

# South Florida History

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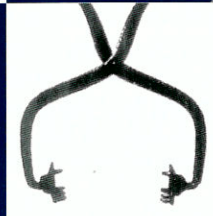
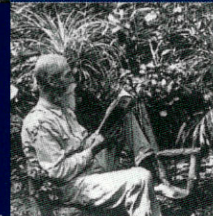
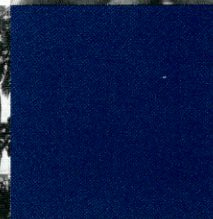
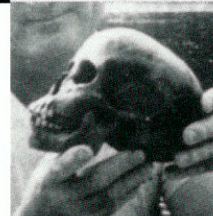
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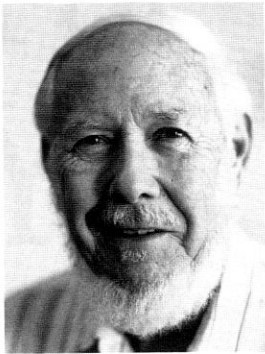
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# Editor's Notes

By Stuart McIver



When I think of Thelma Peters, I think first of crossword puzzles. "History's a Mystery" was the puzzle she constructed each quarter

for *Update*, the forerunner of *South Florida History Magazine*. I'd grab the latest issue and see if I could come up with the answer to such Miamiana as "What Julia Tuttle's home became, 1 across," or "- over Miami, 3 down."

Thelma was an historian with a sense of humor and a down-to-earth touch. History to her was never statistics or trends. It was about pioneer families, about catching fish, about treating head lice with kerosene. She told of the Mettairs' favorite horse, Prince, and how Prohibition forced the closing of a popular tavern, commemorated by a bronze plaque, which read:

Here lies *les restes* of Ye Wee  
Tappie Tavern,  
Once an hotel, a gaudy gilt tavern,  
Born in champagne in 1911,  
Died in limeade before she was  
seven.

In February Dr. Thelma Peters died in a retirement village in South Carolina. She was 90. She left behind many friends like myself, who consider themselves lucky to have known her, and three wonderful books about what life was like in Miami. She wrote *Lemon City: Pioneering on Biscayne Bay, 1850-1925*; *Miami 1909*; and *Biscayne Country*. Do yourself a favor and read them. And for starters, turn to Page 25 and read her account of her own hurricane honeymoon.

Thelma Peters was a versatile woman.

At various times she was a novelist, poet, archeologist, college administrator, editor, historian, bicyclist, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and for a brief period, interim director of the Historical Association of Southern Florida. She filled this post until our present president, Randy Nimnicht, could take over. About his predecessor he said, in a statement to *The Miami Herald*,

"She would be a role model, I think today, to many younger professional women. This lady was always stretching to reach her potential. She was so far ahead of her time. Good lord, she lived life to its potential. She did so many things. She was a ground breaker."

Thelma Peters taught at Edison High School, Miami-Dade Community College and the University of Miami. She became the first chairwoman of the social studies program at Miami-Dade and developed the first Latin American history class for Dade's public schools.

Born Thelma Peterson in Independence, Missouri, she moved with her family to Florida in 1914. The family lived near Lemon City on land that is now part of Barry University. She was educated at Miami High School, Brenau College in Georgia, Duke University and the University of Florida, where she earned her Ph.D. In 1976 she was elected president of the Florida Historical Society.

In 1974, while she was serving HASF as our interim director, she wrote in "From the Director's Desk," a feature of *Update*, our earlier magazine:

Among the satisfactions of working in the historical museum is the opportunity to meet and talk with our visitors. History buffs, pioneers and their descendants, the nostalgic and the curious, all come our way.

And all who came her way were lucky indeed to have known her.

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Dear Rebecca:

Congratulations on a job well done! The first issue under your direction is beautiful. I have shown some of the extra copies around at work and the comments are exciting to hear. The full-color layout of Glenn Westfall's article and the absolute beauty of the cigar labels made it an immediate hit with the Bureau of Survey and Mapping.

With warmest regards,

Dr. Joe Knetsch, SMA II  
Bureau of Survey and Mapping  
Division of State Lands  
Tallahassee, Florida

Dear Editors:

Dr. Westfall's skillful integration of Cuban history, cigar history, labor history and art history into Florida's history was exciting to read.

The author's obvious knowledge of these diverse fields and his ability to blend all that history together in one brief, readable essay is commendable. Further, the illustrations and judicious use of caption color made the whole piece a beautiful thing to behold. This is certainly one of the best articles (color, design, typogra-

phy and general interest) to appear in your journal.

The passage on "The Lectors" was of particular interest. Westfall mentions "political" readings, but does not say what kind of politics. Although historical references to leftists and communists are terribly out of fashion in Florida these days, it is interesting to note that the cigar workers, and consequently the lectors, were largely influenced by the left as far back as 1924. Passages from Marx, Kropotkin, Malataesta and other famous revolutionary propagandists along with Shakespeare and Cervantes were among the most popular readings by *el lector*.

The Communist Party made significant inroads in Ybor City culture in the early 1930s. When the cigar man-

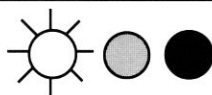
ufactures banned readers from the factories in 1931, the cigar workers went on strike, demanding the return of *el lector*. This was one of the rare moments in American labor history when workers went on strike not for wages or hours, but because of a thirst for cultural enjoyment and a need for knowledge. A culture strike!

For those who are interested in the "other side" of Cuban-American history, Gary R. Mormino, professor of history at the University of South Florida, and George Pozzetta from the University of Florida published an excellent, well-illustrated article on the subject of Florida's Cuban cigar workers in *Labor's Heritage*, vol. 5, no. 1 (spring 1993).

Yours truly,  
John Gladstone

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# Around the Galleries



## HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

Metro-Dade Cultural Center  
101 West Flagler Street, Miami

(305) 375-1492

**General Information:** Open Monday through Saturday, 10 A.M.-5 P.M.; Thursdays until 9 P.M. Sundays, 12 noon-5 P.M. Closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Adults \$4; Children 6-12 \$2. Members Free.

### EXHIBITIONS

#### MIAMI: THE FIRST 100 YEARS, APRIL 18 - SEPTEMBER 29, 1996

Travel through 100 years of history and see how Miami grew from a trading post in 1896 to today's metropolis. Coordinated with Miami's centennial anniversary in July, this exhibition features interesting artifacts and photographs from the museum's extensive collections. An exciting century of development unfolds before the visitors' eyes. This exhibition will also include a multi-dimensional display featuring local residents who contribute family photographs and stories through the museum's



Faces of the Centennial Project (Fall 1995 - Summer 1996) and the Miami Centennial Quilt, created by local quilters through the Miami Centennial Quilt Project. Guest curated by Dr. Paul S. George.

**MAJOR MILESTONES, IN LOBBY THROUGHOUT 1996**  
This centennial exhibit—displayed in the form of a timeline—features a mural of hand-painted ceramic tiles created by the students of Frederick Douglass Elementary. The mural visually depicts the history of Miami and highlights the regional plants and animals that represent the unique character of South Florida

### HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH FLORIDA SPECIAL EVENTS



**JUNE 9, 1996**  
**Dr. George Metrorail Tour of Greater Miami;** 11:00 A.M. Dadeland South Station, at the rail entrance. For a comprehensive tour of our multicultural county, hop on the Metrorail with Dr. George and travel 20 miles around Greater Miami. From WWII camps to historic waterways, farms and racetracks, to the many ethnic neighborhoods of Dade County, you will hear about the people and places that made Greater Miami what it is today. Members: \$10; Non-Members: \$15, plus \$1.25 rail fare.

refundable payments are required. Members: \$20; Non-Members: \$25. To reserve, call (305) 375-1625.

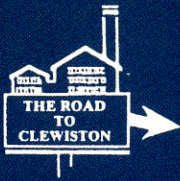
**JUNE 22, 1996**  
**Tropees 2nd Annual Historic Pursuit Limo Rally** Miami Beach; 7 P.M.-midnight.  
Join the Tropees for "Historic Pursuit," a Miami history Trivial Pursuit® / scavenger hunt / progressive cocktail party combination. After a champagne toast, participants cruise in limos from clue to clue throughout South Beach, enjoying complimentary drinks and hors d'oeuvres on their hunt for historical answers. For reservations, please call (305) 375-1492.

#### CENTENNIAL EVENTS:

**Fall 1995 - Summer 1996**  
**Faces of the Centennial**  
The Historical Museum is gathering materials and stories from area residents to tell about Miami's most important element throughout all of its 100 years – its people. The museum is assembling a multi-dimensional Faces of the Centennial exhibit and databank using photographs, mementos and family histories. Yours should be included. Everyone in Miami – whether you came a month ago or your relatives came a century ago is invited to participate. Something brought us all here, and this project aims to define what that is. Special Thanks to the Goldsmith Family Foundation, a major sponsor of this project.

**JUNE 23, 1996**  
**Stiltsville / Key Biscayne Boat Tour;** 5 P.M.-8 P.M.  
Enjoy a picturesque South Florida sunset on this relaxing summer evening boat ride while cruising through Biscayne Bay's most unique neighborhood. Hear all about Stiltsville, Virginia Key, Key Biscayne and the Cape Florida Lighthouse on this comfortable, historical journey. Advance reservations and non-

**JULY 28, 1996**  
**The Big Walk with Dr. Paul George;** 11:00 A.M.  
Meet at Tobacco Road, 626 South Miami Avenue. This tour, specially designed for Miami's Centennial celebration, will take you through 100 years of fascinating history. Follow Dr. George north on Miami Avenue to see how the city grew from a trading post on the Miami River to the metropolis it is today. Admission is free.



### CLEWISTON MUSEUM

112 South Comercio Street, Clewiston  
(813) 983-2870

General Information: The Clewiston Museum, founded in 1984, is a growing museum, collecting and displaying items, large and small, important and trivial, which reflect the past of Clewiston and its surrounding area.

The Clewiston Museum is open 1-5 P.M. Tuesday through Saturday, with seasonal adjustments. No admission fee is charged; however, donations are encouraged.



### COLLIER COUNTY MUSEUM

3301 Tamiami Trail East, Naples  
(941) 774-8476

General Information: The Collier County Museum explores the people, places and everyday events that have shaped Collier County's heritage. The museum and four-acre historical park are open Monday - Friday, 9 A.M. - 5 P.M. Free.

Exhibitions and Events:  
The Key Marco Exhibition,  
December 7, 1995 - May 31, 1996

Experience the unique opportunity to view some of North America's most treasured pre-Columbian artifacts, including the celebrated Key Marco Cat, a wooden statuette that was carved by ancient Calusa Indians, preserved in the mangrove muck and then unearthed on Marco Island 100 years ago. Through an unprecedented loan arrangement with the Florida Museum of Natural History and the Smithsonian Institution, the Collier County Museum is exhibiting the Cat and other rare objects from one of the richest and most spectacular archaeological discoveries of Native American artifacts.



### FORT MYERS HISTORICAL MUSEUM

2300 Peck Street, Fort Myers  
(941) 332-6879

General Information: Open Tuesday through Friday, 9 A.M. - 4 P.M. and Saturday, 10 A.M. - 4 P.M. Closed Sundays and Mondays. Admission is \$2.50 for adults and \$1 for children under 12.



### FLORIDA HISTORY CENTER & MUSEUM

Burt Reynolds Park  
805 North U.S. Highway 1, Jupiter  
(407) 747-6639

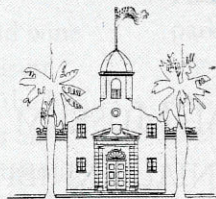
General Information: The Florida History Center & Museum is open all year. Examine artifacts from early Florida inhabitants in the permanent museum collection and view the traveling exhibits. Open Tuesday through Friday, 10 A.M.-5 P.M. and weekends 1-5 P.M. Closed on Mondays. \$4 adults; \$3 seniors; \$2 children.

The Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse is open Sunday - Wednesday, 10 A.M.-4 p.m. (Must be 48" tall to climb.) For information: (405) 747-8380. \$5.

The DuBois Pioneer Home is open Sunday and Wednesday, 1-5 P.M. \$2.

Exhibits and Events:  
Colors of Statehood: Florida Faces,  
February - July 1996

In honor of Florida's 150th anniversary of Statehood, this exhibit illustrates the many ethnic groups who helped shape Florida through authentically costumed mannequins, historical photographs and documents and colorful displays. Featuring Seminole Indians, Women Florida "Crackers," and African American Slaves, Minorcans and children, these groups will come alive through a state-of-the-art interactive display comprised of five dioramas with life-like mannequins, eight-foot photo-murals and artifacts.



### BOCA RATON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Town Hall, 71 N. Federal Highway  
Boca Raton, Florida 33432-3919  
(407) 395-6766.

General Information: The Boca Raton Historical Society operates a Museum and Gift Shop at the old Town Hall, 71 North Federal Highway, Boca Raton. Hours of operation are Tuesday through Friday, 10 A.M.-4 P.M.

The Boca Raton Historical Society offers weekly guided tours of the Boca Raton Resort & Club Tuesdays at 1:30 P.M. The tour lasts 1 1/2 hours and costs \$5.00 per person. Luncheon at this private resort is available to tour participants. Call the Boca Raton Historical Society for tickets and information.

## INTERNATIONAL FAIR PUTS THE MUSEUM ON THE MAP

The Third Annual Miami International Map Fair, held February 24th and 25th, brought a wealth of rare and beautiful maps to the museum for viewing and purchasing by more than 700 attendees.

The Map Fair, now in its third year, was chaired by former museum president Dr. Joseph H. Fitzgerald, a map collector and authority in the field of historic maps. The Map Fair is designed to assemble leading dealers, collectors and experts in antique maps from around the world, to provide a forum for sharing information and expertise.

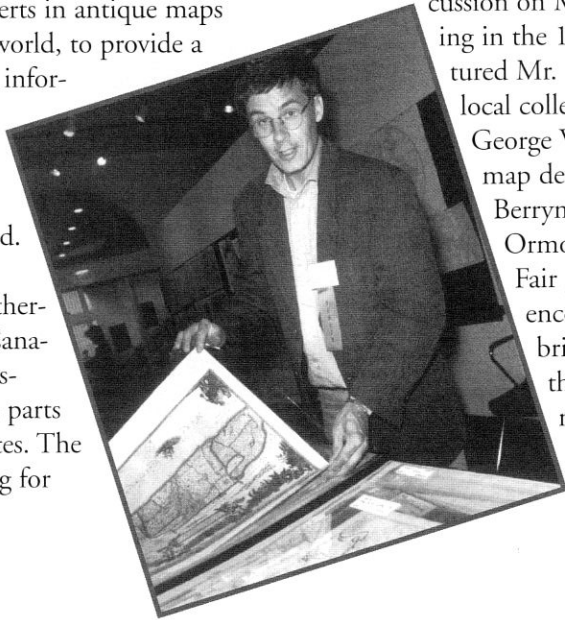
Twenty-four map dealers participated. They came from Germany, the Netherlands, England, Canada, Argentina, Australia, and various parts of the United States. The fair had something for

everyone. Neophyte map enthusiasts were able to buy maps for under \$50. The rarest and most expensive item was an atlas brought by one of the Dutch dealers, valued at \$340,000.

Ralph Ehrenberg of the Library of Congress gave the keynote address. Our own curator, Becky Smith conducted a workshop on preservation and care of historic maps. A panel discussion on Map Collecting in the 1990s featured Mr. Ehrenberg, local collector Dr.

George Vergara and map dealer John Berryman from Ormond Beach.

Fair goers were encouraged to bring in one of their own maps for expert opinions offered



by the outstanding dealers.

In the few, short years of its existence, the museum's map fair has become a prestigious event in the map world, drawing visitors from all over the United States and many foreign countries. It is the only event of its kind in the western hemisphere.

Attendees enjoyed hospitality provided at a cocktail reception by Bill Hansen, caterer and adjunct professor at the School of Hospitality Management, Florida International University, and the Catering Management Class, Spring 1996.

To receive information for the 1997 Map Fair, set for February 1 and 2, please contact Marcia Kanner, Map Fair Coordinator, at 375-1492.

(Left) Map dealer Pierre W.A. Joppen, owner of Paulus Swaen Old Maps & Prints from the Netherlands, displays one of his antique maps.

(Next Page Below Left) Tropee Executive Council member, Martina Hahn and husband Stuart Baur. (Right) HASF Trustee Linda Lubitz of Woolf and Lubitz Consulting and Tessi Garcia-Smith.

## HISTORICAL MUSEUM OPENS CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION

During this centennial year the Historical Museum of Southern Florida offers a special opportunity to revisit Miami's fascinating history. **Miami: The First 100 Years** is a remarkable exhibition that portrays the events and circumstances that made Miami such a unique and wonderful place and showcases aspects of the way people used to live in Miami and in surrounding metropolitan Dade County. Designed to educate visitors about the city's founding and to foster ideas about the metropolis' future, this walk-through display uses photos, maps, documents, audio, hands-on artifacts and statistics to tell the tale of the Magic City on Biscayne Bay.

To kick off this wonderful exhibit, the museum hosted a turn-of-the-century affair for its members and invited guests. **LeBasque Catering** provided a fanciful fete and **ABC Costume Shop** donned the waiters in nineteenth-century garb. Bunches of sunflowers and other wildflowers from **Curbside Florist** brightened the museum's lobby and created the ambiance of an 1890s picnic while **Frederico Britos** and his tuxedoed musicians entertained the guests with delightful upbeat jazz throughout the evening (special thanks to **Flamingo Formal Wear** for providing the tuxes). Artist **Vann Helms** graced the Cultur-

al Center Plaza with brilliant screens of Miami to greet the visitors as they came to the museum. The entire evening was a celebration of Miami's colorful history.

Two HASF trustees who served full terms on the board were honored at the annual membership meeting before the exhibition opening. John C. Harrison, Jr., chairman of the board, presented plaques to **Priscilla Greenfield** and **Janice Pryor** in recognition of their service to the board of trustees. Both women sat on the board for six years, the maximum term allowed for HASF board members. The Historical Museum thanks you, Priscilla and Janice, for your dedication and support.



## CULTURE COMES TO LIFE

Close to 1000 people came to the Historical Museum to learn, listen and dance at its first annual Family Day on May 11. As part of the museum's centennial celebration, the event was dedicated to Miami's diverse heritage.

Miami Jackson High School Jazz Ensemble, the 21st Century Steelband, Sosyete Koukouy, Ifé-Ilé Dance and Music Ensemble, and El Toro Huaco treated the visitors to a continuous schedule of jazz music, Trinidadian calypsos, Haitian dances, Afro-Cuban rumbas and traditional Nicaraguan dances. The museum was alive with Caribbean and Latin flavor!

Families also enjoyed a wide range of other activities, from craft workshops and programs on the giant floor maps to eating ethnic foods and watching Chony Gutierrez

(a regular at the museum's Harvest Festival in the fall) create Nicaraguan festival crafts.

Family Day was funded in part by a Community Grant from the Metro-Dade Cultural Affairs Council.

One of the day's highlights was the official unveiling of the Miami Centennial Quilt, presented by Commissioner J. L. Plummer, Jr. This collaborative work of art, coordinated by the Historical Museum and the Quilt Scene and sponsored by NationsBank, depicts various scenes of Miami's history and represents the many cultures that bind Miami. The Miami Centennial Quilt is on display in the Museum's lobby through September 29.

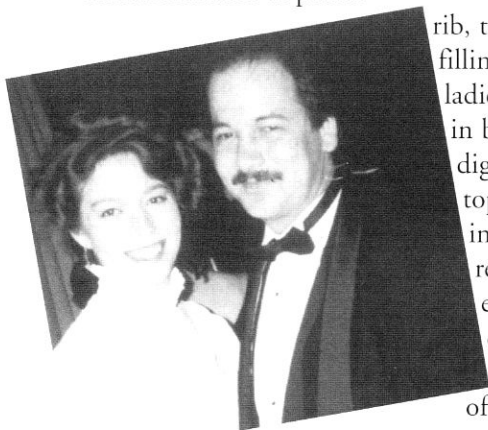


(Left) Neri Torres, Artistic Director of Ifé-Ilé Dance and Music Ensemble, entertains the audience with a chekere.

## A NIGHT OF MAGIC

Imagine the Royal Palm Hotel in all its glory. It's 1896, music floating above the din of the guests' laughter and parrots' chatter. The rich aroma of prime

rib, turtle soup and wine filling the air. Elegant ladies dressed to the hilt in bustled gowns and dignified gentlemen in top hats and tails, dancing and talking and reveling. Celebration is everywhere, good cheer abounds, all cares take the night off.

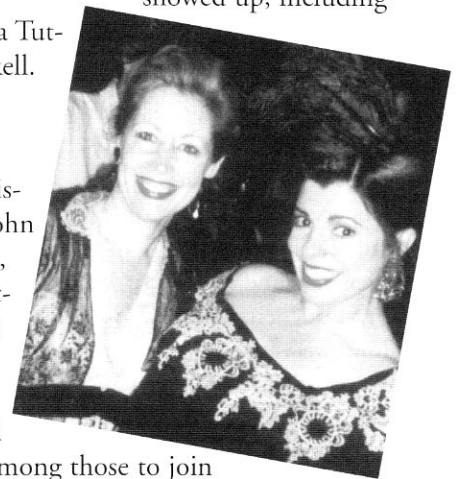


This was the atmosphere at the Centennial Ball in February. To start this centennial year off right, the Royal Palm Hotel opened its doors once again to host a grand gala for more than one thousand guests, treating them to a seven course meal — complete with prime rib, sorbet and consomme (in lieu of turtle soup) — and offering continuous entertainment with three orchestras that played music from the turn of the century all the way through the present decade. The guests turned out in their feathers and top hats, and waltzed, “merengued” and boogied into the wee hours of the night. It was a night of fantasy in the Magic City.

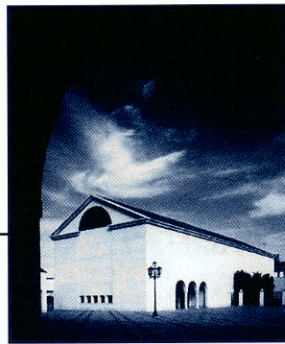
The City of Miami Centennial Committee was the true host of this fabulous event who, quite literally, recreated the Royal Palm Hotel by raising an enormous tent on the DuPont Plaza parking lot — the original site of the hotel — and building a giant facade of the Royal Palm's entrance. Antique cars and horse-drawn carriages lined up outside to add to the 1896 character, and everyone who was anyone showed up, including

Henry Flagler, Julia Tuttle and Mary Brickell.

Of course, guests included the zany members of the Historical Museum. John and Beth Harrison, Bob and Holly Battle, Mike and Tessi Smith, Alan and Linda Lubitz, and Martina Hahn and Stuart Baur were among those to join Randy Nimnicht, Andy Brian and other museum staff members at the amazing affair to welcome the centennial year. This evening of gaiety was truly enchanting and fantastical and will live in our minds through another century of magic.



# GOOD FRIENDS ARE GOOD FRIENDS ... EVEN WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH.



**T**he Historical Museum of Southern Florida salutes these good friends who helped us meet and exceed our 1995 corporate fund-raising goal of \$200,000.

We the members, directors, officers, volunteers and staff are proud to have earned community support for this vital South Florida cultural institution.

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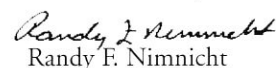
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# COOL IT, SAID JOHN GORRIE

## PANHANDLE DOCTOR PIONEERED IN AIR CONDITIONING

By John Gladstone

Imagine life in South Florida without air conditioning.

In this centennial year, plus one, of the American Society of Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigerating Engineers (ASHRAE), it is natural that we should revisit the history of air conditioning and spotlight the stellar role that Dr. John Gorrie of Apalachicola, Florida, played in its early development.

It is extremely unlikely that any of the group of heating engineers who convened the first meeting of the American Society of Heating and Ventilating Engineers (ASH&VE) on a winter's day in New York City in 1895 had ever heard of John Gorrie.

During his professional lifetime, Dr. Gorrie was the most prominent citizen in Apalachicola. A true Renaissance man, he was physician, physicist and inventor. He served at various times as postmaster, city councilman, treasurer, mayor. He founded Trinity Church in Apalachicola.

In summers it was not unusual to see

the port hospital crowded with seamen afflicted with malaria and yellow fever; it was suspected that they were the source of the periodic fever scourges that swept through this semi-tropical area. In 1840, nearby St. Joseph Hospital was ravaged by epidemics of cholera and yellow fever, and over 100 persons died of the fever in Apalachicola in 1841. It was here that Dr. Gorrie chose to do his work.

The doctor resigned his position as president of the Branch Bank of Pensacola to dedicate himself solely to the prevention of yellow fever and malaria. He supervised the draining of swamps around the bustling seaport, and during his office as Mayor, he recommended a plan for a hospital for poor and needy people, a project that was later undertaken by the city.

He was convinced that he could save his patients, who were dying from malaria, if only he could reduce the patient's room temperature. So, armed with his knowledge of the laws of thermodynamics and his understanding of the transformation of energy, he

set about to develop his rational cold-air refrigerating system.

Bernard Nagangast, who has done the most current research on Gorrie, has pointed out that Gorrie "remains a man of mystery." Although much has been written of him, traditional legends and hearsay have been the basis for much of what has been printed. As one researcher noted, "He was born on two different dates, graduated from medical school on two different dates, and died on three different dates."

But there is little doubt that Gorrie devised his first ice making machine in 1842. Writing in the *Apalachicola Commercial Advertiser* in 1844, under his *nom de plume* "Jenner," he proposed that, "the houses of warm countries be built with equal regard to insulation, and a like labor and expense be incurred in moderating the temperature and lessening the moisture of the internal atmosphere," to reduce the threat of malaria. He further theorized that elevated temperature with high humidity "prevents a large portion of the human family



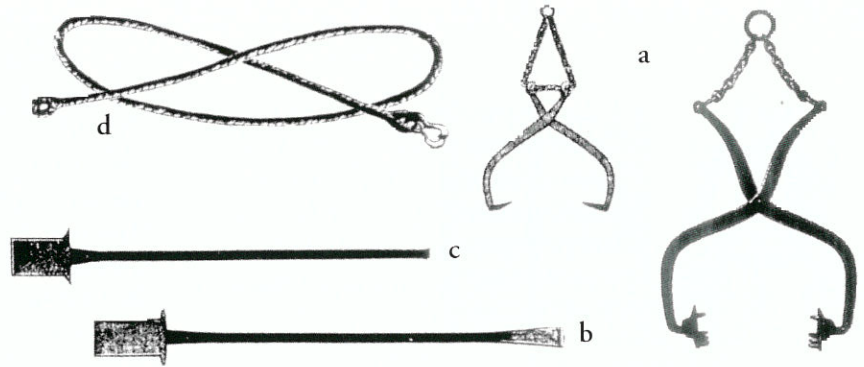
(Right) Tools of the trade: (a) Hoisting tongs, for hauling blocks up the inclined plane and for loading and unloading vessels; (b) Breaking-off bar, the ice cutter's handy tool — the broad blade is for detaching large sheets and small blade is for splitting off the smaller blocks; (c) Caulking bar, for filling the grooves in the ice with snow or chips to prevent flooding and freezing up; (d) Plow rope, 10 feet of 3-inch manilla cordage. (*ASHRAE Journal*, July 1976)

(Below Right) Dr. John Gorrie of Apalachicola, Florida.

(*John Gorrie State Museum*)

(Below Left) The ice crop on the Hudson River, 1874 —

Cutting the ice. (*Harper's Weekly*, March 7, 1874. Courtesy of John Gladstone)



from sharing the natural advantages they possess, and causes mental and physical deterioration of the native inhabitants.”

In another article, “On the Prevention of Malarial Disease” (June 1, 1844), he wrote:

The proposed engine for ventilation, and cooling in tropical climates by mechanical power is simple in its construction, requires but a small expense of power, admits of being complete in its operation, and its parts if well made are not liable to be injured by wear. It consists essentially of two double acting force pumps — one for condensing, and the other for rarefying air — and an air magazine or receptacle for condensed air. It may be placed in any part of a house or ship.

The doctor went on to describe the function of his compressed-air refrigeration system and predicted a future when “fruits, vegetables, and meats would be preserved in transit and thereby enjoyed by all.”

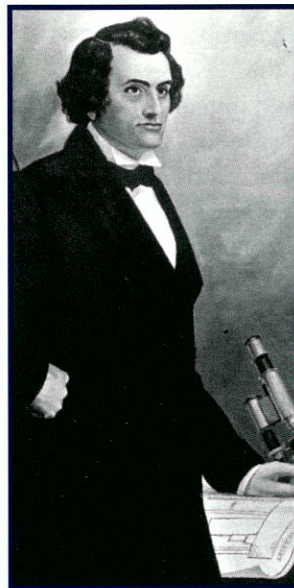
Before the coming of the railroads in the late 1850s gave the South many inland cotton depots, Apalachicola was the sole outlet for all cotton grown in the Chattahoochee Valley in Georgia and Alabama as well as the Florida Panhandle. The second largest seaport in the Gulf, it was by no means a “small town” by contemporary standards. Tall ships from around the world sailed in and out of this vital cotton port in great numbers; over 200,000 bales of cotton moved through the port in one year.

The availability of ice was central to Gorrie’s thinking by this time. Traditionally, ice was delivered to the Gulf ports by sailing ships out of Boston and New York, where it was harvested from northern lakes and stored in ice houses.

But shipping schedules in those days were unreliable. Storms around Cape Hatteras and the Florida coast during the summer and fall accounted for many shipwrecks. Fur-

ther shipping delays were incurred by fierce competition between northern and southern business men who fought over bank credits and prices of delivered ice. The retail price of Boston lake ice, when available at the Gulf ports from Apalachicola, Florida, to Brownsville, Texas, before the Civil War, was 10 cents a pound.

The unreliability of ice deliveries to Apalachicola drove Dr. Gorrie to invent a mechanical ice-making system to guarantee that his fever patients would always have available ice.



Gorrie petitioned for his patent (No. 8080) in 1848, but northern newspapers aligned with the ice trade attacked his ideas so vehemently that all backers shied away from him. He never received a penny for his great invention. But his new machine provided both ice and air cooling for history’s first air-conditioned hospital. His process was the predecessor of the compressed-air ice-making machine used almost universally aboard ships in the early twentieth century.

The pursuit of ice making did not begin with Dr. Gorrie nor did it end with him. Somewhere around the time that Gorrie was searching for a better way to cool his patients, Ferdinand Carré, a Parisian scientist, was searching for a better way to cool French table wine. On October 2, 1860, Carré received his U.S. patent (No. 30201) and went into production with a rather primitive, small absorption system; it was one year before the Civil War.

Soon ice machines were being built in France, and James Harrison, a Scottish-Australian, convinced of Australia’s economic need to ship refrigerated beef to the European market, successfully built a brewery cooler in Victoria and other plants in Sydney and London.

But nowhere could the machines compete with the northern harvests in Boston, New York and the Great Lakes. Progress remained slow.

What really triggered the development of the commercial

ice-making machine was the Civil War. During the War the northern ice harvests were no longer available to the Confederate States. The South became desperate; the blockade kept all but Gorrie's hospital from using ice.

In 1863 the blockade was broken via France to New Orleans; a couple of small Carré absorption machines were brought through. One went to the Convalescent Hospital in Augusta, Georgia, the other to a large Texas ranch. That was the beginning. In the 15 years following the Civil War, the science of making ice took a giant leap forward, and the United States moved into a position as world leader in the manufacture of ice and scientific preservation of

meat, fish and dairy products, as well as the production of beer.

Ice houses along northern wharves had been a major industry. They had endless chains (the forerunner of transmission belts) for transferring ice between ice house, schooner, and wagons. Tools and equipment long since out of use — horse-drawn ice planes, plows, and cutters, breaking-off bars, caulking bars, ice saws, grapples, hoisting tongs, skids, etc. — constituted a good-sized supporting industry.

But the winter industry of cutting up frozen lakes and rivers and storing the great blocks of ice for summer refrigeration could no longer hold out against the prospect of year-round ice manufacturing. As manufactured ice became competitive with natural ice, the ice houses began to convert to ice plants.

Ice and refrigerating factories were springing up everywhere. Some of the major refrigerating machine manufacturers operating today were founded in the first 25 years following the Civil War. As the nation grew in population and industrial manufacture in the post-Civil War era, America's pristine lakes and rivers were turning brown and poisonous with raw sewage and

industrial waste. In a few short years natural lake ice would have become unpotable.

The early history of John Gorrie is shrouded in mystery. Like that more famous American, Alexander Hamilton, he was born on St. Nevis in the West Indies, and also like Hamilton, his father was of Scottish descent. His mother, however, as one story goes, was a young Spanish beauty who fled Spain with the middle-aged Captain Gorrie at the turn of the century.

When political problems broke out in St. Nevis, Captain Gorrie brought his young wife and baby son to Charleston, South Carolina. Some reports have it that John was actually born in Charleston after his mother arrived from St. Nevis. (Birth records and census figures in those years were not always available.) At that time, 1803-04, the population of the United States was about five million, less than one half the number now living in Florida. Thomas Jefferson was President. Water power was the major source of energy.

Captain Gorrie returned to St. Nevis, and John never again saw his father. But monthly remittances arrived from St. Nevis, and mother and son lived without want. The young Gorrie attended the best private schools in Charleston.

In his early twenties, Gorrie attended Fairfield Medical College, a highly respected medical school in New York and earned his Doctor of Medicine at the age of twenty-four. Following his mother's death, the young doctor left South Carolina and opened a practice in Apalachicola.

When Gorrie arrived in 1834, there was still a large segment of Apalachee Indians living near the river, but in 1840 the remnants of this once large nation that had lived along the river district since 1716 were removed by the federal government and resettled on a western reservation.



Delivering ice in town. (Harper's Weekly, August 30, 1884. Courtesy of John Gladstone)

It is about this time that the commercial history of Apalachicola begins. The Bank of Apalachicola was incorporated in 1839 (capital \$500,000), two newspapers, *The Gazette* and

*The Courier*, were published that year, the first race track in Florida was opened, and many elegant homes were constructed in Apalachicola and nearby St. Joseph — and

Florida was admitted into the Union as the 27th State in 1845.

Gorrie died six years before the firing upon Fort Sumter. He was only 52 years old. Following Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860, Florida seceded and joined the Confederacy. Dr. Gorrie's son and his daughter's husband, both officers, died in the Virginia campaign of 1862.

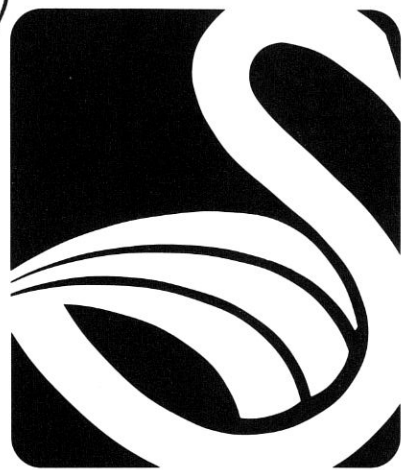
If not for the pioneering work of such scientists as John there would have been neither ice nor air conditioning.

Gorrie's contribution to our present-

day standard of living is immeasurable. His contribution to the medical literature establishes him as the first to cultivate the theory of controlling fever by cooling the patient externally.

Although his marble statue stands tall in Statuary Hall in the Capitol building in Washington as Florida's most esteemed citizen, and the Gorrie Museum in Apalachicola attracts some tourists, Dr. Gorrie is little known to present-day Floridians. Aside from a few readers of specific history, he remains unrecognized. ❄

John Gladstone, Fellow and Life Member of the American Society of Heating Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, serves as Miami Chapter historian. Engineer, teacher, historian, writer and artist, he earned his undergraduate degree at St. Thomas University and his masters at Vermont College. Author of twenty books and numerous articles Gladstone's specialties are nineteenth-century labor and art history. He is a former docent at the University of Miami Lowe, and member of the Historical Association of Southern Florida.



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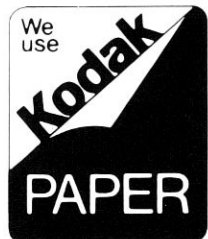
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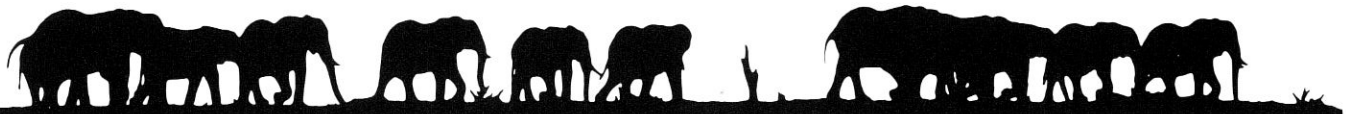
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# INVENTOR AT THE BAT

By  
Michele Wehrwein Albion

Two of the most famous men in the country face off, digging their feet into the clay. On the pitcher's mound is the infamous Ty Cobb. He sizes up the batter, and figuring him to be a lightweight, tosses an easy underhanded pitch.

What happens next taught Cobb the folly of underestimating 80-year-old Thomas Edison.

Between 1924 and 1935 the Philadelphia A's, under the leadership of Connie Mack, spent spring training in Fort Myers, Florida. Frequently, winter resident Thomas Edison motored out to Terry Park to watch Mack's new teams. But on March 7, 1927, the renowned inventor wanted to do more than watch; he wanted to play.

The chauffeur pulled up in front of Seminole Lodge, the Edison's McGregor Boulevard home, and he and his wife Mina climbed into the flivver. They arrived at Terry Park at 10 A.M. with a virtual army of newspaper and cameramen in their wake.

Immediately Edison was thrown into an impromptu press conference.

"You know of Mr. Cobb?" Edison was asked.

"Yes. Is he a good batter?" he replied.

"One of the best in the game," Connie Mack, the famous manager answered.

"Oh, I thought he was a fielder," said Thomas Edison with a sly grin.

Impatient to play, he picked up a bat and walked to the plate. As the movie cam-

(Top) Ty Cobb pitching to Thomas Edison. (Courtesy of Edison and Ford Winter Estates) (Right) Ty Cobb, Thomas Edison and Connie Mack at Terry Park in Fort Meyers, 1927. (Courtesy of Fort Meyers Historical Museum) (Next Page) Thomas Edison at bat with Connie Mack catching in Fort Meyers, 1927. (Courtesy of US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Edison National Historic Site)

eras swarmed around her white-haired husband, Mina Edison intervened, trying to protect him from the barrage of questions. Edison focused on the plate and made it clear baseball was the order of the day.

Cobb sized up his opponent. Hoping to make things easy for the octogenarian, he stepped down from the mound and sauntered to a spot halfway between it and the plate. Edison gripped the bat in his left handed stance, and with a slouchy Panama hat over his eyes, smiled.

Cobb pulled back and lobbed an easy underhanded ball. Edison swung hard. The bat cracked smartly and produced a solid line drive with the pitcher directly in its path. The ball struck Cobb hard on the shoulder, knocking him cleanly off his feet and onto the ground. The inventor chuckled loudly and gracefully accepted the bountiful praise from the crowd.

Cobb brushed himself off and walked to the plate where his opponent was standing with a smug look on his face.

Edison asked sardonically, "Do you think you can hit them like that when you are 80?"

"I hope so," was Cobb's deadpan reply.

Later that month Edison thanked Cobb, Mack and the rest of the A's with a visit to Seminole Lodge. For two hours he personally conducted players around the grounds and laboratory.

After an afternoon of alligator stories, Edison gave each man an imported Havana cigar. When Mina Edison observed the players stashing the stogies in their pockets, Lefty Grove explained that they intended to save them as souvenirs. Wishing both to preserve history and have a good smoke, Edison served up a second course. Together the most famous inventor in the world and

some of the best baseball players of the day lit cigars to celebrate the end of one of the best days of their lives. ☺

Michele Albion is the Curator of the Edison & Ford Winter Estates in Fort Myers. She writes a monthly history column for the Fort Myers News-Press. She holds an undergraduate degree in American History from the University of Maine and a Masters in Museum Studies with a history concentration from George Washington University. She and her husband Jim live in Fort Myers.





# DEEP DIVE INTO PAST: WARM MINERAL SPRINGS YIELDS HOT ARCHEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY

By Dr. Irvin D. Solomon

Warm Mineral Springs is perhaps Florida's most mysterious sinkhole. Its water often reflects a greenish-yellow tint, an eerie effect caused primarily by the upward spiral of hot, mineralized water entering the springs at its deepest depth of about 230 feet.

Although once a forgotten Florida lake near Charlotte Harbor on the Gulf coast, the springs has operated as a health spa for the last two decades. Not well-known to Floridians, the peculiar waters of the springs annually attract large numbers of Eastern Europeans who believe that this health spa, advertised as "Ponce de Leon's Fountain of Youth," has therapeutic mineral properties. As these visitors eventually depart the resort, most of them are unaware that they have just splashed about in one of the major marine archaeological sites of North America.

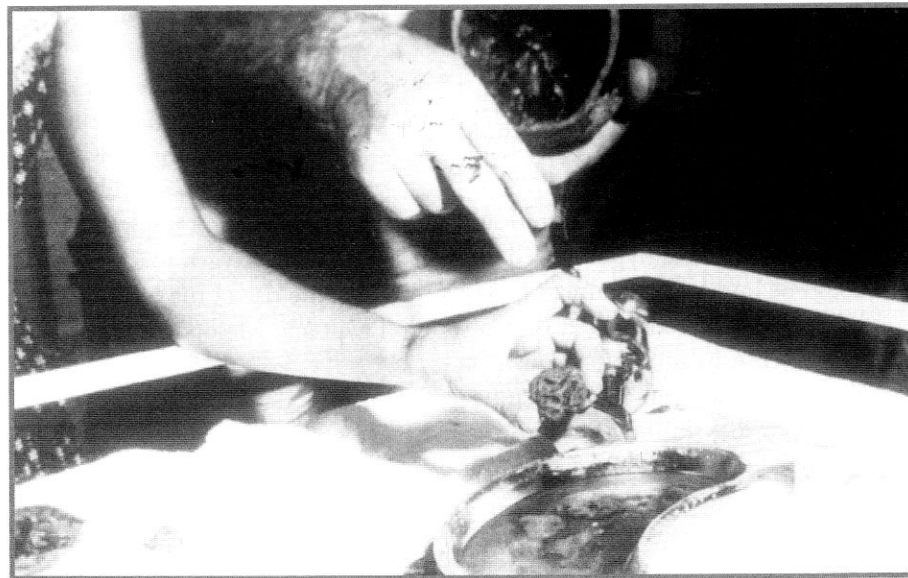
Warm Mineral Springs is unique in that its water is nearly oxygenless except in a shallow layer at the surface, which supports some small marine life. This lack of oxygen, coupled with a high mineral content and a constant 92-degree temperature in the depths of the springs, has preserved the water's organic "secrets"

from decay-producing bacteria and scavengers. Archaeologists have determined that any organic matter placed or fallen into Warm Mineral Springs or its companion, Little Salt Springs, will remain preserved almost indefinitely.

Through massive excavations at these springs "you can look at a slice of the Southeast's prehistory, particularly Florida's prehistory, continuing on into the modern-day beer cans you see today. What that gives you is a way of telling things about the human experience that you can't find in history books," says Dan Lenihan, chief of submerged cultural resources for the National Park Service.

Thus, artifacts and skeletal remains have survived thousands of years in Warm Mineral Springs' unique time warp. Their discoveries have brought worldwide attention to the South Florida area as perhaps one of the earliest North American sites where primitive humans hunted mastodon and saber cats. So significant is the springs that the federal government placed it on the National Register of Historical Places in 1977.

The hidden archaeological treasures of the springs might have remained a secret had not former Air Force Colonel William R. "Bill" Royal retired to South Florida near the springs in the 1950s. A well-recognized pilot in World War II, Royal first captured headlines in 1929 for



(Top Photo)  
Col. Bill Royal and Dr. Eugenie Clark  
with the ancient skull that Bill dis-  
covered with a "bar of white soap"  
lodged inside. It turned out that this  
"soap" was the brain.

*(Courtesy of Col. William R. Royal)*

(Middle Photo)

Opening the ancient skull with the  
brain still intact, discovered in the  
Warm Mineral Spring in 1959. Dr.  
Eugenie Clark and Col. Bill Royal  
watch as the brain is dissected.

*(Courtesy of Col. William R. Royal)*

(Bottom Photo)

Air-dried brain from skull excavated  
at Warm Mineral Springs, 1959.

*(Courtesy of Col. William R. Royal)*

his diving exploits. During one dive in the 1930s, Colonel Royal made world headlines by capturing the largest moray eel on record. He also became famous for his exploits with sharks, including lassoing and riding them. Such are the feats that he retold in his book, *The Man Who Rode Sharks*.

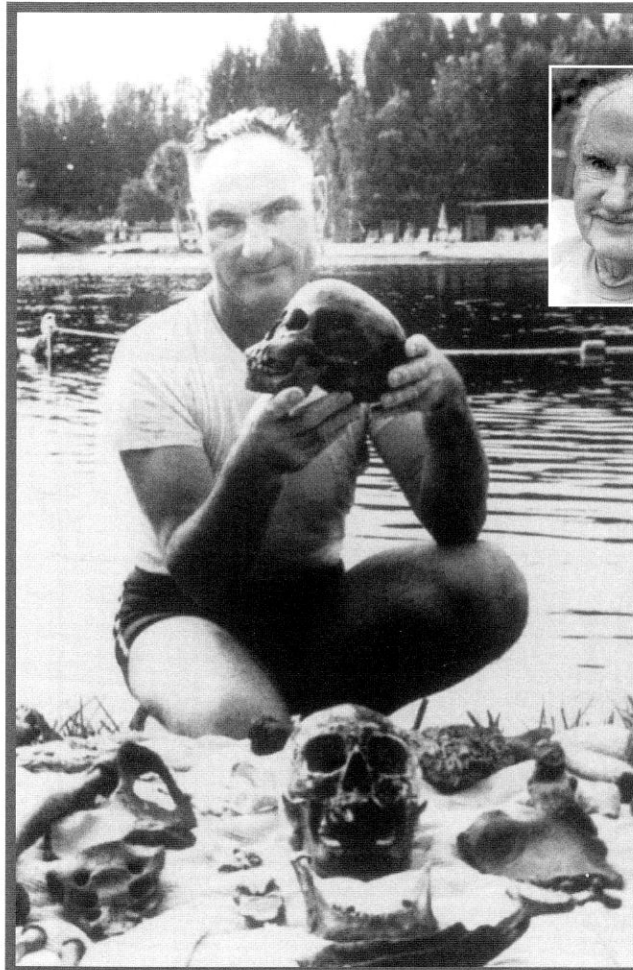
Ever the adventurer, Royal suspected the archeological potential of the springs after he relocated to South Florida. Using scuba gear in 1958, he discovered hundreds of old bones of megafauna like that of the smilodon (saber cat), megalonx (primitive sloth), mammoth, and mastodon in the springs' anaerobic waters during his many "exercise" dives.

At 230-foot depths, where most divers suffer from the potentially fatal "rapture of the deep" (nitrogen narcosis), Royal doggedly pursued his fossil searches. As Royal recalled: "Everything [was] black, covered with mud, and a light [had] nothing to reflect on. It was the same in an Egyptian tomb I visited one time. It was lined with black marble, and the light just seemed to disappear into nothing."

Royal's persistent dives into the murky waters paid unexpected dividends. He continued to discover numerous bones of species long-extinct from the peninsula, as well as a few human bones. His discoveries in the spring's numerous underwater ledges and caverns shocked the scientific community, long convinced that no such significant archaeological sites existed in Florida.

Soon scientists and laypersons alike speculated on the origin and culture of these people whose bones Royal had discovered. Were they the early Calusa Mound Builders or unknown

groups that preceded them, perhaps Paleo-Indians who lived in Florida thousands of years prior to the time of Columbus? Was this a sacrificial site similar to the bloody cenotes that had received so many unwilling sacri-

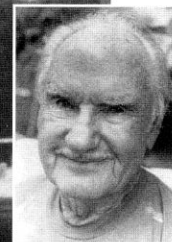


Col. Bill Royal and bones found in Warm Mineral Springs, 1959. (Inset) Col. William R. Royal on his 90th birthday. (Both Photos Courtesy of Col. William R. Royal)

ficial victims in ancient Mexico and Central America? Or was it perhaps the garbage dump of yet unrecorded cannibals who roamed the peninsula following the last Ice Age?

Intrigued by the possible significance of his finds, Royal hypothesized there could be hundreds of human remains lying under the loose silt at the 230-foot level. A handful of curious scientists joined Royal in contemplating other possible startling finds in the springs' depths. At this point, Royal and some concerned academic researchers convinced the Mackle

Company, owners of the property, to close the springs to outside diving. Not only did they wish to ensure the integrity of the springs' secrets, but they also desired to prevent opportunistic non-scientific divers from looting the waters.



Shortly thereafter Royal shook up the scientific community by claiming to find the world's oldest anaerobically preserved human skull. He argued that it had been lying for about 6,000 years in the oxygenless waters, which would have dated it to the beginning of Egyptian civilization.

With an NBC News underwater camera witnessing his final removal of the fossil, Bill Royal gently cleaned off the ancient skull. Probing with his index finger into the base of the cranium, Royal dislodged from within it a "bar of white soap." Royal soon darted to the surface with reckless abandon: "Jesus Christ!" he cried. The "bar of white soap" was a timeless brain.

Royal's new colleague at the time was Jacques Cousteau's protégé Dr. Eugenie Clark, a famous shark researcher from

MOTE Marine Laboratory (then located at Cape Haze). She expressed shock. Later in her lab, she saw the greenish-brown brain floating in the skull, whole and white. As Clark watched, the brain steadily darkened and shriveled as a result of being exposed to oxygen for the first time since the rise of the earliest cultures in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Soon after the discoveries, NBC news anchor Chet Huntley informed the world of a 6,000-year-old brain recently recovered from a South Florida spring. A surprised and skeptical scientific community dismissed the

report as a grand hoax. John Goggin, known as the “Father of Underwater Archaeology” at the University of Florida, labeled it a fraud. He derogated Bill Royal as a sloppy amateur and headline-grabbing opportunist, who had gone so far as to imbed his new fireplace with some of the ancient finds from the springs.

Goggin further insulted Dr. Clark by stating that she “should stick to fish.” While most scientists did not adopt the strident rhetoric of Goggin, they did nevertheless remain skeptical that marine archaeology had suddenly been rewritten in a remote corner of South Florida.

Even the prestige of the Smithsonian Institution came down against the presumed ancient skull of Warm Mineral Springs. The Smithsonian literature steadfastly maintained that humans had not lived in North America more than 2,000 years prior to the time of Christ. Undeterred, Royal sought other sources of paleontological reference dating.

A subsequent artifact Royal found was dated at roughly 10,000 BP (before the present) and was regarded by some scientists as the oldest human documented remains in the western hemisphere. This was further substantiated when Jacques Cousteau dated Royal’s fossils as 9,000 to 11,000 years old. Still, no one believed Royal’s claim of finding an ancient brain intact until Dr. K. P. Oakley of the British Museum of Natural History, chief British critic of “the great Piltdown Man Hoax,” classified it as a prehistoric human brain.

In 1971, the State of Florida officially entered the scientific debate growing out of the discoveries at Warm Mineral Springs. Legislators were apparently convinced that the sinkhole in South Florida could serve the state well, especially by attracting research scientists and free-spending curiosity-seekers to the peninsula.

In early 1973, the Secretary of State’s office released emergency funds to begin large-scale exploration of Warm Mineral Springs and nearby Little Salt Springs. At that time state marine archaeologist Dr. Wilburn A. “Sonny” Cockrell came to the springs. Cockrell’s involvement in the springs’ archaeological work had two immediate effects: 1) Cockrell commenced the first “scientific” explorations of the site, and 2) Cockrell forced Royal into a role as bystander to his new discoveries. The latter action, in particular, angered Royal, who almost immediately began an adversarial relationship with his unwanted colleague. Despite Royal’s protests, Cockrell received the credit for most of the “significant” discoveries at the springs throughout the following years.

Cockrell pursued his work like a man possessed. His ceaseless explorations paid almost immediate dividends. During one of his early dives, Cockrell and his companion scientists removed what they argued were the remains of the oldest human burial in North America. Cockrell argued that here finally was “scientific” proof that humans roamed North America in an age of long-disappeared creatures like the saber cat and giant ground sloth.

Cockrell made another startling scientific find. He returned from one dive with an intact skeleton of a Paleo-Indian, which he had removed from a depression some 40 feet into the depths of the sinkhole. An examination of the Ice Age man disclosed that he had been buried in the fetal position beside a weapon fashioned from indigenous shell.

The Paleo-Indian had died at about age 30, he had stood about 5 feet 4 inches tall and weighed about 110 pounds. The corpse had been deliber-

*Cockrell made another startling scientific find. He returned from one dive with an intact skeleton of a Paleo Indian, which he had removed from a depression some 40 feet into the depths of the sinkhole.*

ately placed there about 10,000 years ago when the sinkhole’s ground level was much lower.

Cockrell reasoned that: “This was an arranged burial, done in the fetal position often used by early cultures, in a niche in the wall of the sinkhole, and the end of a spearthrower [or atlatl] carved from shell was buried with the dead tribesman.”

This discovery of the oldest “intentional” human grave in the Western Hemisphere drew worldwide attention. But it also drew criticism from some scientists as a “hoax” because of the presence of a “staged press conference” at the springs during its excavation.

In the mid-1980s, Cockrell focused new national attention on the critical archaeological significance of the mysterious sinkhole when he contributed lengthy segments to the PBS and National Academy of Sciences television series, “The Infinite Voyage,” which discussed the latest archaeological and anthropological evidence in the on-going scientific “searches for ancient Americans.” These discussions of Warm Mineral Springs reflected its high point as a famous marine archaeological site.

And then, for several years, matters stalled as a result of escalating diving costs, lack of money, opposition by would-be treasure hunters, and Cockrell’s failure to publish findings in the

scientific literature. Eventually the state promised Cockrell a special \$100,000 appropriation for a second phase of exploration at Warm Mineral Springs. Despite their promises, state legislators never allocated the money. Cockrell thereafter attempted a privately financed exploration of the springs, but the ill-conceived attempt only led to his own near bankruptcy.

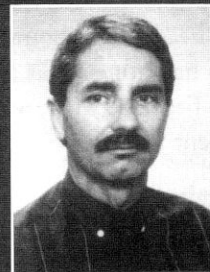
Throughout Cockrell's ordeal, Colonel Bill Royal steadfastly maintained that he should receive credit as the springs' first successful marine archaeologist. Through a myriad of books, articles, and lectures, Royal argued that he had been the first not only to explore the murky depths of the springs but to recognize its scientific potential, as well. Furthermore, as Royal stated in a recent interview, he had proudly continued his work even as the scientific community scoffed at him as a charlatan and misguided old man.

Colonel Royal is now more than ninety years old. His body is bent and rigid from the many dives in the waters which he hoped would make him the world's most famous amateur marine archaeologist. Even though the former adventurer can now only dream of the discoveries that might have been, he still exudes excitement as he relates the stories of his many dives and "confrontations" with the scientific community. Nevertheless, he remains bitter toward the archaeologists who humiliated him and who prevented his continuing searches of the waters.

The discoveries at Warm Mineral Springs changed the concept of archaeological periods in North America. Yet the legacy of those discoveries and the ensuing controversies engendered by them can only leave the rest of us, like Bill Royal, wondering what startling evidence about Florida's human past still lies below

the Old World bathers who paddle around South Florida's most controversial "window to the past." ❁

Dr. Irvin D. Solomon is an assistant professor of history at the University of South Florida at



Fort Myers. He wishes to credit Tamara Wilson as the author of the first draft of this study, which she completed in one of Dr. Solomon's research seminars. Dr. Solomon also wishes to thank Dr. Robin C. Brown for his generous support on this project and to credit the photographs courtesy of Colonel William R. Royal.



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# NEWLY-WEDS HIT STORMY WEATHER

BY THELMA PETERS

*Theлма Peters wrote this memorable honeymoon story for Update, volume 2, number 6 (1976)*

We were married the evening of September 3, 1926, in the white frame community church of Arch Creek. My family, the Ephraim Petersons, had moved to Florida from Missouri in 1914; the groom's family, the Thomas J. Peterses, came to Miami before the railroad. Thomas J. Jr. and I were classmates at Miami High School when it was located on NW Third Avenue.

A reception at my family's modest home near Arch Creek was followed by a less formal one aboard the *Esmeralda* at the city docks. The *Esmeralda* was a 250-ton steam yacht, reputedly built for Fleischmann of yeast fame, and purchased in 1925 by Mr. Peters, owner of the Halcyon

Hotel in Miami, to carry passengers to his newer hotel in Bimini. Bimini was beginning to attract tourists: it had great fishing and it was "wet."

Since it was off season the yacht, with a somewhat reduced crew of fourteen, was turned over to us for our honeymoon. As we left the city dock, nearby craft tooted and whistled and our friends raced their cars to the County Causeway to honk us out the channel. It was a wonderfully noisy and happy send-off. No one guessed that the fine old yacht was making its final trip.

The next morning we were anchored in the translucent sea off the two Biminis waiting for a tender to take us to the hotel dock at North Bimini. Half of Alicetown, a



motley assortment of islanders, was at the dock to watch us disembark.

The hotel seemed beautiful to me, its palm-shaded grounds running from bay to ocean across the narrow island. Most of it was boarded up but the best bedroom

bangs and crashes over our heads told us the hotel was faring badly. If that weren't enough there was drama in our little cell: Mrs. Harris, who was quite elderly, was having a heart attack. The men made a bed for her by putting a shelf across two crates and padding it with a

blanket. I was sure she was dying.

It was a long night. By morning Mrs. Harris was better and the storm seemed to have lessened. One by one we went up the ladder to see what was

left of the world. Not much. Only the very top of the island "hogsback" was above water. The bay dashed against the foundations of the hotel on one side, the ocean on the other. We were like a ship stranded atop a reef.

The walls of the hotel were intact but much of the roof was gone except in the west or kitchen wing. Windows had blown in, furniture was askew, rugs and mattresses sodden. On our tour of exploration we came upon four strangers under the main stairs – rumrunners from Miami who had abandoned their boat in the night. We added them to our "guest" list.

Toward noon when the water receded a bit the island's British doctor and his wife joined us. Their house had been destroyed. Now we were thirteen.

There were piles of debris caught all along the sharp rise of the ridge, and all our men worked there in the driving rain most of the day hunting for survivors. Once my husband came in to say they had found the four Saunders women, all dead, and he needed a

sheet to wrap them in. The Saunders family had lived near the hotel in a good two-story frame house. Mrs. Saunders had put a bowl of island roses in our room to welcome us and we had called to thank them. Now only Mr. Saunders was left, a dazed, elderly waif picking through the ruin.

We never again saw our regular cook. The doctor's wife was caring for Mrs. Harris, so the cooking job fell to me.

had been prepared for us and the spacious public rooms were open. Five people were living there: the caretakers, Mr. and Mrs. Harris, and three surveyors who were doing some work for Mr. Peters on South Bimini where he hoped to build a golf course. A cook came in by day.

Mornings we went deep-sea fishing, evenings we often joined the surveyors in fishing for shark off the dock. We strolled the narrow stony Kings Highway under the coconuts past tiny unpainted houses and stores or climbed the ridge to admire the vivid seascapes. An idyllic honeymoon until –

The wind began to rise and the barometer to fall. The islanders, wise to hurricanes, were pulling out their boats and battening down their homes. We were glad the *Esmeralda* had returned to Miami for supplies. Then on Friday night, September 17, the 1926 Killer Hurricane bore down on Bimini several hours earlier than it hit Miami.

The seven of us in the hotel holed up in what Mr. Harris said was the safest spot, a storeroom cut out of the rocky ridge on which the hotel was perched and reached by going down a ladder from the kitchen. We took with us a kerosene lantern, flashlights, blankets, water and food. The room was about twelve by twelve with deep shelves, mostly empty, on three sides. We sat on the floor or lay down on the wide lower shelves.

The screaming roar of the storm was less here but the



Thelma Peters. (HASF, Miami News Collection)

There was no electricity or gas, so I wrestled with a two-burner kerosene stove with set-on oven.

I soon proved that I knew nothing about cooking when I added sweetened condensed milk to a casserole of macaroni. But I was quite good at opening cans of beans and corned beef, and none of my twelve boarders complained.

Not a dock, boat or house on the island was undamaged – most were totally destroyed. Yet islanders have a knack for survival. Of the 300 or more on the island, only eleven were killed. Some saved themselves by embracing the trunk of a coconut tree and floating upward as the water rose, but sustaining terrible lacerations and bruises from the constant battering of the wind.

The remaining nights in the hotel we and our guests picked out our own dry spots to sleep. Thomas and I chose the ladies' lounge off the lobby because it had a dry floor.

The wireless station had been destroyed and we had no way to send a message out. Not was there left a single seaworthy boat with the exception of the rumrunners' – they thought when the rain stopped they could repair theirs. The rain did stop on Sunday and they went to work on their boat.

Meantime, we were handing out eggs, potatoes and canned goods to a parade of homeless, hungry people.

Monday dawned fair and almost calm, making the island even more bedraggled by contrast. We heard the sputtering of the rumrunners' boat, then its steady roar. They came to the hotel to say they were ready to take off, would take messages to our folks. I, for one, had not worried about my family, not guessing the hurricane had hit Miami. They, on the other hand, had given us up as lost.

On Tuesday the 21st my father-in-law arrived to rescue us, as we knew he would. Then we learned for the first time of the disaster that had befallen Miami. He said there had not been a boat in Miami with the capability of making the Bimini run – every one destroyed. He hired the first seagoing boat to reach the Bay – a tug from Savannah – and it was necessary for us to go right back. We rounded up our personal things. Meantime Mr. Peters offered transportation to Miami to anyone who wanted it. About fifty islanders went with us.

The Bimini Hotel was never rebuilt. For a time it was guarded to keep away looters, but that became impractical. Some of the furnishings were moved to Miami, the rest abandoned. For years we used Bimini

pink-and-white blankets and I still use daily some of the Bimini Hotel flat silver.

As for the *Esmeralda*, she sank at the city dock in Miami, becoming an obstructive nuisance. There were so many hulks in the bay and wrecks on the bayfront in Miami that it was a year before the *Esmeralda* was raised, found to be valueless, and towed to a grave at sea.

Mrs. Harris recovered and the Harises moved to Miami. Rotund, bearded and jovial Mr. Harris always had seasonal work as Santa Claus at a Flagler Street store.

The loss of the yacht and the hotel started a chain reaction for the Peters family, and other dominoes fell. Hundreds of other Miami families suffered a similar fate. A catalytic blow had changed the Boom to Bust. 🌪

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# ★ Dinner Key Airport ★

By William E. Brown, Jr.



Miami, long a destination for travelers seeking a warm subtropical climate and playground of sun and sand, also serves as point of departure for travelers interested in the wonders of the Caribbean, Latin America, South America and points beyond. Our region, home first to great sailing ships and later to the railroad, achieved its ultimate glory with the development of commercial air transportation.

Pan American Airways, as it was then named, began operations on October 28, 1927, with the first scheduled international flight by a United States airline. A small wood and fabric Fokker tri-motor airplane loaded with

mail sacks took off from a dirt runway in Key West, Florida, and landed one hour and ten minutes later in Havana, Cuba, a distance of ninety miles.

Juan Terry Trippe, Pan Am's 28-year-old founder, began operations with two airplanes, twenty-four employees and the goal "to provide mass air transportation for the average man at rates he can afford to pay." Within three months the airline transported passengers on a daily schedule between Florida and Cuba. Initial success encouraged the acquisition of new aircraft, employees and routes — to the Caribbean Islands, Mexico, Central America and South America.



The Dinner Key Terminal served thousands of travelers and visitors each year. Where is the congestion of automobiles and traffic associated with modern airports?

*(Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, University of Miami Library)*

In 1928 Trippe engaged the services of Charles A. Lindbergh, and the famed American aviator served as a technical advisor to Pan Am for forty-five years. Thus Pan Am began a legacy of service, commitment, and dedication that runs deeply through generations of South Floridians today.

On February 22, 1931, Miami Mayor C. H. Reeder placed a shovel in the land at Dinner Key and launched construction work on the largest seaplane base and terminal in the world. The historic airport opened on May 27, 1934, and served as the gateway to the world for tens of thousands of tourists, travelers and residents of South

Florida. The original Dinner Key terminal, the present-day Miami City Hall, still stands as a monument to this landmark aviation enterprise.

In its early years, Dinner Key Airport served as home to Pan Am's fleet of Clipper Ships, the great ladies of the sky. These majestic airplanes helped Pan Am offer the wonders of long distance air transportation to a broader economic strata of American society.

In the process, the growth of Pan Am provided jobs to a new generation of South Floridians, both here at home and at aviation outposts around the world. Dinner Key

Airport, used by the U.S. Navy during World War II, closed soon after the end of the war, with the shift to land-based aircraft. The last flight scheduled to depart the terminal was August 9, 1945.

The innovative airport layout at Dinner Key allowed traffic handlers to manage four aircraft simultaneously, a major accomplishment. The construction and facilities at Dinner Key also served as a model for airports built throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Pan Am also conducted a dredging project to widen and deepen the channel in order to support large, amphibious aircraft. During the mid-1930s and 1940s approximately 50,000 people flowed through the terminal, with more than 30,000 additional visitors each month.

Dinner Key Airport provided the first glimpse of Miami for many visitors. The airport personified the pioneer spirit that settled South Florida and marked the development of Pan Am across the globe.

As these photographs illustrate, South Florida and its residents flocked to Dinner Key to experience the challenge and thrills of air travel. As a mecca for tourism and com-

merce, however, the Dinner Key Airport and Pan Am responded to meet the economic and recreational needs of its customers. Prior to the construction of the Dinner Key Terminal, passengers arrived and embarked via a barge or houseboat. In retrospect, there hardly seems a more appropriate way for passengers on the great Clipper Ships to arrive or leave Miami.

The Archives and Special Collections Department at the University of Miami's Otto G. Richter Library is the proud home of the "Pan American World Airways, Inc., Records." From Pan Am's founding in 1927 through its closing in 1991, the airline served as an international leader in aviation transportation of persons, property and mail.

The records of Pan Am include administrative and financial files; technical, mechanical and research reports; extensive public relations and promotional materials; internal publications including newsletters, journals and press releases; and other materials. Extensive photograph files, albums and scrapbooks also document the worldwide history of Pan Am, as a pioneer in the development of aviation equipment, air routes, commercial passenger



service, navigation techniques and communication systems. The records consist of approximately 600 cubic feet of files.

The Pan Am Records, acquired in a cooperative venture with the Pan Am Historical Foundation, continues to be the most consulted collection in the Archives and Special Collections Department. Concurrently, the Historical Museum of Southern Florida is a proud partner with the Pan Am Historical Foundation in a venture to create a Pan Am Museum here in South Florida. The Historical Museum currently houses an extensive collection of Pan Am memorabilia, including uniforms, models, insignia and awards, and other items.

Many South Floridians and former Pan Am employees will recognize these views of Dinner Key. For others these images repre-

sent a window to a bygone era of air travel. More recently, the advent of jet propulsion ushered in yet another era of commercial air travel, and the supersonic transport (SST) and space shuttle flights will continue to raise the expectations of a new generation of travelers.

For a moment, though, let yourself return to the 1930s, to an age when air travel was a new and exciting adventure. Imagine generations of South Floridians mesmerized by the huge Clipper ships that appeared from the air and glided to rest on the waters at Dinner Key. Feel the excitement of watching these great metal ships take flight as they skimmed across the waters of South Florida. The

wonder of flight will always capture the heart and imagination of mankind, and Pan Am will always hold a special place in the hearts and minds of South Florida. ★



This photograph captures the Martin M-130 Flying Boat, or Clipper Ship, in transit to San Francisco in October 1935. Later that month, the "China Clipper" successfully complete the first commercial transpacific flight, with stops in Hawaii, Wake Island, Guam and Midway en route to Manila. (Inset) An aerial view of Dinner Key Terminal in Miami in 1934. The building is the present-day Miami City Hall. (Both photos courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, University of Miami Library)



(Left)  
Captioned "Barge at Dinner Key," this photograph includes a non-flying member of the Pan Am fleet. Passengers were transported to and from the Dinner Key Terminal in Pan Am's limousine service.  
*(Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, University of Miami Library)*

(Below)  
Pan Am passengers admire the globe in the Passenger Terminal at Dinner Key in Miami, Florida. The sign above the desk advertises flights to Havana and Nassau for \$35. The globe, with a circumference of 21 feet 5 inches, used a scale of 1/64 inch to 1 mile. The globe was moved from the terminal on August 2, 1951, to be placed at the new terminal, located at NW 36th Street. This did not occur, however, and the globe was later relocated to the Miami Museum of Science on Bayshore Drive.  
*(Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, University of Miami Library)*







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William E. Brown, Jr., serves at the University of Miami in Coral Gables as an associate professor and head of the Archives and Special collections of the Otto G. Richter Library. He has published a variety of articles and works on Florida history, sports history and subjects relating to rare books and special collections. He is currently pursuing research topics relating to the Civil War in Florida, the history of Pan Am Airways and early photography in South Florida. Researchers wishing to consult the collections at the library are invited to call Bill at (305) 284-3247.



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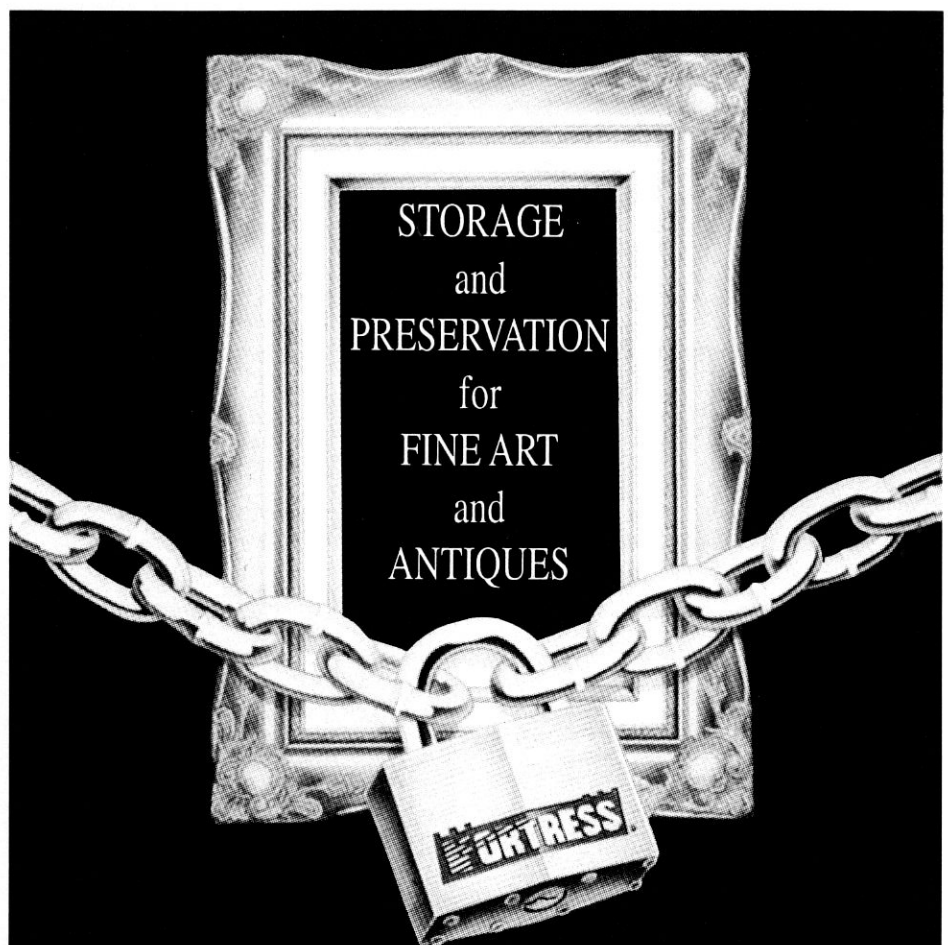


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(Above)

This partial view of a maintenance building at Dinner Key illustrates the all-important "behind-the-scenes" aspect of commercial aviation designed to keep aircraft ready for travel.

*(Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, University of Miami Library)*

(Right)

James E. Yonge, attorney for Pan Am (left) receives a check for \$25,000 from Miami City Manager A.B. Curry as down payment for the purchase of "International Dinner Key Airport."

Total cost to the City of Miami was \$1,050,000.

*(Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, University of Miami Library)*



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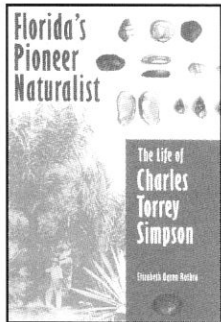
**FLORIDA'S PIONEER NATURALIST:  
THE LIFE OF CHARLES TORREY SIMPSON**

by Elizabeth Ogran Rothra

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995. 240 pages. \$49.95.

Review by Leah LaPlante

Those who enjoy and cherish South Florida's natural environment — its peerless Everglades, pine-palmetto lands, waterways, hammocks and keys — and are concerned about protecting this subtropical/ tropical paradise, will be especially grateful to Elizabeth Rothra, who has exhaustively researched and fully written the life story of Charles Torrey Simpson (1846-1932), "the father of all South Florida naturalists."



Following her earlier book on the life and writings of John C. Gifford, another important plantsman and conservationist (*On Preserving Tropical Florida*, University of Miami Press, 1972), who, like Simpson, moved to the area permanently in the early 1900s, Rothra tells the Simpson story with sensibility and good style.

"The Old Man," as Simpson called himself, was a true original whose life included serving in the Union army in the Civil War, and later traveling widely in Europe and the Caribbean, taking in the sights but always gathering shell specimens, and eventually amassing an enormous lifetime collection. With little formal education but with what Rothra calls "a passion for knowing," Simpson became a world-renowned conchologist at the Smithsonian, "retiring" in 1905 to South Florida, which he had become smitten by on earlier collecting trips.

Simpson built his own home, "The Sentinels," in an area then called Lemon City, north of downtown Miami. He then took to the nature trail, exploring, gathering and writing about plants and shells, (the fan palm *Simpsonia microcarpa* and the tropical tree snail *Liguus fasciatus simpsonii* were named for him) with the enthusiasm of a child, the keen eye of a scientist and the words of a born writer. "I pity those," he said, "whose entire life and energies are devoted to money-making, who have never reveled in the beauty and freedom of the great out of doors."

Somehow Simpson found time to tend his own garden, a



famous place of botanical pilgrimage during his lifetime, and to write countless articles and four books (unfortunately, currently out of print): *Ornamental Gardening in Florida* (1916), *In Lower Florida Wilds* (1920), *Out of Doors in Florida* (1924), and *Florida Wild Life* (1932).

Rothra tells about Simpson's association with his contemporaries — David Fairchild, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, John Gifford and the other nature explorers and writers. Charles Deering consulted him about the landscaping of Vizcaya. "The Old Man" was good-humored and sociable, but must also have been ambitious and remarkably self-disciplined to accomplish so much in his "quest — very simply, as he often put it, 'the discovery of nature's secrets,' and his determination to pass the torch of curiosity to others."

In 1923, at the age of 77, Simpson received a high honor in the botanical world, the Meyer medal, presented to him in his garden by David Fairchild. In 1927, the University of Miami awarded him its first honorary doctorate in science, after which a common nickname for him used by his wife and others was "The Professor."

Rothra's biography, illustrated with 34 photographs, is a richly detailed portrait of the unstoppable and fascinating Simpson. "For me," she reports, "discovering the person behind the personality was high adventure." One glimpse into his free and creative mind: "It seems to me," he often said, "that there is a soul throughout nature, that the animals and, I like to believe, the plants, to a certain extent, think."

Along with the joy and heightened awareness, there was serious concern. It is sobering to read what Simpson said at the end of his last book, *Florida Wild Life* (1932):

"Looking back to the days when South Florida was a beautiful wilderness filled with magnificent wildlife and then contemplating the wreck of today is enough to sicken the heart of a lover of nature... But, within the last few years there has come an awakening, a realization of the value of beauty for beauty's sake, and intelligent people are beginning to ask if it is wise to utterly destroy everything nature has so lavishly given us for the sake of gain."

For today's more aware and intelligent reader, Elizabeth Rothra's definitive biography of Charles Torrey Simpson could well spark yet another awakening. Those who want to pursue the many publications by and about Simpson should consult Rothra's extensive bibliography.

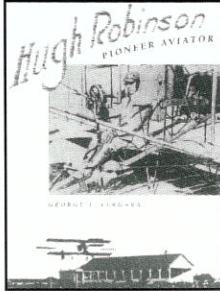
**HUGH ROBINSON, PIONEER AVIATOR**

by George L. Vergara

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995. 154 pages. \$32.95.

Review by John C. Nordt, III, M.D.

Once in a great while some original information surfaces about a subject that can offer us a window into the past.



Dr. George Vergara has written a wonderful book regarding the early development of aviation through the eyes of Hugh Robinson, chief pilot to Glenn Curtiss. The collected memorabilia of Hugh Robinson that formed the basis of his book was carefully preserved by his family and later given to Dr. Vergara.

One should remember that the Wright Brothers first flew in 1903 and proceeded in secret until 1908, when they made their first public flight. Glenn Curtiss made his first public flight that same year.

Curtiss met Hugh Robinson at the St. Louis Centennial in 1910, where Robinson was attempting to fly one of the earliest monoplanes that he had designed and built himself. At that time Glenn Curtiss was known as one of the foremost aviators in the world, and it was a tribute to Hugh Robinson that Curtiss offered him a job as his chief pilot and engineer.

Dr. Vergara describes the quiet way

that Hugh Robinson went about his tasks and the innovative way he designed flying machines and found uses for them. In order to finance this work, he and others traveled the country performing in air shows and later delivered the first long distance air mail.

Hugh Robinson made the first air/sea rescue and the first medical emergency flight. Later in 1913, he designed and built the Benoist, the first commercial airplane in the world, which flew from St. Petersburg to Tampa, Florida. These fascinating events are well delineated in Dr. Vergara's book.

This book evolved over ten years as the information was compiled and organized into an easy and readable form. The original detail that one finds in the book is extraordinary.

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The information that the author used came from the Hugh Robinson family and has never been published before.

The pictures, only a few of which could be published, are unique. The multiple newspaper clippings and candid snapshots are invaluable as a primary source of information from this era. Dr. Vergara does an excellent job in presenting these in a form enjoyable to either the historian or the Sunday afternoon reader.

As an early bicycle mechanic like the Wright Brothers and Glenn Curtiss, and with a “we can fix anything” attitude, Robinson possessed a mind fertile enough for the engineering challenge necessary for aviation in the early part of this century. This challenge was to place man in the air when there was still a great deal of skepticism that flying would ever become practical, safe and useful. It was people like Hugh Robinson who methodically perfected what was, at the time, more an art form than a science.

It is interesting to note that Robinson outlived most of the early aviators he flew with, such as Lincoln Beachy and Eugene Ely. Early avia-

tors paid an exacting toll for a lack of either information or concentration on detail. Hugh Robinson, however, would not fly if he felt a breath of wind on his moistened finger tip. This is but one example of the caution he used in pursuing his flying activities.

I think we all should applaud Dr. Vergara for opening this small window into the past with a very detailed story about the development of early aviation that can be appreciated by all.

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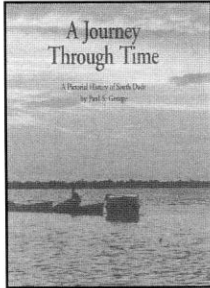
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**A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME: A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SOUTH DADE**

by Paul S. George  
 Virginia Beach: The Donning Company Publishers, 1995. 200 pages. \$37.00.

Review by Carlos Plaza

A native of Brooklyn who became an Illinois physician, turned avocational horticulturist on a trip to Cuba and then furthered his agricultural interests as United States' Consul to Campeche, Mexico, eventually petitioned for and received 230,000 acres of land in South Dade County in order to establish a subtropical plant nursery. Did you know he never actually established the proposed community in the area that bears his name because he was killed by Seminole Indians shortly after saving the lives of his wife and children by hiding them under a dock on Indian Key where they had gone precisely to avoid the ravages of the Seminole Indian War? No?! Well then you may be interested in going through the pages of acclaimed South Florida historian Dr. Paul George's latest effort.



*A Journey Through Time: A Pictorial History of South Dade* is that and a bit more. While graced with a wide variety of photos depicting the people and places that make up the region's truly interesting history and increasingly diverse culture, the accompanying text is both more complete and detailed than one would expect from a pictorial work. The smaller than average print, while still very easy to read, provides the extra space without resorting to the uncomfortably large and burdensome size of publications common among this genre.


A selected bibliography that tells you exactly where to look for more information and a handy index enhance

this book's value as a research tool. The inside flap promises over 250 photographs, maps, and illustrations. The photographs and illustrations chosen succeed in bringing the region's history to life, but I found myself looking for those darn maps, and all to no avail. There is nowhere to chart the progress so carefully drawn out in the text. So, if you, like me, take great pleasure in finding out just where things were relative to where things are today, (and Dr. George is great about giving precise locations in the form of modern street addresses), then be sure to bring along your own map.

Dr. George's style is succinct yet captivating; like the late news highlights of a game you could not help missing, you are given the best pictures and most complete scenario in the limited

amount of time (in our case, space) provided. Yet, worry not. Dr. George has considerably more space than I, and his narration is much less compact and strenuous than the query I posed above.

Nevertheless, I can not help but leave you with just a few of the many facts that make this book worth reading: Did you know about the Zionist kibbutz in early Homestead? Or how about the German POW camp that stood near today's Dadeland Mall which, by the way, is the busiest shopping mall in the continental U.S. and stands only one mile from Baptist Hospital where Seminole Indians thrived as late as the 1920s, but were replaced by 1939, when a popular rodeo opened near the site? It's all there — the details that make South Florida's colorful history so fun to read. (By the way, the intriguing physician-turned-horticulturist is none other than Dr. Henry P. Perrine.)



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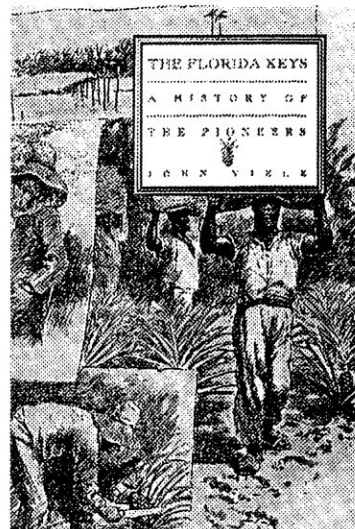


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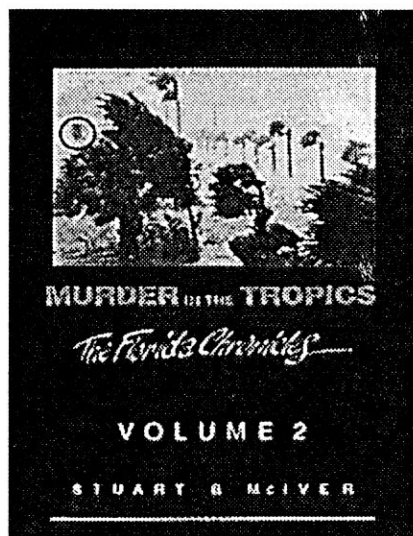
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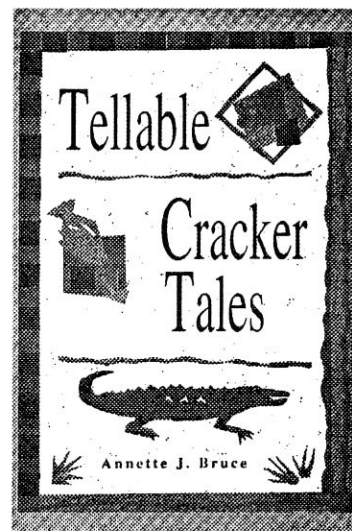
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**MURDER IN THE TROPICS**

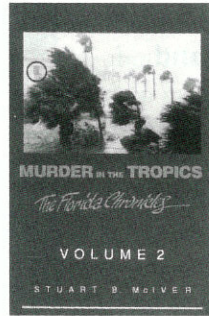
by Stuart McIver

Sarasota, Fla.: Pineapple Press, 1995. \$17.95.

Book review by Nicole Shuey

“Here it is that our narrative whirls into tragedy, grief and misery, prefaced with venture and desperation...”

This phrase, written by West Palm Beach postmistress Lena Clarke during her incarceration on murder charges, aptly describes the sordid twists and turns of Stuart McIver’s collection of stories in *Murder In the Tropics*. In this second volume of *The Florida Chronicles*, McIver exposes the seamy underbelly of a world known on the surface for its tropical beauty and southern charm. Each fascinating chapter takes the reader on a tour of sinister machinations and bloody crimes peopled with Florida residents both famous and infamous, from heiress Mary Lily Kenan Flagler Bingham, to would-be presidential assassin Giuseppe Zangara. However, in case you thought only the rich and read-about fall victim to crimes of passion and greed, McIver also unearths little-known cases of deceit and mayhem involving Floridians whose fame rests only in the exposing revelation of their disturbing deeds.



For avid crime buffs and newshounds, McIver’s book is the ultimate bedside reading, picking up on intrigue and dishonesty where television and newspapers leave off. As an author and former police reporter for *The Baltimore Sun*, McIver is able to invest each crime story with the requisite facts, and go one step further by giving readers a historical and psychological context for his subjects’

motives. By culling material from a variety of historical resources, McIver transcends spare news coverage with revealing details, allowing readers to discover the story behind the story. Become acquainted with the failed Shaker religious community in Osceola County and learn why the first and only crime committed by the peaceful residents was murder. Visit Florida’s wild frontier in 1870 and witness its cattle barons locking horns in a violent range war. Meet Lobster Boy, a carnival performer whose troubled family life led to alcoholism, abuse and ultimately, a contract killing.

Although theft, racketeering and murder may not seem like lighthearted fare, McIver treats his grim subject matter with the dry humor of a seasoned crime writer. Balancing the shocking with the absurd, he places Florida’s criminal record in a spotlight of both interrogation and theatricality. In between chapters on brutal racial attacks, frontier lawlessness and killings at sea, McIver introduces a “softer, gentler crime” known as the Case of the Clinking Brassieres, in which female employees bilked the phone company out of an estimated \$100,000 by sneaking rolls of quarters out in their oversized undergarments. *Murder in the Tropics* not only satisfies the literary appetites of the morbidly curious, it simultaneously opens a hidden window for Florida historians onto the often precarious social climate of Florida throughout its turbulent development from the 1870s to the 1990s. While other history books glorify the pioneering heroes of Florida’s epic story with examples of their forethought and industriousness, *Murder In the Tropics* lays bare the vile deeds of the Sunshine State’s most notorious villains as they cheated, schemed and murdered their way through the dark side of a tropical paradise.

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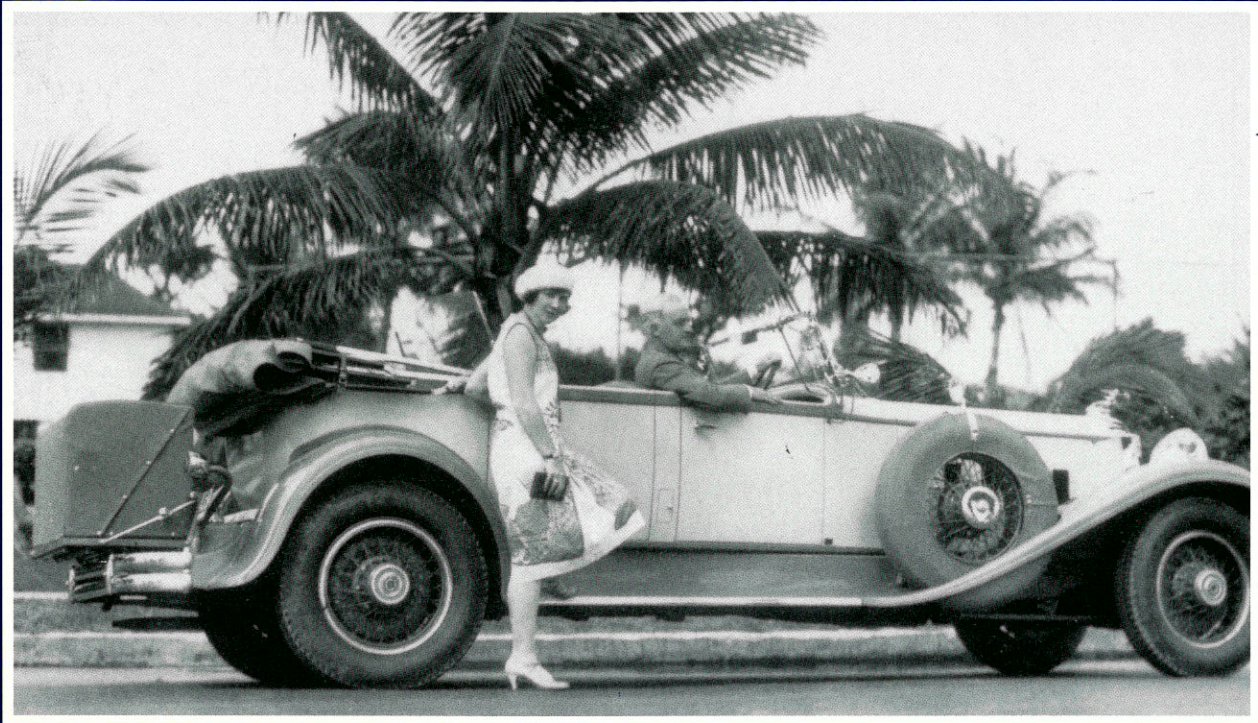
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