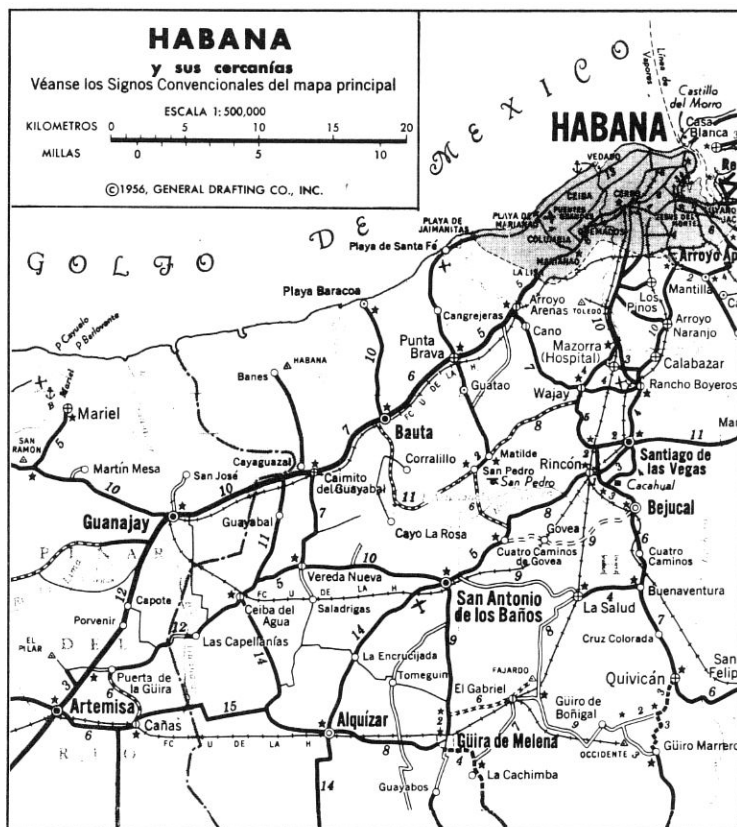
HASF, 1989-011-4373



El Morro Castle overlooks the entrance to Havana Harbor.

palpable in the conference room of Raul's office. Posters of Cuba are on the walls, as are framed photographs of his projects. *Cuba in the 1850s* lies next to *Western Architecture* in his bookcase.

summer of 1991. He has brought his wife Ninon and his son Ruli (Raul III) with him. Sharing the place of his birth with his son has been meaningful and magical to Raul.



1956 Map of Havana area

Rodriguez, who yearns to reconcile Cuba and America, says, "My life started when the countries were great friends. Making the world, my world, right again means bringing them back together. Cuba has made an unwilling investment in Florida, but the two will be forever tied, not just because of geography, which was the first reason for the relationship, but also because of bloodlines."

It is brutal, going back

Rodriguez manages a wry smile when talk turns of going back to Cuba to live, "The truth of the matter is that Cuba is 35 minutes away by air and 32 years behind. It is brutal, going back."

That doesn't mean the possibility of return isn't there. He has travelled back several times, the last time being the

"I sat with him on the balcony of our hotel room, overlooking Havana, and there he was, and I thought, is he my son or me?"

As much as he loves to share Cuba, his first home, with his son, Rodriguez is torn, as he's been all his life.

"I could never live in a country that didn't have the level of comfort the Bill of Rights has provided for me," he says.

Rights and options and freedom are not abstract terms for Rodriguez. They are forces that have played a part in his life since he was a boy in Cuba.

"My parents exercised the option to take me out of Cuba when they had the opportunity," he says. "That was their decision. It was my option to reel my son back to Cuba. That has been my decision."

Rodriguez sits back and smiles. "There," he says. "We're even." □

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Advertisements from
Anglo-American Directory of Cuba 1960

Phones started ringing in Miami in 1899

by Arthur E. Chapman

In some cases history and dates just seem to go together and when examining the history of Miami the following dates may be considered critical:

1. April 15, 1896, the first train arrived.
2. May 15, 1896, the first newspaper (*Miami Metropolis*) was published.
3. July 28, 1896, the City of Miami was incorporated.

Missing from these dates is any note of the beginning of the vital telecommunications industry. As the story of the telephone and the history of Miami are very closely interwoven, it may be helpful to examine how family tradition and fact came into existence along with this industry.

The price of telephone service for business purposes will probably be priced at \$30 per year

On December 23, 1898, the *Miami Metropolis*, published an article entitled, "New Telephone Company." This article read as follows:

At the regular meeting of the common council last night there was granted to J. R. Dewey, James Sanders and Y. F. Gray a charter for the operation of a telephone system in the City of Miami. These gentlemen state they have plenty of money back of them to carry the business of the company ahead successfully. The business will be conducted as a stock company, with the purpose in view of extending the service of the company all the way from New River (Fort Lauderdale) to Cutler. For the present the lines will be extended from Coconut Grove and Lemon City. The name of the company has not yet been settled upon. Work upon the construction of Lemon City and Coconut Grove will commence at once, even before the stock com-

pany is ready to commence business as such. The price of telephone service for business purposes will probably be priced at \$30.00 per year. It is probable that there will not be much money in the business at first, but like all other business in Miami, it will prove a good thing to hold on to.

Telephone Directory



September 1, 1916

The Miami Telephone Company produced an impressive directory

Only two months later telephone service became a reality, and in an article on February 24, 1899, the *Miami Metropolis* published the following account of this important event:

The switchboard of the Miami Telephone Company has been put in and the phones about town connected up this week. Everything is in systematic and complete working order and the service is equal to that of any of our larger cities, and is certainly a credit to Miami. With a telephone unexcelled, we predict for the Company a steady and large increase of business. The exchange will be located in the Miami Drug

Store, and day and night service will be rendered. Extra forces of men have been put to work upon the extension of the line to Lemon City and Coconut Grove. Connection was made with the golf links and the water works at the rapids on Wednesday.

A listing of the first subscribers then followed with a footnote that read, "Private houses have not been solicited, but will be soon. Lines will also run to the vegetable section beyond the golf grounds."

The rapids were located west and south of the existing 17th Avenue bridge on the south fork of the Miami River. The drug store was located on the southwest corner of what is now Miami Avenue and Southwest First Street, which was the location of the Magneto Switchboard, in the rear of the store. Miss Eunice Coons was the first switchboard operator. Not long thereafter the switchboard was moved to the Kronowitter Building on the south side of Flagler Street between Miami and Northeast First Avenue.

They played pinochle, smoked cigars, and , as related, 'swapped lies'

The narrative as presented thus far has been composed of well documented information. But there is a substantial part of the story missing. Who were those men involved in this major undertaking and how did they proceed? It is within these parameters that family tradition may be incorporated to support the documented history.

It has long been held that Dewey, Sanders and Gray, the founders of the Miami Telephone Company, would meet with Frank Walton Chapman on regular occasions beneath a large sapodilla tree in the front yard of his house. There they played pinochle, smoked cigars, and, as related, "swapped lies." The location of this tree was supposed to be on Third Street and Northeast 18th Avenue; a property that remained in the family until

1991. But the Chapman family home was located (in 1898) on Biscayne Boulevard (not named the Boulevard then) and Fifth Street (the site became the location of the *Miami News (Metropolis)* Building in 1925).

'I know all about that telephone stuff . . .'

Again, in accordance with tradition, Chapman and "company" were happily engaged in their card game and "swapping lies," when Edwin B. Critchley (another relative) joined in the company. This was the early fall of 1898. As the discussion progressed, it was revealed that plans were underway for the creation of a telephone company. Critchley immediately made it known that "I know all about that telephone stuff and you should use me to put it in."

Great Uncle Critchley was not exactly telling the truth, despite the claim that he had been employed for three years by the Phoenix Electric Telephone Company of New York. Furthermore, being "smarter and faster than a greased hog," he immediately wrote to his "former employer" and in glowing terms described the opportunity for equipment sales. Unfortunately, his letters have been lost, but we have copies of Phoenix Electric Telephone's responses, not only to Critchley but to Dewey as well.

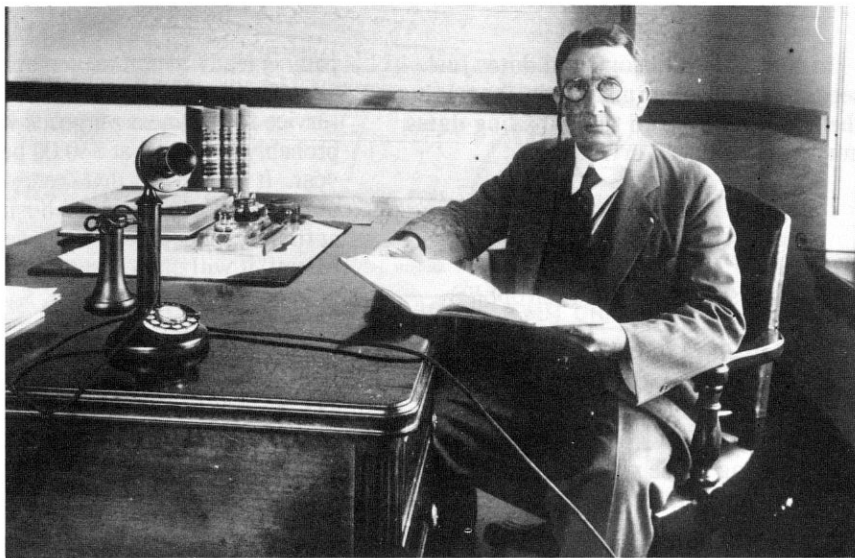
A December 31, 1898, letter to Critchley simply states, "We thank you very much and we can assure you if you succeed in establishing our goods in Miami, we will remember you in a substantial manner. Do all you can for us, and leave the balance to us."

'This is of course between ourselves'

A letter of the same date to Dewey states, "If you desire to ascertain the detailed construction of our instruments, Mr. Critchley is perfectly capable of giving you the same, as he was employed in our factory for three years and is conversant with the details of our manufacture."

It was the letter to Dewey that ensured Critchleys' role in the selection and the installation of the first telephone equipment in Miami. In a following letter of January 11, the company wrote him again:

'smarter and faster than a greased hog'



No business office was complete without a desk-top telephone, which in those days came in just one color – basic black.

. . . as fast as we receive our check in payment for the goods that they purchase from us, we will see that you are reimbursed with a check from us as commission. This is of course between ourselves.

This commission was apparently fixed at 5 percent for in an April 14 letter that is what was noted.

So Miami got its telephone system. On occasion, Dewey would notify his subscribers that he had arranged for a musical program. The quartet consisted of J. K. Dorn, Earl Munford, Louis Wolf, and Vivian Rutherford. They would gather around the switchboard, Gray would insert all the plugs, ring all the sets, and the music would begin. This first musical broadcast in the city reached about 35 homes.

She rang and she rang, but there was no answer

Sometime in 1902, Dewey sold his share to John Gramling Sr. who was the justice of the peace. Gramling often held court in the "telephone (Kronowitter)

building." One day Miss Coons had a call for C. M. Brown who operated a furniture store west of Miami Avenue. She rang and rang but there was no answer, so Gramling walked over to see what was the matter. He found Brown sitting on the front step. When asked if he didn't know that his phone was ringing, Brown said, sure, he could hear it but "if somebody wants something let him come around and get it."

In the June 26, 1903, *Miami Metropolis* appears an article entitled, "Sold His Telephone Stock."

Mr. John Gramling has sold his interests in the Miami Telephone Company to Mr. E. T. Clyatt and Capt. James Sanders. Mr. Clyatt has been in charge of the practical work of the system for some time.

Time moved quickly and on December 11, 1917, the South Atlantic Telephone and Telegraph Company bought the Miami Telephone Company. On December 6, 1924, Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company bought that company, resulting in the current ownership. □

parties

by

pat

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Around the galleries . . .



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Cuba & Florida

October 2, 1991 - January 19, 1992
A retrospective on the 500-year relationship between the island and the peninsula.

Era of Columbus

January - December, 1992
Lobby exhibit presenting an overview of people and events surrounding Columbus' voyages and resulting consequences.

Temples of Gold, Crowns of Silver

January 31 - March 1, 1992
A Columbus Quincentenary exhibition of paintings and artifacts of Latin American colonial art relating to pre-Columbian past and its encounter with Spanish culture.

Monday - Saturday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
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Columbian Journey, a series of lecture programs that focus on the world of Christopher Columbus and the broad consequences of his contact with the Americas. Lectures for the winter and spring of 1992 are scheduled for January 12, February 9, March 8, April 12, and May 10. Call to confirm speakers and dates.

Dr. Paul George Boat Tours

Tours continue this spring on the following dates.

MIAMI RIVER

10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Sunday, April 12, 1992

KEY BISCAYNE

5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Sunday, May 3, 1992

MIAMI RIVER

10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Sunday, May 17, 1992

All boat tours require pre-payment two weeks in advance to confirm reservations and launching sites. Members: \$20/person; nonmembers: \$25/person. To reserve your seat, please call 375-1625. Bring refreshments.

Dr. Paul George Walking Tours

Tours of Miami neighborhoods begin again this new year. Reservations are not required, just meet at the locations indicated. Members: \$10, Non-members \$13 a person

Art Deco District South

11 a.m., Sunday, January 12, 1992
Meet at Ocean Drive and 8th Street, Miami Beach

Art Deco District North

10 a.m., Saturday, February 1, 1992
Meet at Ocean Drive and 13th Street, Miami Beach

Morningside

10 a.m., Saturday, February 8, 1992
Meet at NE 6th Avenue and 56 Street Miami

Coral Gables

11 a.m., Sunday, February 16, 1992
Meet at Coral Gables City Hall
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables

Brickell/South Side

10 a.m., Saturday, February 22, 1992
Meet at Brickell Park, SE 5th Street and Brickell Avenue (next to the Sheraton Brickell Point Hotel), Miami

City of Miami Cementery

10 a.m., Saturday, March 7, 1992
Meet at NE 2nd Avenue and 8th Street, Miami

West Little Havana

10 a.m., Saturday, March 14, 1992
Meet at the Cuban Memorial Plaza Torch SW 8th Street and 13th Avenue, Miami

Downtown/Biscayne

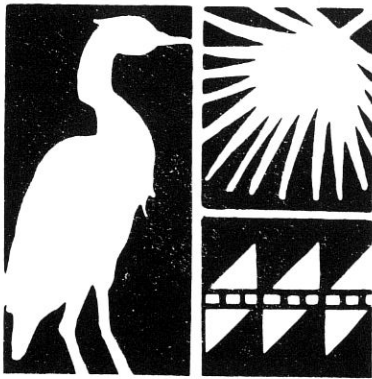
10 a.m., Saturday, March 21, 1992
Meet at the flag-draped entrance to Bayside near the information booth on NE 4th Street and Biscayne Boulevard.

"Readers' Choice"

Art of the Florida Indians: Seminoles and Miccosukees

February 20, 1992
Champagne brunch and a slide lecture with Dot Downs, lecturer for the Florida Endowment for the Humanities, at the museum. Brunch begins at 11:00 a.m., slide presentation at 11:45 a.m. Cost of the event is \$20. Call Pat Helms for further information and reservations at 375-1492

Museum membership is \$35 for individuals; \$45 for families, and includes a variety of benefits. Museum membership in the Tropees, the museum's young professionals group, is \$35 for individuals and \$50 for couples/families.



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Events

Columbus Quincentennial Film Series
Reservations are required, please
call the museum

Seeking the First Americans
February 1, 1992, 10 a.m. - Noon

16th Century Preceptions of Latin America: Civil or Savage
February 8, 1992, 10 a.m. - Noon

Seasons of A Navajo
February 15, 1992, 10 a.m. - Noon

Walking in a Sacred Manner
February 22, 1992, 10 a.m. - Noon

4th Annual Heritage Days Festival
March 14-15, 1992
A living history weekend reaching back
through 500 years of Florida's past.

4th Annual Tea Party
May 2, 1992
An event for little girls and their dolls.
Reservations are required.

Exhibits

Seeds of Change
March 2 - 27, 1992
Examines change in the Old and New
Worlds due to exchanges of agriculture and
introductions of disease.

Paintbrush Diplomacy
May 11 - June 5, 1992
Features 70 paintings and drawings by
children from South, Central, and North
America.

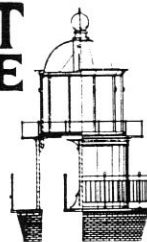


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Adults \$3; Children \$1.
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Exhibits

Woodcarving
January 3 - February 14
February 19 - April 10, 1992

Hermann Heller: Austrian artist, 1866-1949
January 2 - February 23, 1992

A History of the United States Sugar Corporation
December 20 - February 28, 1992

Black History Posters
January 15 - February 28, 1992

Racimo - A 19th Century Florida Plantation
March 1 - April 30, 1992

Field Trips:

Eden Vineyards, LaBelle/Alva Museum
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Bok Tower Gardens/Chalet Suzanne/Kissimmee Cow Camp
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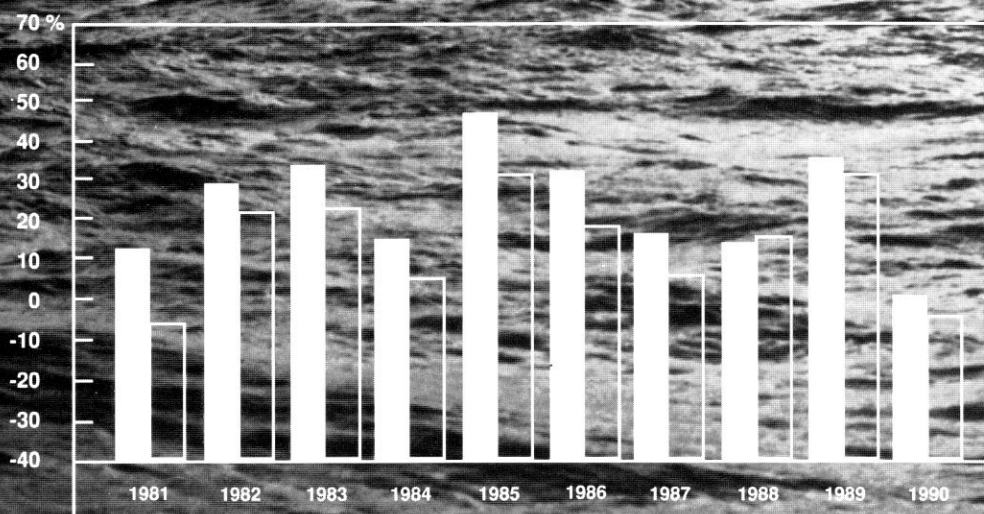
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