

# South Florida History



VOLUME 28, NO. 4, FALL/WINTER 2000, \$3.00

## THE BAREFOOT MAILMAN

A Job That Became a Legend

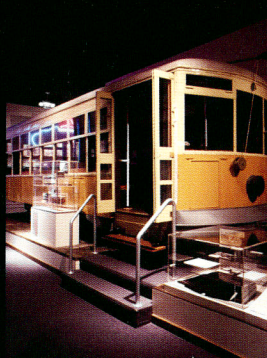
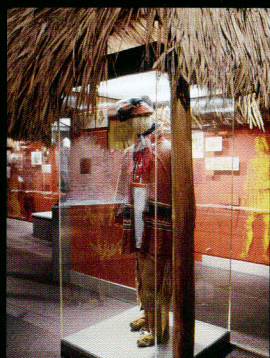




# HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

The Historical Museum brings 10,000 years of South Florida and Caribbean history to life through permanent and changing exhibits, special events, performances and educational programs for all.

The museum is open every day. Hours are Mon.–Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thurs. 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; and Sun. noon–5 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$2 for children (ages 6–12), and free for children under 6. The museum is located in downtown Miami, just blocks from I-95, across from the Government Center Metrorail Station.



**HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA**

Miami-Dade Cultural Plaza 101 West Flagler St. Miami, FL 33130  
305.375.1492 305.375.1609 fax [www.historical-museum.org](http://www.historical-museum.org)



# features this issue

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*South Florida History* Volume 28, No. 4, Fall/Winter 2000

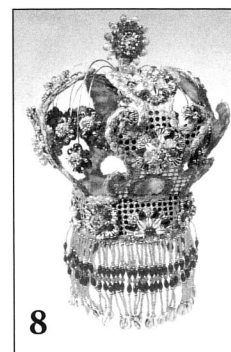
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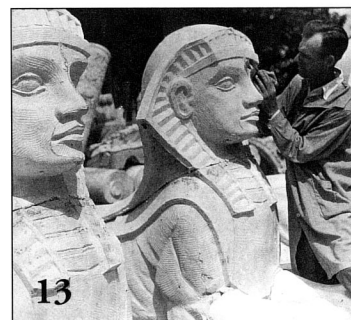
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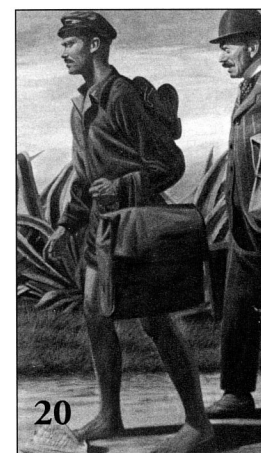
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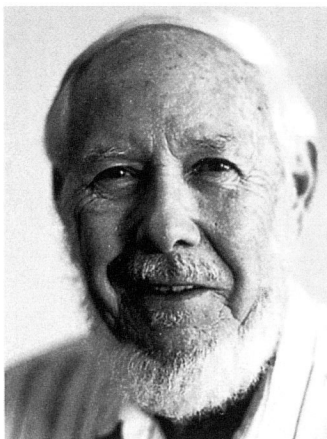
A painting of a nude woman displayed in a store window shakes up the city of Miami in 1913.

*Betty Jones & Eugene Threadgill*

Cover—Part of Stevan Dohanos' mural painted in 1940 on the wall of the old downtown West Palm Beach Post Office. HASF X-485-X.



# editor's notes



**By Stuart McIver**

Over the holidays, I was visiting one of my daughters and two of my grandchildren in the South Carolina Upcountry, not to be confused with the Low Country. One day at breakfast, I turned to the editorial page of the morning paper. There, to my delight, I found a column written by an old friend of mine, Sandy Grady.

His column, entitled "Reflections on a Year," included such topics as

Biggest 2000 Loser, states category. Florida won, earning the label "lunatic asylum" and from Sandy, the prediction that our next governor might well be Dave Barry.

Naturally, I read on to the last section, headed "Most Joyous 50 Years: The half-century I spent writing columns about sports and politics in Charlotte, Philadelphia and Washington. Fading into semi-retirement, this will be my last regular column for a while."

Wow, it hit me! For the past three years my wife and children have been bugging me to lighten my work schedule. Now here comes Sandy Grady. When I was sports editor of the *Charlotte News*, Sandy worked part-time for me covering prep sports after school. When a man who worked for you in high school retires, maybe it's time for you to at least slow down a little.

So, like good, old Sandy, I'm writing my last column for *South Florida History*. It's been a great two decades, working with interesting people, interesting stories and interesting pictures.

When I first joined the magazine in the late 1970s, it was called *Update*, a terrible name, I thought. It sounded like a newsletter for a brokerage firm giving you the very latest in investment trends or stock buys. *Update* says "right now." We were looking for "right then." We wanted old stuff that illuminated life in South Florida in bygone days.

Nothing drives the Florida engine more than weather. In the summer of 1992, Don Gaby, author of *The Miami River*, wrote a marvelous story for us entitled, "Early Weather Service in Miami." Until his retirement and move to Ormond Beach, Don worked for many years in Miami in the weather-forecasting business, for the U.S. Air Force, for American Airlines, the National Weather Service and the National Environmental Satellite Service.

Don traced our weather forecasting back to October, 1839 at the U.S. Army's Fort Dallas, on the Miami River. Observations were made then on temperature, humidity, direction and speed of the wind.

"Those early weather observations," he wrote, "indicate that the climate then was not greatly different from what we know today.

Winter temperatures rarely fell below freezing, but did so on occasion with a coldest temperature of 30 °F and ice recorded."

One day in 1989, a manuscript arrived from a man named Steve Glassman, an assistant professor of humanities at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach. Steve had written a hilarious account of how some two dozen West Coast boosters piled into a convoy of one Model T truck, two heavy touring cars and seven Model T sedans to drive across the Everglades. The trouble was that there was no road there at the time. They were actually trying to dramatize the need for a highway which would eventually emerge as the Tamiami Trail.

The projected time for the trip was three to four days. It took two-and-a-half weeks of battling insects and cottonmouth moccasins before seven Model T's made it to Flagler Street. The event helped put South Florida on the world map. It was estimated that 35,000 front page columns were devoted to the Tamiami Trail Blazers by American and European newspapers. Since no reporters were traveling with them, these accounts drew heavily on the imaginations of the writers, describing battles with wild animals and capture by hostile Indians.

They could never have made it across the Everglades without the help of their two Miccosukee guides, one of whom, Assumhachee, bore a distinguished Anglo name. He was called Abraham Lincoln. Why? Because he looked like President Abe. We ran a picture of the tall, lanky guide on the cover.

Steve Glassman went on to write a Florida historical novel, *Blood on the Moon*, set during the Seminole Wars. He also was co-editor of a book on the eminent African-American novelist Zora Neale Hurston and two books on the popular field of mystery writing. One of these, *Florida Noir*, was a finalist for an Edgar, the highest award given by the Mystery Writers of America.

We published stories by many gifted authors, Helen Muir, Arva Parks, Thelma Peters, Paul George, Canter Brown, Jr., and novelist David Kaufelt. We also ran many stories by little-known people struggling to put on paper marvelous tales about how their pioneer parents made their way in a South Florida that was just beginning to unfold.

Now and then we lucked into a story from an unexpected source. While working on a project at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in Collier County, I found a manuscript recounting just how the sanctuary came into being. It was written by the eminent Carl W. Buchheister, who from 1959-1967 served as president of the National Audubon Society.

He wrote about how the Corkscrew Cypress Rookery Association was born in 1954, how the swamp with its 700-year-old cypresses was acquired, how the boardwalk was built, and how important it was to protect the largest rookery of wood storks and egrets in the country. One of the most intriguing parts of the story concerned raising money. Buchheister told us how the association persuaded Mrs. Marcia Tucker, a wealthy donor to many Audubon causes, to support the venture.



## South Florida History

### Editors

Stuart McIver and Sara Muñoz

### Editorial Assistance

Jodi Weitz, Becky Smith, Kelly Geisinger

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When a caravan of conservationists left Miami to show her the swamp, Mrs. Tucker rode in the lead car, her own shiny grey Daimler, complete with liveried chauffeur and footman. When they arrived at Corkscrew, northeast of Naples, they walked through sawgrass, swamp and ponds, sometimes in water that was waist-deep. Mrs. Tucker was in her seventies but she wanted to see Corkscrew for herself.

Later the party climbed out of the wetlands, changed into dry clothes and headed back to Miami. Mrs. Tucker's luxury sedan once again was the lead car. On the Tamiami Trail the car suddenly stopped and the footman disappeared into a raunchy-looking roadside saloon. One of the Auduon directors asked the chauffeur why they had stopped. Time for Mrs. Tucker's afternoon dry martini, he was told.

Soon the footman emerged from the bar carrying a tray with a martini on it. Mrs. Tucker liked it and ordered another one. By the time it arrived the car was surrounded by curious villagers and farm workers. They had never seen a Daimler or a martini before.

After her second cocktail, Mrs. Tucker gave the signal to continue to Miami. And, of course, we know the Corkscrew Sanctuary continues as a haven for birds and a delight for birdwatchers.

We always had trouble getting good stories about the West Indies, which of course concerns us since the focus of our organization is on southern Florida and the Caribbean.

Nell Colcord Weidenbach's story about her 1941 visit to Havana, featured as the cover story in our last issue, was a particular delight. As a teenager, I had visited Havana in the late 1930s, and I remembered it as the most beautiful city I had ever seen. I visited it again last October to gather material for a book on Ernest Hemingway and was saddened by how much the city has deteriorated.

But Nell Weidenbach's story brought back to me not the shabbiness of the year 2001 but my memories of 1938, all of it enhanced further by the pictures Becky

Smith assembled from the HASF Resource Center and the marvelous layout my coeditor Sara Muñoz created. We even had a picture of the steamship Florida, the one I traveled on for my first trip to Cuba.

The late Thelma Peters, a major player on the Florida historical scene, provided us with some of our best stories on the islands, on the Bahamas and most recently on Haiti. Jane Day, a founding partner of Research Atlantica, wrote "Bimini, Bahamas: Hemingway's Island in the Stream" for us in 1989.

Her story dealt largely with the Great Man's 1930s adventures in tuna fishing, but she also presented an incredible tale of a fight he had late one afternoon on a dock in Bimini. The fight, in which Ernest kayoed the publisher of *Colliers* and *McCall's* magazines, became so legendary that a Bahamian named Nattie Saunders wrote a calypso-style song about it. He called it "Big Fat Slob," which was the insult tossed at Hemingway to trigger the fight. The author got such a kick out of the song that for a while he was known to sign his letters "Big Fat Slob."

But for music you couldn't beat Eve Reed's "Funky Nights in Overtown," my favorite of all the stories we ran over the past two decades. She recounted how Overtown became a center for the best in American jazz from the early postwar years until Interstate-95 demolished the heart of Miami's African-American community in the early 1960s.

Those days are gone now but just try to think of how electrifying they must have been. Right after the end of World War II a group of black business men launched the night club business in Overtown with the opening of the Fiesta Club. A major venue in that Golden Age was the Zebra Room at the Mary Elizabeth Hotel.

Viewers who followed Ken Burns' recent 10-part series on jazz on WPBT will recognize the names of the jazz and rhythm-and-blues greats who played in Overtown's clubs, a dazzling Who's Who of America's finest musicians: Duke Ellington, Art Tatum, Billie Holiday,

*Continued on page 37*



# around the galleries



**HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA**

**Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Miami-Dade Cultural Center, 101 West Flagler Street, Miami, 305.375.1492, 305.375.1609 fax, hasf@historical-museum.org, www.historical-museum.org.** Open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursdays until 9 p.m.; Sundays, noon–5 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Adults \$5; Children 6-12 \$2. Members Free.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### **A Race into History**

*Saturday, April 7*

*Post Time 1:05 p.m.*

*Tropee Named Race & Reception 2:00–5:00 p.m.*

*Hialeah Park and Race Course, 2200 East Fourth Avenue*

Enjoy an afternoon at the races with the Tropees of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. Celebrate the 70th running of the "Flamingo Stakes" at the historic Hialeah Park & Race Course. Admission covers parking, entrance to the park and a complimentary buffet and cocktail reception in the Tropees' VIP tent. Admission is \$25 for museum members and \$35 for non-members. For more information, please call 305.375.1492.

### **Croquet & Croquetas**

*Sunday, May 6, 5:00–8:00 p.m.*

*Fairchild Tropical Garden, 10901 Old Cutler Road*

Presented by the Historical Museum's young professionals group, the Tropees, the second annual Croquet & Croquetas will feature live music, croquet demonstrations and friendly competitions. Guests will delight in sampling the classic and nouvelle Floribbean croquetas. A sunset tram ride through the gardens will provide the perfect end to the quintessential Miami-style party. All proceeds benefit the Historical Museum's exhibitions and education programs. For more information, call 305.375-1492 or visit [www.historical-museum.org](http://www.historical-museum.org)

### **Thursday Evening Programs**

*7:00–9:00 p.m.*

*Historical Museum of Southern Florida, 101 West Flagler Street*

Free and Open to the Public

#### **April 5**

*Historical Perspectives on Afro-Cuban Orisha Worship*

Panel Discussion (English)

Mercedes Sandoval, Willie Ramos, Nelson Mendoza (Chair)

#### **April 19**

*Afro-Cuban Orisha Dance, Music and Poetry*

Performances and Readings (English and Spanish)

Iroko Afro-Cuban Dance Theater

Poets: Adrian Castro, Greg Everitt

## SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

### **At the Crossroads: Afro-Cuban Orisha Arts in Miami**

*February 23, 2001–July 8, 2001*

In an effort to give the Orisha community the chance to present and interpret its arts to the general public, *At the Crossroads* highlights the work of more than 25 of Miami's leading Orisha artists, examining their careers and creative visions. The exhibit will also explore the history of the Afro-Cuban Orisha religion, Orisha philosophy and symbolism and local ceremonial practices.

### **Follow that Dream: Florida's Rock & Roll Legends**

*July 27, 2001–January 20, 2002*

Follow that Dream explores what makes Florida's music scene so attractive to music lovers and musicians and what sets it apart from the rest of the country. The exhibit focuses on Florida's rock 'n' roll and popular music from the 1950s to the present and examines gospel, blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, folk and country, the Latin sound and the roots of rock 'n' roll in Florida.

## HISTORIC TOURS

### **Stiltsville/Key Biscayne Boat Tour**

*Sunday, April 8, 5:00–8:00 p.m.*

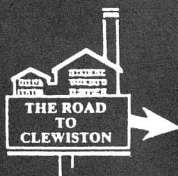
Get one last peak of the extraordinary neighborhood in the middle of Biscayne Bay. Explore the textured histories of Virginia Key, Key Biscayne, the restored historic Cape Florida Lighthouse and bustling Brickell Avenue. \$30 Members; \$35 Non-Members. Advance reservations and non-refundable payment required. For more information and reservations, call 305.375.1621.

### **Downtown/Miami River Walking Tour**

*Saturday, April 21, 10:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.*

Stroll along the river and learn about the Miami Circle, Spanish missions, two slave plantations, army forts, historic Fort Dallas, the "Village of Miami," Lummus Park and the home of Julia Tuttle. Enjoy Downtown's historic architecture and explore Gusman Center, Burdines and the Seybold Building. Meet behind the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 400 SE 2nd Ave. \$10 for Members and \$15 for Non-Members. No reservations required.





**Clewiston Museum, 112 South Comercio Street, Clewiston—863.983.2870.** 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.



**The Historical Society of Palm Beach County, 400 N. Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach—561.832.4164.** A nonprofit membership organization devoted to collecting and preserving archives and artifacts pertaining to the history of Palm Beach County and Florida. Make local history a part of your life and join as a member to help support this effort. You will enjoy lectures and special events, discounts on historical books and research fees. Office hours are Mon.–Fri. from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Research hours are by appointment Tues.—Thurs. from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



**Collier County Museum, 3301 Tamiami Trail East, Naples—941.774.8476.** 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.

### Special Exhibition

#### As You Were

*January 20–April 20, 2001*

A 3,000 square foot exhibition devoted exclusively to World War II veterans. Exhibits and displays trace America's entry into the war, the military leaders and key campaigns, weapons, uniforms and the war effort on the homefront.



**Florida History Center & Museum Burt Reynolds Park, 805 North U.S. Highway 1, Jupiter—561.747.6639.** 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 p.m.–5 p.m. \$2.

### Special Exhibition

#### "Beautiful~The Dress, Cloaked in Time"

#### A Retrospect of Women's Fashions 1900–1939

*March 2–May 30, 2001*

In celebration of Women's History Month, formal gowns, shoes, hats and accessories, dating from 1900 to 1939, will be displayed, along with afternoon tea outfits and outerwear. The collection will consist of a series of vignettes which will reflect the time period.



**Fort Myers Historical Museum, 2300 Peck Street, Fort Myers—941.332.5955.** Open Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Closed Sundays and Mondays and most holidays. Admission is \$6 for adults and \$3 for children ages 3–12. Museum members are free.



**Boca Raton Historical Society Town Hall, 71 N. Federal Highway, Boca Raton—561.395.6766.** 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.



# AT THE CROSSROADS

AFRO-CUBAN ORISHA ARTS IN MIAMI

Historical Museum of Southern Florida  
FEBRUARY 23 THROUGH JULY 8

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By Kelly Geisinger

Over the past forty years, Miami has emerged as one of the major centers of the Afro-Cuban Orisha religion and its array of traditional arts. Several waves of Cuban migration to South Florida since the 1959 Castro revolution have helped to create a community of over 100,000 Orisha practitioners. While many people were Orisha devotees before leaving Cuba, others adopted the religion in Miami, due in part to the stresses of the exile experience.

To celebrate this community and its unique art forms, more than 30 of Miami's leading Orisha artists have donated or loaned their pieces to the Historical Museum of Southern Florida to create a new exhibition entitled *At the Crossroads: Afro-Cuban Orisha Arts in Miami*. The exhibit will be on display at the Historical Museum through July 8, 2001.

"*At the Crossroads*" includes almost 200 artifacts such as ceremonial garments, decorated cloth panels, necklaces, metal tools and wood carvings, all of which reflect the artist's spiritual devotion to the orishas (deities) of the religion's pantheon.

According to Steve Stuempfle, Chief Curator for the Historical Museum, "This is the first large-scale exhibition that deals with

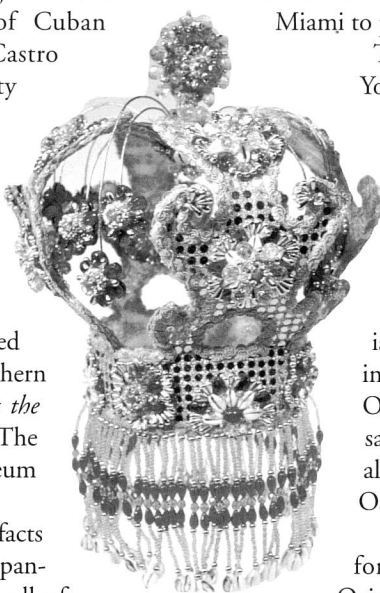
the art forms of the Orisha community in Miami. The goal of the exhibition is to provide a forum for the Orisha community in Miami to present and interpret its arts to the general public."

The Afro-Cuban Orisha religion is a synthesis of Yoruba Orisha worship and Spanish Catholicism.

Enslaved Africans combined their beliefs and customs with those imposed by the Spanish colonists to avoid religious persecution. By adopting some of the beliefs of the Catholics, their African beliefs had a greater chance of surviving in the hostile colonial environment.

The Catholic influence on the Yoruba religion is manifested in such practices as the association of individual orishas with Catholic saints. For example, Oshún parallels Our Lady of Charity, the patron saint of Cuba. Each orisha in the religion's pantheon also represents a different natural element or an idea. Oshún represents rivers and love.

The name "*At the Crossroads*" was chosen for the exhibition because Miami is the center of Orisha worship in the United States and is integral to the dissemination of the religion, says Miguel "Willie" Ramos, one of the guest curators of the exhibition. He adds that "Miami is the point of encounter between the exiled Cuban community and other immigrant groups in the







United States.”

The exhibition title also refers to Elegbá, the orisha of the crossroads, who is the divine messenger of the gods.

Working alongside Ramos, who is a well-respected priest of Shangó and Orisha scholar, are two other guest curators. Ezequiel Torres is a priest of Obatalá and a master craftsman of Afro-Cuban musical instruments, including drums.

He is one of two Cuban batá drum makers known to live in the United States.

Nelson Mendoza has been an active researcher and collector of Orisha artworks for more than ten years.

The curators have been working on the exhibition since 1998. Grants received by the Historical Museum from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1999 and 2000 were used for field research, exhibition development and educational programming.

“*At the Crossroads*” focuses on artists and the essential role they play in the Orisha community in Miami, catering to divine and human tastes in their attempts to gratify the orishas. The artists believe that the pleasure or displeasure an orisha expresses about their work has a direct relation to their prosperity in the commu-

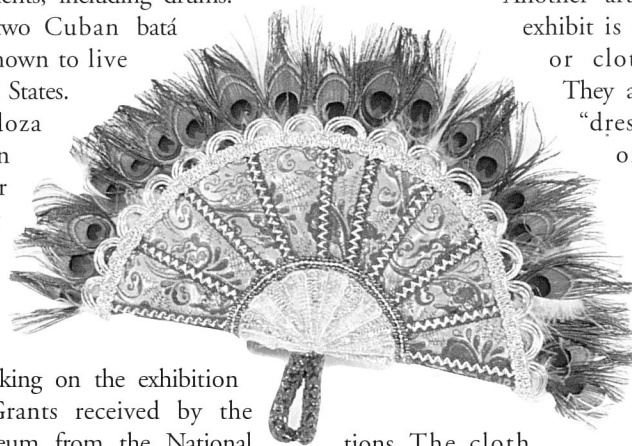
nity. Because the process of creating the works of art is as much a part of the exhibition as the finished product, photographs and video of the artists and their homes are on display as well.

Beadwork, one of the art forms showcased in the exhibition, is important to practitioners because beads show the beauty and significance of the orishas. Different beads are associated with different orishas. Ivory and mother-of-pearl, for instance, are the beads associated with Oduduwa and Obatalá, the two most respected orishas in the pantheon. Coral is a symbol of prosperity and is linked with Oshún and Yemojá.

The beads are used to make items including *collares de mazo* or “mazos,” large necklaces with clusters of beads; *elekés*, single-string necklaces; *idés*, bracelets; *mayas*, decorative bead nets; and *artículos forrados*, ceremonial items covered with beads.

Another art form on exhibit is the *pañó*, or cloth panel.

They are used to “dress” orishas on special occasions such as religious anniversaries or other spiritual celebra-



tions. The cloth panels often include fine fabrics, beads, cowries, pearls, rhinestones and metallic trimmings that reflect an orisha. *Paños* have developed into a particularly elaborate art form in Miami and generally are made by specialists.

*Continued on page 37*

Left page—Crown for Oshún made by Eusebio Escobar. Top—Shekerés, musical instruments, made by Ezequiel Torres. Bottom—Fan for Yemojá made by Nayla Llanes.

## Special Thursday Evening Programs

7:00–9:00 p.m.

Free and Open to the Public

April 5

### Historical Perspectives on Afro-Cuban Orisha Worship

Panel Discussion (English)

Mercedes Sandoval, Willie Ramos, Nelson Mendoza (Chair)

April 19

### Afro-Cuban Orisha Dance, Music and Poetry

Performances and Readings (English and Spanish)

Iroko Afro-Cuban Dance Theater  
Poets: Adrian Castro, Greg Everitt

May 3

### Afro-Cuban Herbalism

Panel Discussion (Spanish)

Ezequiel Torres, Jesus Ramos, Willie Ramos (Chair)

May 17

### An Evening of Afro-Cuban Music and Foods

Performances and Food Tasting  
Akiriwaye (Shekeré Ensemble), Obá Iré (Bembé Ensemble) Cooks:  
Olga Ramos, Norma Villena, Felicia Cabrera

May 31

### The Future of Afro-Cuban Orisha Worship in Miami

Panel Discussion (English)

José Acosta Santo, Ernesto Pichardo, Mercedes Sandoval, Nelson Mendoza (Chair)

June 14

### The Orisha Tradition in Studio Arts

Panel Discussion (Spanish)

José Chúi, Laura Luna, Luis Molina, Miguel Ordoqui, Willie Ramos (Chair)



# In His Own Words...

## **Foreword by Rebecca A. Smith**

*Randy Nimnicht worked as the Historical Association and Museum's "chief-of-staff" for 26 years, from 1974 until his retirement in late 2000. During that time, he earned the reputation as one of the best historical society leaders in Florida and the nation.*

*From time to time, he would write articles for the Association's publications, reflecting upon the museum. In the December 1974 issue of Update (South Florida History's predecessor), when still new to the museum, he observed:*

*It "is not so much the size of the historical society ..., its wealth ..., or the particular area it serves that dictates its success or failure. The most important ingredient seems to be people."*

*Randy built his career upon this belief. In this piece, he looks back upon the accomplishments during his tenure, always with the most important ingredient in mind.*



Randy F. Nimnicht, former President/CEO of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida

## **By Randy F. Nimnicht**

I was asked to provide an overview perspective regarding the years I served as the senior staff member at the museum. The personal pronoun "we" is used extensively throughout. This is not an editorial "we" but actively reflects the reality of how the museum prospered through the collective efforts of many. My perspective unfolds by looking at three aspects: attitudes/traditions, milestones and "cruising speed."

At 8:00 a.m. on the morning of July 22, 1974, I reported for work as the newly hired museum director. I had to go back to where we were staying and wait an hour because the museum didn't open until 9:00. Thus began my work with the Historical Association of Southern Florida. I assure you it has continued to be both humbling and exhilarating.

## **Attitudes/Traditions**

**AGENDA**—We have consistently stayed on agenda. That agenda is formally reflected in our Mission Statement. The attitude/tradition permeates down to the everyday work of everyone at the museum, whether professional or volunteer.

**PROFESSIONALS**—We have been fortunate to attract and keep a wonderful group of individuals who not only have been consummate professionals in their respective areas but I think, most importantly, decent, civil, hardworking, good people. There has always been stress on our staff, but in large measure, it has been self-induced because our good people set extremely high standards for their professional conduct.

**TRUSTEE/OTHER VOLUNTEERS**—We have enjoyed individuals serving on our Board and in other volunteer posts, whose primary motivation has been to serve our community. We have enjoyed the hard work of many "real people" and avoided the "phonies." We have avoided the "big egos" that have plagued many cultural organizations. Occasionally, friendly and well meaning "false prophets" have urged that we become something else—an art or science museum, a performing art entity, or even Disney World—out of the desire to make us more popular. Wiser heads have prevailed.

**ELECTED OFFICIALS/ADMINISTRATORS**—There has been a series of elected officials and senior administrators, pri-



marily in county and state government, that have understood our ability to consistently produce a quality product, and we have enjoyed solid support.

**DIVERSITY**—Long before it became politically correct, we celebrated our community's cultural and ethnic diversity. This was true long before I joined the staff. Our celebration seems to be more about the value of the individual within a group instead of just praising the group.

**MANAGEMENT SKILLS**—We have fervently believed the museum was a business and needed sound management practices. Good watchwords—"Budget! Budget! Budget!"

**QUALITY**—Intention can lead to reality. Our intention and reality has been to produce quality exhibits, programs and events. In a community that sees so much "splash," we have been substance. We acquired and have maintained many of our supporters because of this simple fact.

**TECHNOLOGY**—We have embraced technology. As a museum, we were way ahead of the curve for our field in Florida in computerizing all aspects of our operational work.

**PRACTICAL AND DO-ABLE**—We have disciplined ourselves to do what is practical and do-able. We have avoided the siren call to promise all to a community that is so used to that song. We produce before we brag. We have listened to our community.

**THE VISION THING**—Museums, above all else, are educational institutions. History museums, above all else, are educational institutions that celebrate human life—the story of people. The image in our logo and the phrase attached pretty well says it all—"An association of people interested in South Florida and the Caribbean." It really translates into "Know thyself." Our vision has been simple. We hope that all who come in contact with our museum through our exhibits, programs, publications and events will go away with a better understanding of what happened to people who lived here in the past. And in doing so, they may have a better understanding of their own place in their time.

### **Milestones**

Securing the formal invitation to become a tenant in the Metro-Dade Cultural Center (Spring 1976). Moving into the Historical Museum of Southern Florida with all storyline exhibits complete (Spring 1984).

Securing a \$375,000 National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant in 1978, which gave us the wherewithal to begin building professional museum and development staff. At the time this was the largest grant ever given to a regional history organization in the United States.

Rising to the standard required for accreditation first in 1979, with reaccreditation in 1987 and again in 1997.

Establishing Harvest in 1975 (Fall 2000, 27th year—Yes, two in one year).

Establishing the "History Mysteries" program for fourth grade students.

Securing the first ever "cultural turkey" from the State of Florida to fund permanent exhibits. While there had been many "local projects" funded out of Tallahassee, I believe this to be the first "cultural turkey" to fly, and it inadvertently and wonderfully begot a flock of other "cultural turkeys" that have landed all over our fine state.

Likewise, through our leadership effort and in combination with others, inducing the legislature to put in place and fund a series of grant programs that benefit all museums. Our quality was documented when we were ranked the number one museum in Florida in 1993 in the first round of competition in the Cultural Institution Program.

Establishing of our endowment in 1985 and continuing to make its growth an ongoing priority (Fall 2000 = \$11,000,000).

Establishing the Folklife Program in 1985.

Establishing the Miami International Map Fair in 1993.

### **Cruising Speed**

Maintaining "cruising speed" is the term I have used in reference to the ongoing day-to-day, year in, year out work which keeps the museum operating at a level of excellence. It is by far the most arduous and complex task we undertake. On occasion, people forget we are 24/7/365 operation. Collections (artifactual, archival, iconographic) have continued to grow both in size and quality. Interpretive services consistently produces quality exhibits and catalogs. Education serves thousands with programming not available anywhere else. Publications document as a permanent record of our region's history. Folklife celebrates our community's wonderful diversity and keeps us in touch with our citizens/clients. The research library and the museum store serve thousands yearly. Development and Finance find and manage the resources necessary to make it all happen.

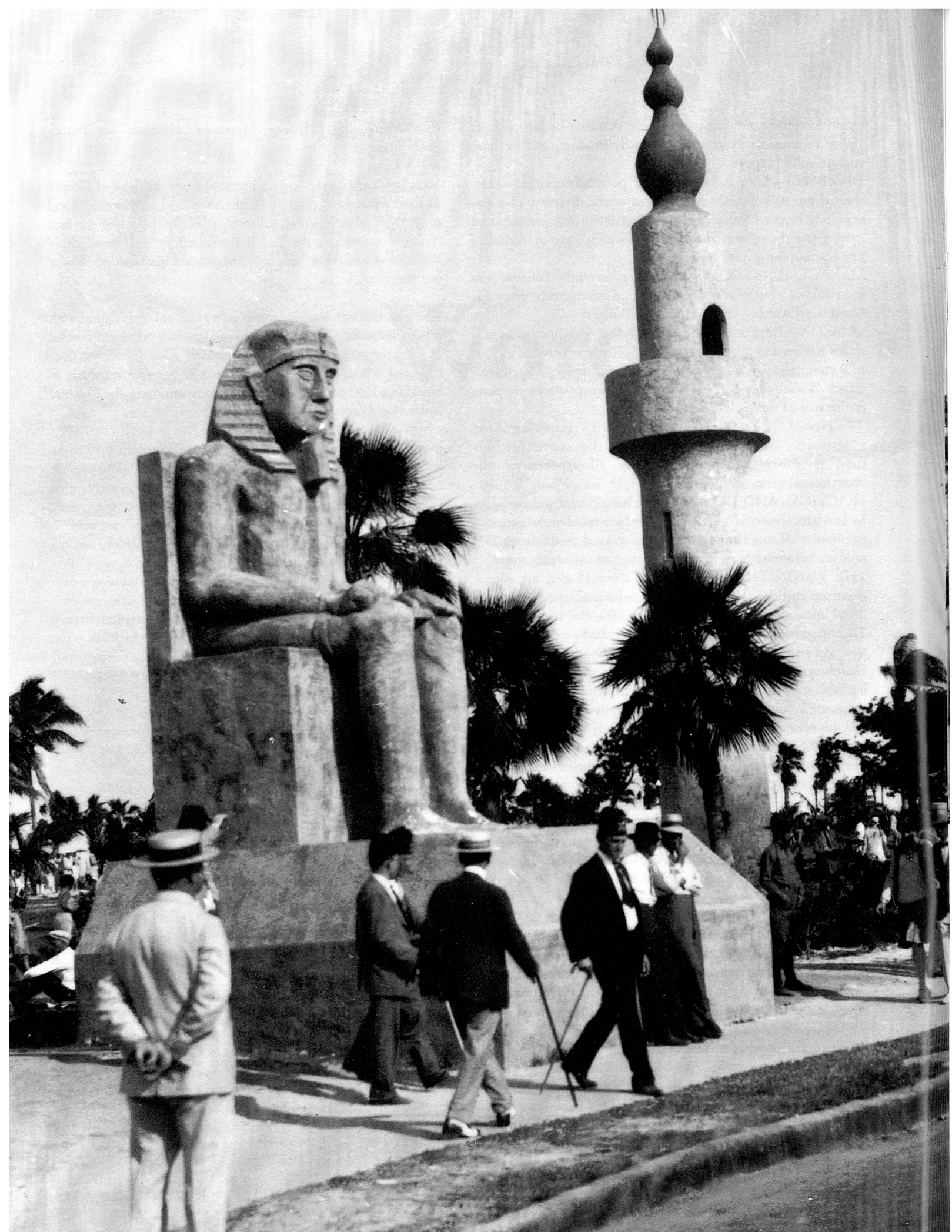
### **The Past and the Future**

Hopefully the past has been a good foundation upon which to build a prosperous future.

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*Editor's Note—This piece is in Randy's own words, un-edited, as he wished to have them presented.*







# Miami's Garden of Allah

b y L i s a G i b b s

IN THE HEADY BOOM DAYS OF THE MID-1920s, Miami's boosters continually sought new ways to reinvigorate the city's image as the country's foremost playground. In the effort to capitalize on the city's sunny climate and make Miami a tourist's paradise, carefully orchestrated special events played a crucial role in communicating images of spectacle and pleasure to the rest of the country.

Parades arguably were the most effective of these tools, for they provided the opportunity to pick a fantasy-inspired theme, transform the city with cheerfully elaborate decorations, and galvanize crowds of spectators in a prolonged festival of hype. The Shriners' convention parade in the first days of May 1928 exemplifies not only the techniques Miami used to evoke the desired image of mystique and beauty, but also the importance city leaders bestowed on these events in their efforts to build a modern American industrial city.

The national fraternal organization called the Shriners, the charitable arm of the Masons, brought together the country's most prominent businessmen. Miami was only the fourth city south of the Mason-Dixon line to host the group's annual national convention in 54 years. By 1928, the organization was said to

have 600,000 members, so this was quite a prestigious coup. Indeed, the Shriner convention was extremely significant in the city's efforts to build a thriving convention business.

Although the city had been hosting conventions as early as 1897, the mid-1920s marked Miami's turning point between simply a nice place to have a meeting and a serious contender for major national conventions. Conventions were an effective way of luring large numbers of tourists to the area and attracting national publicity. In the years after the 1926 hurricane, when the real estate boom had busted, large conventions took on greater significance.

Wrote Miami Advertising Club president R.M. Erdmans in the August 1927 *Miamian*, the Chamber of Commerce's monthly publication:

"This year's great problem is to fill the city with tourists...The many great conventions that have either been arranged or projected for this city will have a tremendous influence for the good. Several hundred thousand people will spend several millions of dollars while in attendance. This means a great influx of cash but not as great as the general good the conventions will do by virtue of word-of-mouth advertising throughout the U.S."

Each of the 13 Pharaohs that lined Biscayne Boulevard, the Avenue of the Gods, dwarfed passersby. HASF 219-14 Matlack



## The Shriners' Middle Eastern

themes fit in perfectly with

Miami's campaign to

establish itself as a place of luxury

whose ability to please and excite

out-of-towners appeared effortless

and boundless—

Miami, the Magic City.

By 1927, a well-oiled machine was in place. Miami's chamber of commerce had a convention committee, and business leaders got together with politicians to lure conventions. There was talk of building a large auditorium so that the city could accommodate properly the largest of events. Wrote then-mayor E.G. Sewell, "Miami ranks third or fourth in hotel capacity for cities of the United States but without a convention hall we are like a home without a kitchen or an automobile without a magneto." The *Miamian* records 15 significant conventions for 1927, and the International Lions convention in June of that year probably was the first real major event to come to the city, bringing 10,000 delegates.

While planning for the Lions convention was in the final stages, Miami's civic leaders were lobbying hard to bring the

Shriners to Miami in 1928. This lobbying effort consisted of a team of Miami Shriners making a presentation to the organization's national leaders in Atlantic City "of the claims of Miami through its hotel facilities, climate and recreational possibilities."

Competing with established convention cities like Atlantic City and Los Angeles also meant sweetening the deal with some cash. The cities of Miami, Miami Beach and Coral Gables guaranteed \$250,000 in funding, and the Miami Shriners at their July 7 meeting collected \$200,000 in pledges for preliminary financing of the national Imperial Council sessions. Another \$100,000 was collected the next morning. The winning of the convention, the chamber proclaimed, "put Miami in the national spotlight."



A phenomenon of the 1920s and part of the Shriner's ritual character, Middle Eastern themes were used to create an extravagant setting for their National Convention and Parade. HASF 81-89-67.



Although the Shriners' origin was debated, one theory had the group founded in Mecca in Arabia. Whatever the origin, the organization employed Middle Eastern themes as part of its ritual character. Local chapters were called "temples"—Miami's delegation was the Mahi Temple—and Shriners wore red fezzes. The leader of the national organization had the title of Imperial Potentate.

The Shriners' Middle Eastern themes fit in perfectly with Miami's campaign to establish itself as a place of luxury whose ability to please and excite out-of-towners appeared effortless and boundless—Miami, the Magic City.

It also fit in perfectly with the by-now well-established nationwide fascination with the exotic character of Arabia. Orientalism, which included the Islamic, had been exploited by department stores and World's Fairs since the late-nineteenth century.

Historian William Leach argues that orientalism appealed to Americans' desire for the sensual and romantic that a lifestyle based on Christian values discouraged. Businessmen, notes Leach, later saw profits in using orientalism as a vehicle to praise luxury and self-gratification and inspire consumption of their products.

The appeal of novels and plays with Egyptian themes exploded in the 1920s with a series of motion pictures such as *The Sheik*, starring Rudolph Valentino (1921) and *The Thief of Baghdad*, *An Arabian Nights Fantasy*, starring Douglas Fairbanks (1924).

The fascination continued with the story of T.E. Lawrence, the British soldier known as Lawrence of Arabia who helped lead Arab nationalists against the Ottoman Empire in World War I. The first biography of Lawrence, by American radio commentator Lowell Thomas, became a best seller when it was published in 1924. Subsequent press articles extolled Lawrence as a romantic and brave adventurer who immersed himself in a primitive, exotic culture.

Miami was not immune to the Middle Eastern phenomenon. The biggest and best example is Opa-locka, one of the many new real estate developments undertaken in the 1920s in Dade County. In Opa-locka, developer Glenn Curtiss and architect Bernhardt Muller envisioned a city where every building invoked a tale from the Arabian Nights. City hall had minarets. Streets had names like Ali-Baba Avenue.

Interestingly, the use of themes in real estate developments paralleled their role in Miami's parades. "Themes served to distinguish one flat trace of newly-drained land from another. They were useful to writers of advertising copy. Festivals and other events could be keyed to them, attracting people—and free press coverage—to a site." In other words, the Middle Eastern theme of Opa-locka—and the Shriner parade—provided the vehicle for a message of fun and fantasy.



Top—Lined with 13 statues of pharaohs, Biscayne Boulevard became the Avenue of the Gods. HASF 81-89-68. Bottom—These columns adorned each side of the entrance to the Garden of Allah. HASF 78-47-4.

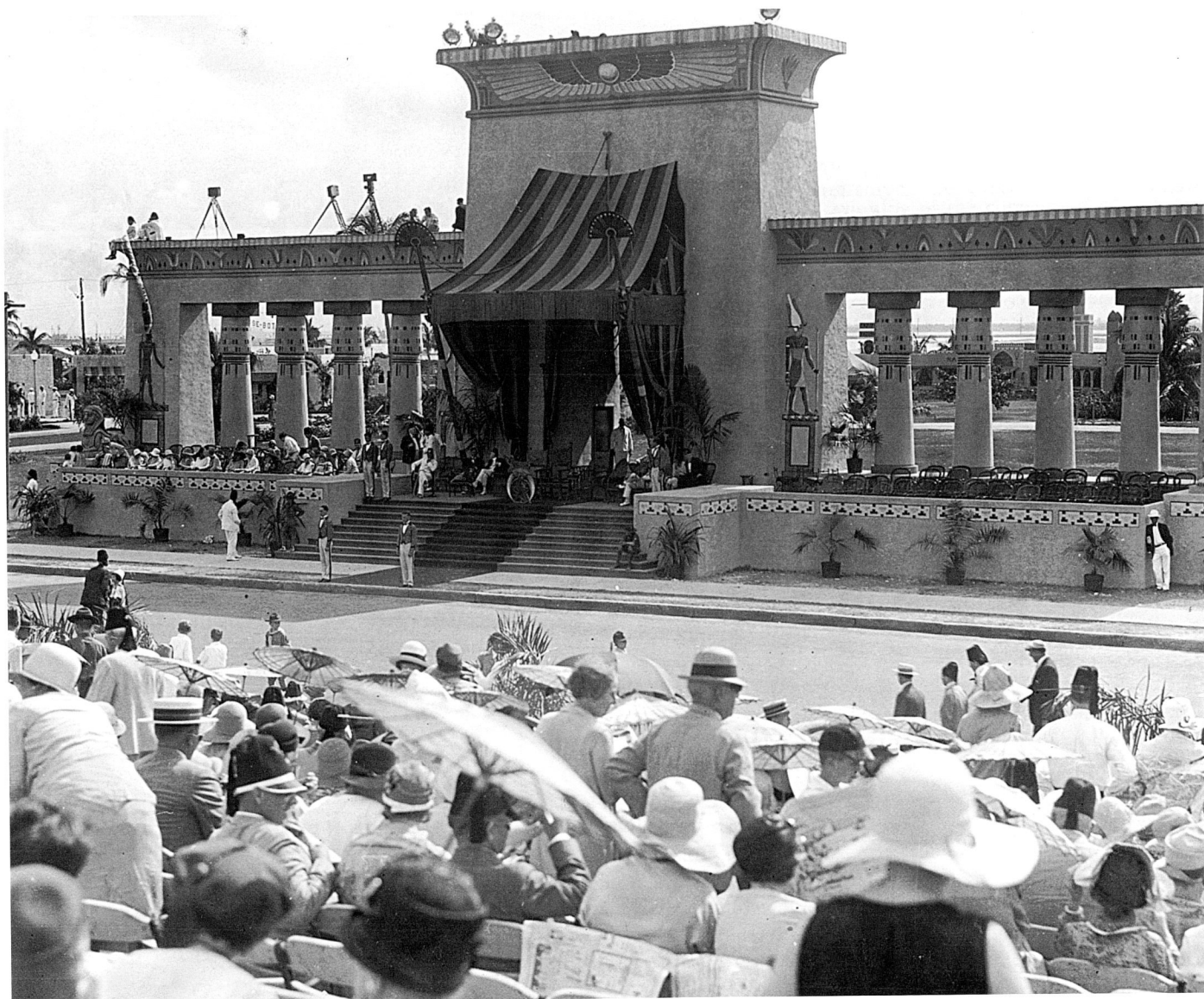
Not surprisingly, given the national audience the Shriner convention would have, local organizers went all out to exploit the Middle Eastern theme and create a properly extravagant setting for the two-parade event. Biscayne Boulevard and Bayfront Park in downtown were transformed. Biscayne Boulevard became the Avenue of the Gods, lined with 13 statues of pharaohs and a makeshift mosque with minaret that was the parade viewing station for the Shriners' national leaders.

That, plus the bandstand, was the "Garden of Allah." Temple columns adorned with hieroglyphics marked

Traffic lights were topped with giant fezzes, and flags bearing Shriner emblems and colors flew from city streets.

The scene was a dazzling spectacle of color, sound and light. Parade stands were decorated in red, amber and green, the Shriner colors. The Oasis, 14 buildings with 26 booths, sported rainbow-colored awnings of "giddy hues" and "tropical parrotlike tones."

The Shriners themselves wore elaborate and colorful costumes of satin and linen, complete with jeweled turbans and gleaming swords. For the second, nighttime parade, Miami had obtained



The parade viewing stand for the Shriner's national leaders was a makeshift mosque along side the Avenue of the Gods. HASF X-1598-4.

the entrances to the parade route. The Avenue of the Sphinxes reached to Biscayne Bay adjacent to Bayfront Park, the site of the "Oasis," a sprawl of food concessions, shops (or "bazaars") and other fair-inspired exhibitions like a display of fruit from the Redlands and a photography studio.

from the Sperry Gyroscope Co. in Brooklyn an elaborate Aurora projector, a type of laser machine that spit out streams of colored light as it revolved.

Huge floodlights lit the Garden of Allah. Marching Shriners wore flashing lights, and "Negro" boys carried illuminated palm





The sights and sounds of the Shriner marching band captivated spectators. HASF X-1598-3.

fronds throughout the parade. The pharaoh statues had floodlights in their base, to light their faces. The combination of bold colors, sparkling lights and marching band sounds played powerfully on the senses, sucking spectators into a fantasy world. Press coverage of the parades, with the glow typical of *The Miami Herald* of the '20s, described prominently these elements of color, light and sound in an effort to convey the splendor of it all:

"Stirring Music of Shrine Bands, Soothing Rhythm of Marching Patrols and Gorgeous Hues of Uniform with Atmosphere of Orient All Blend to Make Spectacle Long Remembered.

"The Shriner on parade is like the peacock of dazzling plumage outspread, reflecting the myriad glories of the rainbow, like the mysterious alchemy of a prism that changes the white ray of light into a shower of color.

"The tread of marching feet, the whistle of band directors, the sweet voices of chanters, the honk of automobiles, the hoarse-throated call of arriving steamers arose in one great wave of harmony and enveloped the city. Miami and all the cities of the country merged into one huge, throbbing, vibrant soul."

For the city leaders striving to grow Miami into a thriving metropolis, these orchestrated spectacles were extremely valuable. These parades very effectively stoked the publicity campaigns endeavoring to portray Miami to northern tourists

as one big playground. With this Shriner parade, though, much more was at stake. Not only was this Miami's chance to show off its assets to tens of thousands of prominent businessmen and their wives from all over the country—tens of thousands of potential tourists, investors and residents—it was the city's opportunity to prove it could handle important, national conventions.

Press coverage makes it clear that the Shriner convention carried unique importance to the community and required the cooperation of all. Many *Herald* articles and editorials took the tone of a chief executive explaining a company's business strategy to the workers. For example, from the daily commentary page entitled "In Today's News" came a game plan for how to treat the Shriners to put the city in the best light:

"Assure our visitors of a good time all the time. Let them get sand in their shoes. Forget business and cares. Then talk confidence in the future. Point out the possibilities.

"Emphasize what is being accomplished. Stress the millions of dollars already invested. Note the incomparable location and climate for agriculture, industry, commerce, and as a playground. Shriners are playfellows. They know that a city which can play can also work and progress and succeed. Pat our friends on the back. Shake their hands. And smile."

**The combination of bold colors,  
sparkling lights and  
marching band sounds played  
powerfully on the senses, sucking  
spectators into a fantasy world.**



The extensive media coverage of the convention assured large crowds for the parade. HASF X-1598-2.

Articles continually stressed the city's role as host, the importance of courtesy and of refraining from price gouging. Miamians even were asked to donate their automobiles to transport Shriners on sightseeing trips in a "Give the Nobles a Ride" campaign.

All this good behavior would convey a good impression to the North, as transmitted through news service reports, and show the national business community that Miami could pull off hosting a complicated convention.

It is interesting to note the degree to which the *Herald*, at the time controlled by prominent lawyer and civic booster Frank Shutts, assisted in this effort. Convention coverage blanketed the pages of the newspaper before, during and after the convention. On May 1, 1928, the day of the first Shriner parade, Shriner news dominated the front page with eight additional stories inside.

After the convention, the *Herald* published a letter from a Shriner delegation thanking the paper for "look[ing] after its

interests," by publishing "special" articles and mentions of individual groups. "Miami businessmen no doubt realize the valuable advertising medium they have in the *Herald* and the *Herald* deserves every possible support from Miami citizens."

Indeed, the newspaper during the convention was stuffed with ads welcoming the Shriners, using graphics of camels, sphinxes and Egyptian kings.

More ominously, it's entirely likely that the *Herald* deliberately suppressed important news that would have damaged the city's image during this time of national spotlight. A benign example was the report that 50 parade spectators had suffered from heat prostration. This was a sensitive area for the city, whose stifling heat had been criticized in northern newspapers skeptical of the Miami mystique.

Not only did the *Herald* not report this tidbit, published by a national wire correspondent, it criticized sharply the other local paper, the *Miami Daily News*, on its commentary page





The Shriners rode on horses and wore Arabian costumes to match the convention's theme. HASF X-1598-1.

for "broadcasting an untruth which would naturally injure the city."

A much more troubling possibility is that the *Herald* downplayed racial tensions wracking the community around the time of the Shriner convention. The week before the parade, Miami Police Chief H. Leslie Quigg had been acquitted of murder charges in the 1926 death of a black bellboy. In the wake of unrest over the verdict, a Hallandale black man shot and killed Hallandale Police Chief Phillipp H. Lee, Quigg's brother-in-law, two days before the May 1 convention opening and parade.

Although the Lee murder made the front page April 30, the day before the parade, news of Lee's condition and the after-effects of this shooting was subsequently buried in the inside pages and reported in sketchy detail. This treatment certainly gives the impression that the *Herald* wasn't interested in publishing anything that would "naturally injure the city."

In any case, the favorable treatment did help Miami achieve its goal of attaining national recognition as a convention spot and the city planned for future business, including the Elks convention in July. Shortly after the Shriner convention, the Florida Chamber of Commerce and the Florida Hotel Association—led by a Jacksonville Shriner who attended the convention—planned a meeting to organize a state convention division. And Miami once again had displayed its inexhaustible capacity for pageantry and clarified the importance of pageantry to its civic identity:

"When an organization like the Shrine comes to our city and inoculates the community with the carnival spirit, it is an enriching experience for all of us, and one which is of certain benefit ...Exhibitions such as this take the edge off of the banality of our daily life. They broaden the extent of our imagination and they enliven our fancy. These spectacles provide us with agreeable memories of music, gay colors and throngs of merry people. And for these benefits we are grateful to our late guests, the Shriners."—*SFH*

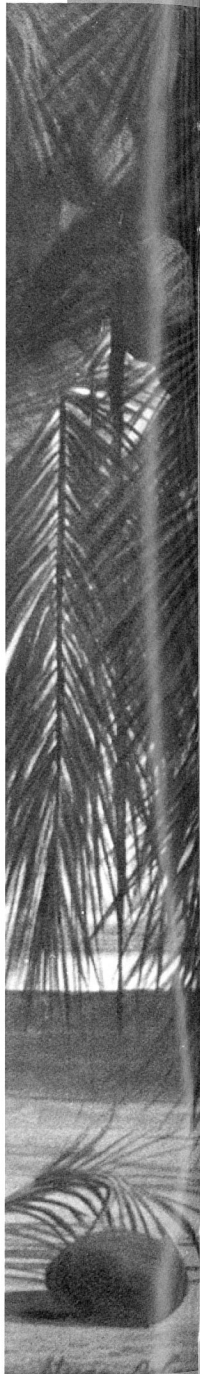
# THE BAREFOOT MAILMAN

## A Job That Became a Legend

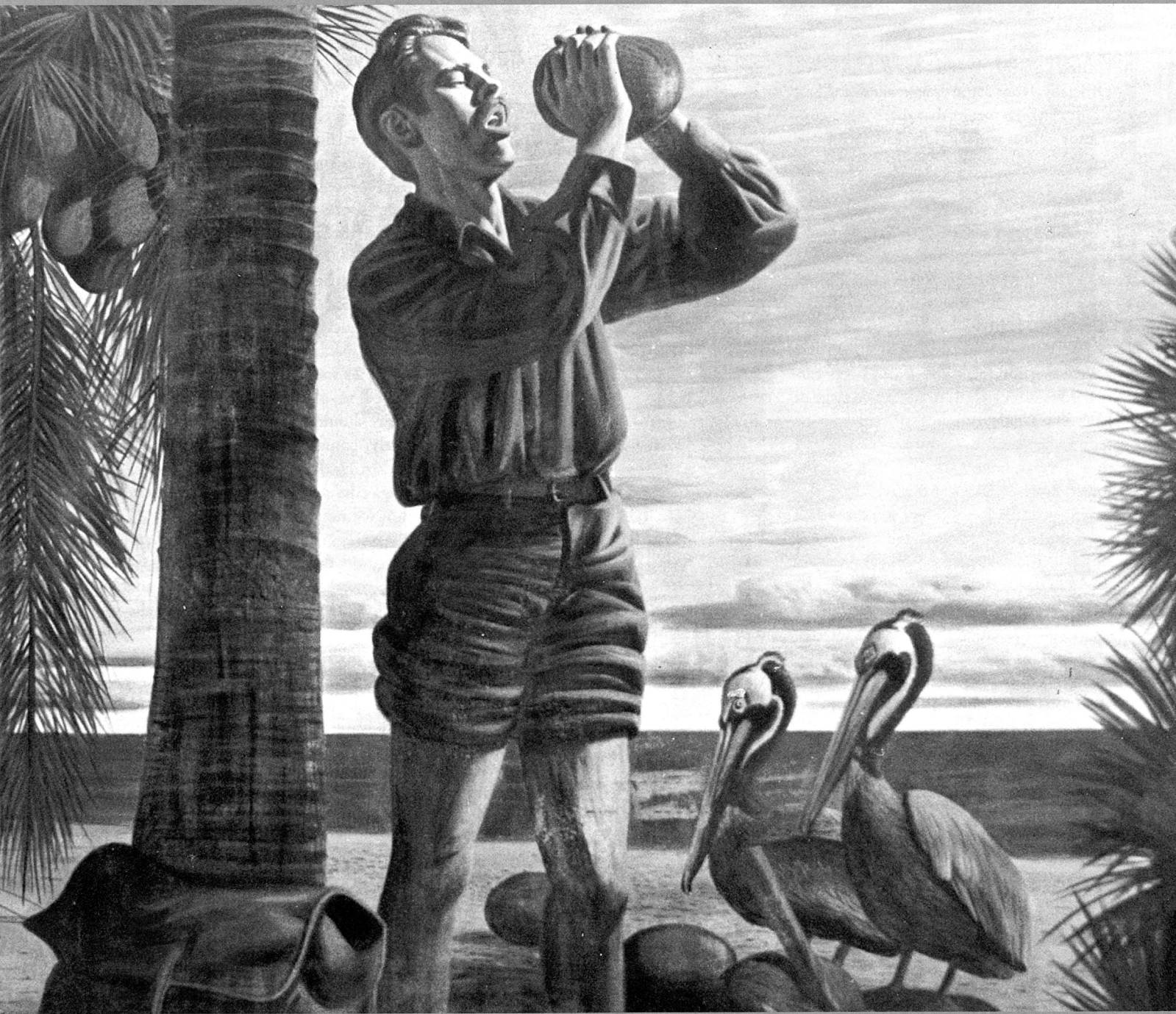
by Harvey E. Oyer, III

**I**n the 1870s and early 1880s, for the few pioneer settlers living in what would become Palm Beach County, incoming and outgoing mail service was inconsistent and painfully slow.

A letter mailed from Palm Beach and bound for Miami would be taken north to Jacksonville by sailboat, across Florida to Cedar Key by rail, down the Gulf Coast of Florida by steamer to Key West, and, finally, by schooner to Miami. This laborious process consumed two to three weeks. Getting mail from Miami to Palm Beach was even more troublesome and time-consuming. A letter sent from Miami would travel by steamer to Key West, then by sailboat to Cuba, then onto a larger vessel bound for New York, then south to Jacksonville and Titusville. If a trustworthy person was traveling south, he would be asked to bring the mail for the Palm Beach area with him and deliver it upon arrival. This process took upwards of two months and covered an astounding 3,000 miles despite the fact that Palm Beach is only about 68 miles from Miami.







Part of Stevan Dohanos' mural painted in 1940 on the wall of the old downtown West Palm Beach Post Office. HASF X-485-X.

As more settlers moved to the area in the early 1880s, pressure mounted for more reliable mail service between Palm Beach and Miami. From this demand was born the unique Barefoot Mail Route, one of the most legendary mail routes in United States Postal Service history. Officially, the route was called a "Star Route," which meant that there was a contractor who, with a low bid, won the responsibility of providing a letter carrier and overseeing the route. Only much later, in the 1940s, after the publication of Theodore Pratt's book *Barefoot Mailman* and the Columbia Pictures movie by the same name, did the carrier of the route begin being referred to as the "Barefoot Mailman."

The mail would arrive in Jupiter via boat down the Indian River and was carried seven miles south to Juno by a stage or hack line (mule and wagon) and later by rail. From Juno, the mail was transferred to a sailboat, later a steamer, that traveled south down Lake Worth (which was a twenty-six mile fresh water lake, extending from Juno on the north to where Boynton Beach is today on the south. It predated the Intracoastal Waterway). When the barefoot route began in 1885, the letter carrier had to go to the Palm Beach Post Office to pick up the mail destined for Miami. The following year, the route was shortened by 10 miles when the Hypoluxo Post Office was established and became the departure point for the route.

Beginning on a Monday, from either Palm Beach or Hypoluxo, the carrier would sail south down Lake Worth to the foot of the lake, approximately where the Boynton Inlet is today, walk over the beach dune, and travel south by foot to the Orange Grove House of Refuge which was located approximately 100 yards north of the intersection of A1A and Atlantic Avenue in present-day Delray Beach.

After spending the night at the Orange Grove House, the carrier would walk seven miles to the Hillsboro Inlet, cross the inlet in a small wooden skiff owned by the postal service, then continue walking for 18 more miles to the New River House of Refuge, located near present-day Hugh

Taylor Birch State Park in Fort Lauderdale, where he would spend his second night.

The carrier would begin the third morning by rowing four miles down the New River to the original New River Inlet and then walking 10 miles to the top of

The life of a  
barefoot mailman was  
physically demanding.  
Only the most athletic  
young men were capable  
of making the long trek,  
constantly battling the  
elements of wind, rain,  
hurricanes, the blistering  
hot sun, mosquitoes and  
wild animals.

Biscayne Bay. After crossing over the beach dune at Baker's Haulover, the carrier had 12 miles to travel by boat to Fort Dallas at the south end of Biscayne Bay. If the carrier had a favorable wind, he could sail the length of the bay. If not, he was forced to row the 12 miles.

Fort Dallas was the county seat of Dade County and was located approximately where the DuPont Plaza Hotel is on the north side of the mouth of the Miami River. After delivering the mail from Palm

Beach and collecting the mail from Fort Dallas, the carrier spent the third night at the Brickell home and trading post located across the Miami River from Fort Dallas. Beginning the morning of the fourth day, the carrier started his long journey back to Lake Worth.

In all, the barefoot mailman covered 136 miles round-trip (80 by foot and 56 by water) in six days, rested on Sunday, and then started anew on Monday, for a total of approximately 8,000 miles per year. If the carrier was late or failed to deliver the mail, he was docked a portion of his \$600 annual salary.

The carriers walked barefoot along the water's edge with their pants rolled up, their shoes hanging around their neck, and a mailbag measuring approximately 18 by 24 inches folded in the middle and placed in a waterproof sack slung over their shoulders. The mailbag probably rarely contained more than 20 letters and sometimes some newspapers and magazines sent by relatives or friends in the North.

The life of a barefoot mailman was physically demanding. Only the most athletic young men were capable of making the long trek, constantly battling the elements of wind, rain, hurricanes, the blistering hot sun, mosquitoes and wild animals. The barefoot mailmen used caves along the beach dune as shelter and had fresh water supplies hidden along the way.

Aside from the physical toll that the barefoot route took on the carriers, loneliness was also an issue. Periodically, the barefoot mailmen would take "passengers" for a fee ranging from \$2 to \$5. There are many stories of annoyed barefoot mailmen having to stop too frequently because passengers could not keep pace or because mailmen had to carry the luggage of their passengers.

James E. ("Ed") Hamilton, a 32-year-old man who moved from Trigg County, Kentucky, to Hypoluxo in 1885, won the contract to carry the mail along the barefoot route beginning in 1886. Hamilton was apparently tired of trying to make ends meet by farming and thought he could earn a better living on the mail carrier's salary. Of all the carriers who worked





# CURRENTS

THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA UPDATE

Miami-Dade Cultural Center • 101 West Flagler Street, Miami, FL • 305.375.1492 • [www.historical-museum.org](http://www.historical-museum.org) • Fall/Winter 2000

## Sixth Annual *Historic Pursuit* Limo Rally

On November 4, more than 170 participants cruised for clues throughout Miami Beach and Miami during the Sixth Annual Historic Pursuit Limo Rally. Limo Rally is a fund raiser/scavenger hunt and progressive cocktail party. Players board limos on their quest for historic answers, enjoying complimentary drinks and hors d'oeuvres at Miami's hot spots.

This year, the event began with a pre-party at the Albion Hotel on South Beach. After boarding their limos, participants made stops at Studio, the Marlin, Big Fish and Gordon Biersch. Among other things, participants had to karaoke at Studio and dance the polka at Gordon Biersch. The night ended with a post-party at Level, one of South Beach's hottest clubs.

Successfully defending their title, team FPL in Limo #2 came in first place with 113 points out of a possible 150 points.

Congratulations to team members Willie and Linda Ho, Garland and Alice Culbreath, Walt and Darlene Danielewski, Eddie and Karen Otto and Eddy and Rosi Prieto.

1. Julia Brown, Liz Sarachek, Julie Basulto, Sharon Thompson

2. Michael Apfel, Tamara Sisler, Max Strang

3. Adriana Fundora, Hugo Alvarez, Vivian de las Cuevas, Alex Glavez, Frank Fernandez, Lisa Devel

4. Linda Ho, Willie Ho, Rosi Prieto, Karen & Eddie Otto

The Tropees would like to thank the following for their sponsorship and support:

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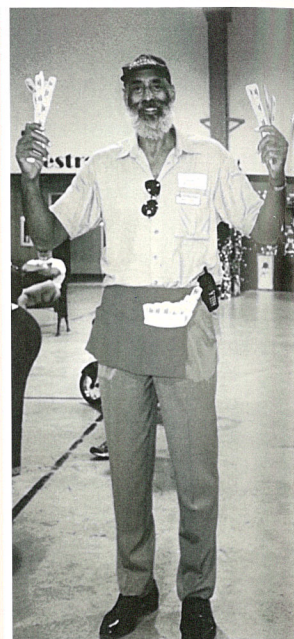


*A South Florida tradition to benefit the Historical Museum of Southern Florida*

In November, more than 15,000 people enjoyed this year's Harvest Festival. The two-day event featured over 300 fine craft booths, antiques, historical reenactments, children's activities, musical performances, delicious foods and lots of people.

Congratulations to Zannie Shipley, winner of our 7-day Caribbean cruise for two courtesy of NCL and to Allie Groh, winner of our Rolling with History contest and a brand new Razor Scooter from the Sharper Image.

Thanks to the efforts of all involved, Harvest was a huge success.



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Patrick Blanchard  
Robert Blanchard  
Kateri Davis  
Jean & Maurice Hawa  
Sam LaRoue  
Doug Loria  
Denise Paparella  
Donna Mansolillo

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Judy Wiggins  
Mack Wiggins

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Augie Artiles  
Raul Martinez, Jr.  
Mark Karris  
Richard Wood  
Scott Poulin  
Julie Tatol  
Maribel Urrutia





# Get Scrooged!



The Tropees celebrated the holidays with their annual Scrooge Holiday Party on December 6. Two-hundred and fifty guests enjoyed delicious hors d'oeuvres, cocktails and the music of Tony Hayes at the Chart House Restaurant.

This year's Scrooge Party also served as an opportunity to thank all of the Harvest volunteers who donated their time to make Harvest a success. The Tropees would like to thank the Chart House Restaurant, Curbside Florist, Sutter Home Wines and Cerveza La Tropical.



1. Judith Mentor, Diaka Tarrt
2. April Drayton, Gloria Perez, Augie Ariles, Mayra Rodriguez, Rey Rodriguez
3. Bruce Matheson, Chuck Blanchard, Sheila Blanchard, Judy Wiggins
4. Ana Herrera, HMSF Community Relations Coordinator; Andy Brian, HMSF President & CEO; Raul Martinez, Jr., Tropee Executive Committee Chair.
5. Bill Holly, Angela Bellamy, Neil Burell

# Bah Humbug!



# World Beat Camp-In

## A Night of Afro-Caribbean Drumming




In December, the Historical Museum of Southern Florida partnered with the Performing Arts Center of Greater Miami and the Texaco Foundation to present a series of World Beat Camp-Ins, which gave students the chance to spend the night in the museum learning percussion techniques and playing on drums of their own.


Inspired by the exhibition *Ritmos de Identidad: Fernando Ortiz's Legacy and the Howard Family Collection of Percussion Instruments*, the three Camp-Ins provided a unique learning experience for 215 elementary, middle and high school students.

The Camp-Ins featured a performance by recording artist Michael Moses and his group Rivers of Time and hands-on drumming instruction by Macobi Village. Students also enjoyed meeting peers with similar interests and creating their own crafts. Participants at each Camp-In had a chance to win a beautiful conga, djembe, or set of bongos donated by Remo, Inc. and Toca Percussion. Educational materials were provided by Remo, Inc., the Percussion Marketing Council, the Percussive Arts Society, and were also developed by the museum's education staff.

Scholarships were awarded to students from Rainbow Park Elementary School, Perrine Elementary School, Jose de Diego Middle School, Lake Stevens Middle School, Barbara Goldman High School, Miami Southridge High School, Miami Parks and Recreation and Shake-a-leg Miami. The Texaco Foundation, Performing Arts Center of Greater Miami, and the Historical Museum's Board of Trustees generously sponsored scholarships.



Students shared a unique overnight adventure at the Historical Museum's World Beat Camp-Ins.



Right—Andy Brian and Stacey de la Grana of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida receive a \$5,000 Musical Roots Grant from Megan Robinson (far right), Program Associate for the Texaco Foundation.







Above—The barefoot mailman would spend his second night of journey at the New River House of Refuge. Fort Lauderdale Historical Society # 5-383, ca. 1900. Below—Baker's Haulover, part of the legendary mail route. HASF 2000-328-5.





Out of loneliness, the barefoot mailman took on passengers. Part of Stevan Dohanos' mural painted in 1940 on the wall of the old downtown West Palm Beach Post Office. HASF X-485-X.

the barefoot route, Hamilton is the most famous because he died in the line of duty.

On October 10, 1887, Hamilton made his usual departure from Hypoluxo and headed south to the Orange Grove House of Refuge. After spending the night at Orange Grove, Hamilton walked south to the Hillsboro Inlet only to find that the rowboat owned by the federal government was on the other side of the inlet.

The boat presumably was taken by a stranger who traveled south along the beach several days earlier and was warned not to use the boat. The man was later caught and tried but not convicted of any crime. It is presumed that Hamilton attempted to swim the inlet and retrieve

the boat. He either drowned or was attacked by sharks or alligators.

When Hamilton failed to return the following week, this author's great-great uncle, Charles W. Pierce, "Uncle Charlie," and Orange Grove House of Refuge Keeper Stephen Andrews walked down the beach retracing Hamilton's path. On the north side of the Hillsboro Inlet, they found the mail sack and Hamilton's clothes hanging in a tree and the boat still on the south side of the inlet.

The two men surmised that Hamilton had hung the mail and his clothes in the tree so that they would remain dry while he attempted to swim the inlet and retrieve the boat. Some contemporary accounts concluded that



Hamilton drowned. However, Uncle Charlie, a close friend of Hamilton, states in his book *Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida* that Hamilton was an excellent swimmer, that the inlet was not very wide, and that it was not a very difficult swim for a man of Hamilton's age and physical condition.

Moreover, Uncle Charlie noted that due to recent heavy rains, typical for South Florida in October, the waters of the inlet had swelled with fresh water running in from the Everglades. Hundreds of alligators were in and around the Hillsboro Inlet during the days surrounding Hamilton's disappearance. Uncle Charlie was convinced that alligators killed Hamilton.

Today, a four-lane bridge that carries more passengers over the inlet per hour than used to pass over it in a year spans the Hillsboro Inlet. In 1937, the Lake Worth Pioneer Association laid a bronze tablet beneath the Hillsboro Lighthouse, overlooking the site where Hamilton lost his life, which bears the inscription:

"THE MAIL MUST GO"

In Memory of James E. Hamilton, U. S. Mail Carrier who lost his life in line of duty, October 11, 1887. Erected by Lake Worth Pioneer Association, 1937."

In the late 1960s, the Estahakee Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution erected another memorial to Hamilton along the beach at Spanish River Park in Boca Raton.

In 1885, E.R. Bradley, no relation to the gambling casino operator by the same name, took the first job as carrier. He carried the mail every other week, alternating with his teenage son Louis. It is also believed that his even younger son, Guy, later a famous game warden killed in the line of duty in Everglades National Park, also may have carried the mail on occasion at the tender age of 15.

After a year of service by the Bradleys the mail contract went to Hamilton. Upon Hamilton's death, the contract went to Uncle Charlie and Andrew Garnett. This is because Uncle Charlie and Garnett had signed Hamilton's bond, agreeing to fulfill Hamilton's contractual commit-



It is presumed that James E. Hamilton, the barefoot mailman in 1887, died while trying to swim across the Hillsboro Inlet in order to reach his boat.

FLHS # 5-274, ca. 1930s.

ments if he should ever fail to do so.

After Hamilton's death, Uncle Charlie and Garnett were thrust into the role of mail carrier regardless of whether they genuinely wanted the job. The two men alternated carrying the mail until Hamilton's contract expired.

Other men who carried the mail along the barefoot route included Dan McCarley of Lantana, John Halstad, and Henry J. Burkhardt of the well-known Burkhardt pioneer family of West Palm Beach. Burkhardt, the last of the barefoot mailmen, was, as legend had it, one of the area's early naturalists and used to carry the mail naked. Because the mail carrier rarely encountered another person along the route, this indiscretion was not a problem.

The barefoot route era drew to a close in 1893 when a hack line running from Lemon City, now part

of Miami, to Lantana was completed so that mail could be transported through the interior of the mainland.

Along with the book, movie, and historic markers, the legacy of the Barefoot Mailman lives on in South Florida in the form of billboards, postcards, and local folklore. There was even a gift store in the Palm Beach Mall called the "Barefoot Mailman." In addition, in 1940, as part of the New Deal era Works Progress Administration Art Project, Stevan Dohanos, an artist who painted over 100 covers of the Saturday Evening Post, was hired to paint a mural of the barefoot mailman on the wall of the old downtown West Palm Beach Post Office, located on Olive Avenue. It is believed that Uncle Charlie's likeness was the model for Dohanos' depiction of the Barefoot Mailman.

When the Post Office was moved to its Clematis Street location, the mural was carefully removed and framed into six separate paintings. The paintings remained in the Clematis Street Post Office until 1985 when the General Mail Facility at the corner of Summit Boulevard and Congress Avenue opened. The paintings are still on display at the General Mail Facility. —SFH

# A Tribute to VICTOR CHAPMAN

## Namesake of South Dade WWI Airfield

by Raymond G. McGuire



Victor Chapman, French Legionnaire, 1914. Reprinted from *Victor Chapman's Letters from France*, by John Jay Chapman, 1917, The MacMillan Co., New York.

**The name Chapman Field still conjures images of swift Piper Cubs, of winter bombing practice over the bay, and of Col. Robert Montgomery's efforts to halt these aeronautical maneuvers.** The Colonel's point of view eventually won out as the neighboring pinelands were housed over, and now, more than 50 years after the last airplanes departed its runways, which were dredged from the mangrove swamps beside Biscayne Bay, few traces remain of the former army airbase. Developed in 1918 as the U.S. Army Signal Corps' Cutler Aerial Gunnery Field and bounded by what would become 144th Street, 67th Avenue, and Old Cutler Road, the base was renamed the Victor Chapman Military Reservation in honor of the first U.S. airman killed in France during World War I.

As a scientist at the USDA's Subtropical Horticulture Research Station at Chapman Field, I have wondered who this man is, but he had already been dead for seven years when Dr. David Fairchild sought out this property in 1923 as an introduction garden for the plant material he and other plant explorers shipped to Florida from around the world. Not even a picture of this war hero could be found in our archives, but to air buffs of World War I, Victor Chapman's story lives on. His name can be found in the writings of many aviation historians of the period, but two of the best references include *Lafayette Escadrille Pilot Biographies* by Dennis Gordon (The Doughboy Historical Society, Missoula, MT, 1991), and *Victor Chapman's Letters from France*, compiled by his father, John Jay Chapman (The Macmillan Co., 1917), from which passages are quoted.



## INTO THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION

Victor Emmanuel Chapman was born in New York City on April 17, 1890, the son of Minna (Timmins) Chapman and John Jay Chapman, lawyer and Harvard professor of literature. In an age when New York and Boston society set the course for the nation, young Victor's future seemed assured. His grandfather was the president of the New York Stock Exchange, and he was descended from the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Victor's childhood was shaped by two tragic losses. At the age of six, his mother, from whom Victor was inseparable, died giving birth to a second younger brother. The boy's melancholy evolved into self-sufficiency and fostered deep loyalty to those who made a commitment to befriend him. His father would later write: "There was from his infancy to his death something about him of silence, mystery, godhead. He continued to the end of his life to make the sign of the cross in saying the same prayers that she had taught him, which ended with the phrase 'and make me a big soldier of Jesus Christ who is the Lord and Light of the world.' He folded his hands like a crusader as he said them. He was a part of the middle ages in this piety. His tiny trench-Bible, which was full of pressed flowers and kodaks of his friends, was so much a miniature copy of his mother's Bible that the little book seemed like the baby of the big one."

The second great loss, for which Victor blamed himself, was the death of his brother Jay when the boys were 12 and 10, respectively. They had been playing together beside a swollen river in the Austrian woods near Gratz when Victor went off on his own for a moment. Just as he returned, he watched, unable to help, as Jay tumbled into the water, where he drowned in the current.

Though powerless to save his brother, Victor thereafter seemed to seek out life-threatening situations to atone for his earlier failure. Only danger, it was said, or the threat of it, brought him completely to life, and he constantly put himself into harm's way. Victor studied at schools in Concord, Germany, France, and Boston before entering Harvard University in 1909 and graduating with an A.B. in 1913. Said his father, "He had no aptitude for sports, none for books, none for music; but always a deep passion for color and scenery, and a real talent for all forms of decoration, which we hoped would lead him toward painting or architecture." Immediately following graduation, Victor sailed to Paris to prepare for admission to the Beaux Arts Academy.

Then, in August of 1914, Germany declared war, and France mobilized against invasion. When Victor presented his father with his intentions to enlist for France, the senior Chapman vehemently disapproved. Through the intervention of his step-mother, though, Victor soon enlisted and, at the age of 24,

became a private in the Third Marching Regiment of the First Foreign Regiment of the Foreign Legion. Training the first few weeks included longer and longer marches outside Paris. He wrote, "The rising mists on the Seine valley were very soft as they rolled over the poplars. Then we came to level lands, wholesale market-gardens, and the companies tried to maneuver without destroying the turnips, carrots and cabbages—a very unsuccessful procedure. We rambled across the cultivated potatoes ahead of the column, and picked up an apple or two besides eating some grapes. The midday rest was very delightful. Though we only cooked coffee it looked like a true bivouac. The Italians in the third company sang the Marseillaise and a number of Neapolitan songs, while some Russians in another group did some fancy dancing."

Since mid-October Victor had been trying to get himself transferred out of infantry into a gunnery unit, which he thought to be more immediately valuable to the war effort. Toward the end of November the transfer came, and he was made pointer. Within three days his battalion was on the move. From Laignèveville, "We marched on happily singing 'La Guerre est déclarée' and so impressed the Colonel that he is putting us at the *tête* tomorrow...We are now in country traversed by Germans, and passed through Creil on a pontoon bridge and saw twenty-odd houses in ruins—the result of German shells."

Victor reached the trenches near Frise the third week in December 1914, and was soon wounded in the right arm by a rifle bullet. Within a few weeks the novelty of army life had worn off. On February 10, 1915, he wrote, "The boring part of this life

is that it is only ideal for a boy of fifteen. The first three weeks we lived under awful deprivations, so that all vestiges of civilization dropped from us. Washing never, change of clothes rare, once a week if lucky, undress never except to change. It was forbidden, mind you, to sleep with one's shoes off."

Despite filth and dysentery, he maintained his enthusiasm. Victor described for his father how he was "generally living a happy-go-lucky, hand-to-mouth existence," and he took care to downplay his experiences under enemy fire. "The tap, tap of Boches' bullets on the face of my abri in the evening affects me about as much as the lap, lap of little waves against the side of my sail boat...The rumble of distant artillery passes unnoticed, and but mild curiosity is aroused by the chug-chug-chug of a machine gun as of a steam-motor boat rounding a bend."

For nearly three months Victor's battalion remained in the forward trenches without a break. While no attacks were launched by either side, his battalion was continually under fire and suffered many killed and wounded from barrages and enemy sniping. During this time, he distributed money sent by his

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wealthy family to provide basic necessities in the camp and was soon affectionately known as “the American millionaire.” Victor would often make the dangerous trek into no-man’s land to rescue comrades, and when a particularly close friend was mortally wounded, he offered a battle surgeon 100,000 francs to save the man’s life.

Relieved behind the lines in April, Victor wrote, “I ask myself time and again whether I am doing all I can here and getting out of it the uttermost. Also, whether I would be better elsewhere. I am very tempted to catch at any straw to put myself in a position where I can do more than vegetate and make myself proficient in

soldiers, etc., not so much the first day or the second, but the hundred and second.”

Within a few days, the battalion was reassigned to the trenches at Bas, near Amiens. Victor wrote May 14, “A curious effect these trenches give when seen from the normal ground-level and not six feet under. Irregular hummocks of turned earth, zigzag moles of brown soil, and in between rows of beet roots with green grass luxuriantly sprouting in spots. The whole seems to have no depth at all, like a plan of a maze on a piece of paper.” He filled his time writing and reading the newspapers and books (their arrival was the event of the day) sent by his father and uncles; “I read Lamb



Victor Chapman (back row, center) with fellow French Legionnaires on leave in Paris, July 7, 1915. Photo reproduced from *America in the War, The Vanguard of American Volunteers in the Fighting Lines and in Humanitarian Service*, August, 1914–April, 1917, by Edwin W. Morse, 1919, C. Scribner’s Sons, New York.

the wily art of breaking the rules without being caught as a schoolboy. I think it only natural that one should be more intellectually bored and fatigued en repos than in the trenches where one is filling at least a potential function. ‘In case of attack’ one would be of use. I suppose what I crave is intercourse. It takes two to enjoy the scene, to study the character of the

and have attacked *The Autocrat*. One has to eat such a lot to get a little nutrition that even a pig’s time is not worth it.”

To his father, June 2, 1915, “Thank you ever so much for the letter describing in detail all the anti-gas inventions as yet devised. I am greatly impressed by this expression of paternal affection. Of course I carry in the back of my head the belief that this regiment



will never be in danger from the deadly clouds.” And to his step-mother, “To sit here week after week reading essays and taking a mild interest in the war without any outlet or relief . . . is nothing more or less than prison life. It comes down to this: From the outside point of view I have done a ‘noble’ act and perhaps garnered honor in so doing. But from the practical point of view I have thrown away ten months of my life, neither helped the French nor injured the Germans.”

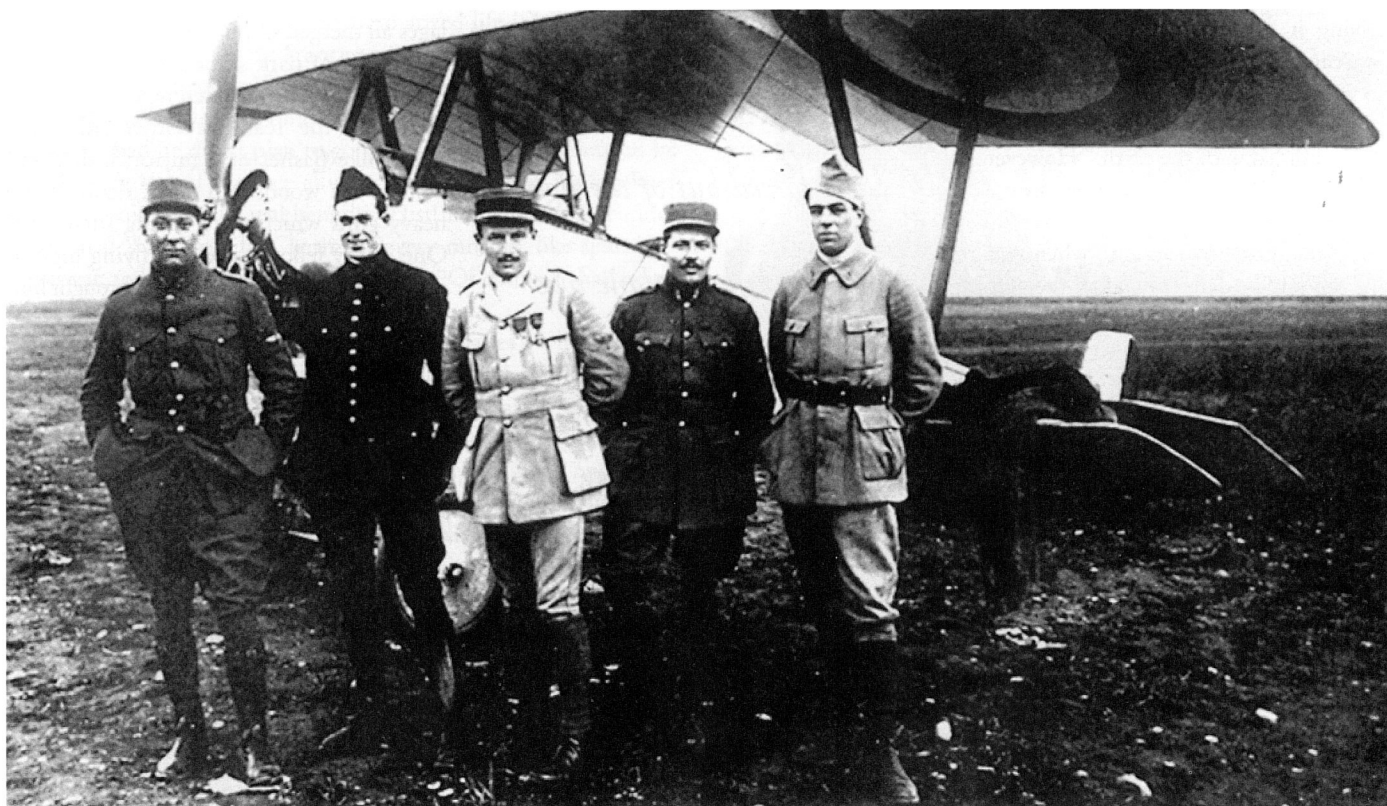
To serve some greater purpose in the war, Victor had sent a note a few months earlier to fellow American Norman Prince when he had learned that Prince was trying to establish an American Air Corps. Nothing seemed to come of that, and Victor was eventually sent to Montbeliard with his battalion to be absorbed by the decimated *2me de Marche*. He was surprised, then, when on August 1, 1915, the news reached him that he was to be transferred to French aviation. Victor concluded his eleven months of service in the Legion having seen one-half of his unit either killed or seriously wounded. His courage and cheerfulness had won him the admiration of both officers and enlisted men, and he departed their company “with many *adieux* and five fellows helping me on with my sack.”

#### ESCADRILLE AMERICAINE

From Malzéville, awaiting assignment to flight school, Victor Chapman made his first flight across German lines as a *bombardier* in a mission to Diligen and described events in a letter to

his brother Conrad. “This” [loading the projectile] “is by far the most difficult operation, for the 155 shell with its tin tail looking like a torpedo four feet long, is hung under the body and without seeing its nose even one has to reach down in front of the pilot, put the *detonateur* in, then the *percuter* and screw it fast. After which I pulled off a safety device. You can imagine how I scrambled round in a fur coat and two pair of leather trousers and squeezed my hand down the hole . . . We were just passing over the river Saar by Pachtten. Everything on the detail map was red. I still have scruples about dropping on dwelling houses—they might be Alsatians. Right under us was a great junction of railroad lines, tracks and sidings. ‘That’s a go,’ I thought, and pulled the handle when it came in the sighter. A slight sway and below me the blue gray shell poised and dipped its head. Straight away and then it seemed motionless. Pretty soon its tail began to wag in small circles and then I lost sight of it over some treetops. ‘Pshaw,’ I thought, ‘there it’s going to fall on its side, and into a garden. *Tant pis!*’ When all at once, in the middle of the railroad tracks, a cloud of black smoke which looked big even from 2400 metres. The Lieutenant said afterwards that I rocked the whole ship when I saw where it had fallen.”

Describing the view on the way home, “From a good altitude the country looks like nothing so much as a rich old Persian carpet. Where the fields are cultivated one sees the soil now a rich pinky red fading into a light yellow, or running into dark browns. The green fields, oblong patches and the brick-roofed villages like



Victor Chapman (far right) with other members of the American Escadrille in 1916. From the James Rogers McConnell Memorial Collections (#2104), Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.

figures on the carpets connected by threads of roads and rivers; superposed upon it here and there in big and little patches—always with straight edges—are the woods, a dull, darkish green, for they are pine woods. In the direction of the sun the bits of water shine silver. In the opposite direction they are blue, but the darkest objects to be seen—making the woods seem pale in contrast.”

Victor entered the School of Military Aviation at Avord in September and initially trained on the Morane monoplane, at first simply rolling around the field and attempting to maintain a straight line. Small jumps led within days to long leaps and bounds into the air, then he and classmates flew with veterans in double command trainers. But because he was said to have a “hard hand,” Victor continued his training on the Maurice Farman biplane. In November he was released from double command and given a 1913 model to share with four others. “‘It holds together because it has the habit,’ was the opinion among us *élèves*. Whenever I changed a piano cord I felt that I ought to get a thin rusty one so as not to over-balance or insult it. Day before yesterday it died in harness, and just as completely as the shay. One of the little tail rudders is the only distinguishable feature. The rest is *débris* in the general outline of an aeroplane...It wasn’t the fault of age, that accident however. The poor fellow driving it *piqué*d from some 300 metres and came down vertically. Not a thing to do with biplanes—they get ‘engaged’ and it is very difficult to change their direction—so he collided with the earth.” However, he wrote to his parents, who apparently worried about his safety, “It is easier to pilot an aeroplane than drive an auto when you get on, and far less dangerous than the autoing I used to do daily at Cambridge.” And, “Besides, I have moved on to the 14 model machines which are newer and far more responsive to handle.” He received his *brevet militaire* on the Maurice Farman in January 1916, then continued to train through mid-April on a variety of planes, including the Nieuport.

With his uncle William Astor Chanler, one of the founding members of the Franco-American Flying Corps, and another uncle, Robert Chanler, using his financial and political influence with the French government to aid the establishment of an American fighting squadron, Victor could expect to be assigned to the newly formed *Escadrille Americaine*, N. 124. The unit of five Americans with two

French officers was based at Luxeuil les Bains, a spa from Roman times, with each man in the *escadrille de chasse*, or attack squadron, assigned one of the Nieuports. Victor wrote, “We are finely situated in this *ville-d’eaux*—eat at the best hotel in town with our officers, live in a ‘villa’ on the hill with an ordnance to clean up, and bathe and drink hot waters.” Waiting for the planes to arrive, the men were chauffeured about the countryside to become familiar with the landmarks, in case it should become necessary to make emergency landings.

Victor’s father noted that his entry into the American Escadrille was the consummate moment in Victor’s life, when he was finally transformed into the knight he had sought to become, completely fulfilled and happy. Toward mid-May, preparations were completed, and Victor and his mates made their first patrol across enemy lines in search of German planes.

After a short familiarization period at Luxeuil, the squadron was transferred May 20, 1916, to Behonne in the Verdun Sector. The pilots were to protect allied observation planes and artillery as part of a great French counteroffensive. “When the weather permits we fly high and low over that smouldering inferno which has been raging since February...The landscape—one wasted surface of brown powdered earth, where hills, valleys, forest, and villages all merged in phantoms—was boiling with puffs of dark smoke. Even above my engine’s roar I could catch reports now and then...To the rear, on either side, tiny sparks like flashes of a mirror, hither and yon, in the woods and dales, denoted the heavy guns which were raising such dust. One of my fellows who was flying high to protect us, fell upon a Boche and brought him down. I think it must be my turn soon.”

On patrol May 24, Victor Chapman began building his reputation as an intrepid fighter who attacked German aircraft whenever and wherever he found them, regardless of the circumstances. Near Etrien, on a scouting expedition along the length of the Verdun Sector, his formation espied twelve German biplanes flying above their own lines. Being undiscovered, the squadron’s Captain hoped to avoid confrontation, feeling the enemy’s numbers were too great to provoke, but Chapman broke out of formation and dived to the attack. He fired upon a Fokker that was seen to fall out of control, and a fierce combat soon raged from a height of 4,000 meters. Outnumbered three-to-one,

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### REQUIESCAT IN PACE

In the month since the American Escadrille was transferred to Behonne to support the battle at Verdun, the number of air missions set a frantic pace. Every day that the weather was good, three-man patrols left every three hours through mid-afternoon, giving each pilot a chance to fly twice a day. Victor Chapman couldn't have been happier. To his father he wrote, "This flying is much too romantic to be modern war with all its horrors. There is something so unreal and fairy about it, which ought to be told and described by poets." He wrote of the open sky as though it were a frog pond and of his maneuvers among the clouds like those of some predator through the thick water plants—the different aircraft like skates or other prey, or, when high above, "dark specks resembling the larvae one sees in brackish water." Victor wrote to his stepmother, "Clouds are not thin pieces of blotting paper, but a liquid, ceaselessly changing stream. I played hide-and-seek in and out of them yesterday; sometimes flat blankets like melting snow on either side below me, or again, like great ice floes with distant bergs looming up, and 'open water' near at hand, blue as a moonstone cloud, floating full, for all the world like a giant jelly-fish." Reporters dramatized life in the squadron in newspapers throughout France and America, creating a notoriety that made the pilots feel awkward around their French counterparts. Victor's letters home downplayed events but noted that it was too bad he didn't plan to go into politics after the war so he could make use of the free advertising. He figured his younger brothers would get the real benefit: "Hist! Dat guy has a brudder in the real War. He kills Chermans every mornin' like sparrers." However, to his Uncle Willy he confided, "Of course I shall never come out of this alive."

June 14, 1916 was overcast, keeping the planes on the ground; "I sit in an upper window with waves of leaden clouds drifting by, and the indefatigable graphophone churns out some vulgar tune below, and the other 'heroes' play poker, and the Captain practices scales on the piano. It is disintegrating to mind and body, this continued inertia." The weather cleared, and on June 17, Victor Chapman and others were patrolling along the Meuse River when they spotted a formation of German aircraft on the opposite bank. Chapman's passion for combat had become ungovernable. Without hesitation he disobeyed his Captain's explicit orders not to cross the Meuse and dove to the attack, dragging the rest of the patrol into the maelstrom.

The engagement was indecisive, and all returned to Behonne except Victor who refueled nearby then returned to the lines. He attacked two German Aviatiks and sent one earthward in flames before three escorting Fokker fighters he had failed to see realized an attack was being pressed by a single Nieuport. Although

stunned by the boldness of the American's solo attack, the Germans quickly regrouped, then swooped in on Chapman from all directions, raking his fuselage with intense fire.

Chapman refused to disengage from the fight and was fitting a new magazine into his Lewis gun when a bullet severed his right aileron control rod then ricocheted into the cockpit. That same bullet then sliced through Victor's helmet and deeply creased his skull. Bloodied and dazed, his machine gun empty, Chapman finally decided to abandon the fight. By feigning death and allowing his Nieuport to spin earthward, he tricked the Germans into forsaking further combat. Then, out of harm's way, he reestablished control of his fighter by gathering the severed ends of the control rod in his fists and manipulating the joystick between his knees. After lunch and repairs to his plane at a neighboring airfield, and a bandage for his bleeding skull, he returned to Behonne. Kiffin Rockwell, who had started the patrol that day with Chapman, wrote to his brother and described Victor's reckless behavior. "Chapman has been a little too courageous and got me into one of the mess-ups because I couldn't stand back and see him get it alone. He was attacking all the time, without paying much attention. He did the same thing this morning and wouldn't come home when the rest of us did. The result was that he attacked one German, and then a Fokker got full on Chapman's back, shot his machine to pieces, and wounded Chapman in the head."



Victor Chapman after his encounter with German airmen over Verdun, June 17, 1916. From *Victor Chapman's Letters from France*, by John Jay Chapman, 1917, The MacMillan Co., New York.

Victor refused Capitaine Thenault's and his squadron mates' pleas to go to the hospital and seek treatment for his wound. In return for the Captain's bribe of a new plane, however, he agreed to rest a few days and drifted around the aerodrome seeing to the readiness of his new fighter.

Horace Clyde Balsley became the first of the squadron's American pilots to be seriously wounded in aerial combat on June 18. A bullet had smashed his right pelvic bone and perforated his intestines, and his doctors restricted his intake of fluids to only what he could suck from a wet bandage. A burning thirst unbearable, however, and Chapman suggested that he be allowed to suck the juice of oranges instead. Although no oranges could be found in the village, the doctor agreed, and an undaunted Chapman promised to return with the fruit if he had to fly all the way to Paris. Everyday thereafter, Chapman appeared at Balsley's side with a fresh bag of oranges. On June 23, however, Victor failed to appear, and another pilot came in his place telling Balsley that Chapman's plane had broken down.

In truth, Victor had been on his way to Balsley with two bags of oranges when he had seen three squadron mates depart on patrol. Not wanting to miss this opportunity to engage the enemy, Chapman decided to tag along despite the fact that he was not scheduled to participate, intending to visit Balsley afterward. Northeast of Ft. Douaumont the regular patrol ran into five German aircraft, but after a brief combat, the Americans retreated back across the French lines.

Unknown to the patrol, from the onset of the combat Chapman was rushing to their assistance. Chapman then stayed to carry the fight to the enemy after the Americans had withdrawn without ever seeing him.

His fate was not learned until hours later when a French crew flying a Maurice Farman artillery-regulating machine returned to their squadron late in the afternoon and telephoned Victor's captain. The Frenchman reported seeing the initial attack by the American group and their withdrawal. But then he reported seeing a fourth

Nieuport dive onto the five Germans from above. Two Germans dived for safety, but three scattered then reformed to draw Victor's plane into a withering crossfire. Chapman, probably killed instantly, fell against the stick, and the stricken plane dived vertically for the earth from 10,000 feet. As the Nieuport streaked earthward, it passed close to the French crew who could see Victor's hunched body, his head slumped over the side of the cockpit. The Farman pilot watched the wings tear loose from the splintered struts and sail away into the sky and saw the fuselage plunge into the ground near the ruins of Beaumont, more than three miles inside German territory.

At Behonne, pilots and mechanics waited in disbelief until their hopes were dashed by the settling darkness. They left one by one until only Kiffin Rockwell remained. He wrote, "As I left the field, I caught sight of Victor's *mechanicien* leaning against the end of our hangar. He was looking northward into the sky where his patron had vanished, his face was very sad."

Victor Chapman's body could not be recovered at the time since it was within enemy territory, but as a courtesy one German drew a map of the location. Nevertheless, a funeral service for Sergeant Victor Chapman was held in the American Church at Paris on July 4, 1916, as part of the American Independence Day service. He was 27 years old at the time of his death, a founding member of the *Escadrille Americaine*, and the first American aviator to be killed in World War I. In a letter to Victor's mother, Kiffin Rockwell wrote, "Victor was one of the very few who had the strongest of ideals, and then had the character to withstand anything that tried to come into his life and kill them. He was just a large, healthy

man, full of life and goodness toward life, and could only see the fine, true points in life and in other people...He died the most glorious death, and at the most glorious time of life to die, especially for him, with his ideals. I have never once regretted it for him, as I know he was willing and satisfied to give his life that way if it was necessary, and that he had no fear of death. It is for you, his

*In Florida, the ideals espoused  
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Chapman Field Park and its  
preservation of native plant  
communities along the bay  
may be an even more fitting  
tribute to a man who found  
glory in the great outdoors.*



father, relatives, myself, and for all who have known him, and all who would have known him, and for the world as a whole, I regret his loss. Yet he is not dead; he lives forever in every place he has been, and in everyone who knew him, and in the future generations little points of his character will be passed along."

In the custom of the day, school friends also contributed remembrances. One, John Heard, Jr., wrote:  
 "Great-hearted, loyal, reckless for a friend;  
 Not counting risks, cool handed, clear of sight,  
 He gave himself to serve a lofty end,  
 And, like an eagle soaring in the light,



Chapman Field. HASE News Collection 1989-011-2782.

After the war, remains believed to be those of Victor Chapman were exhumed near the site where he was thought to have crashed, but a dental examination proved otherwise. Nevertheless, the remains were reburied in the American Cemetery at Suresness under Chapman's name but not re-interred at a memorial to the Americans' squadron built by the French outside Paris; his crypt at the memorial remains empty. For his war service to France, Chapman was decorated with the *Medaille Militaire* and the *Croix de Guerre*, with two Palms.

Upon learning of Victor's death, John Jay Chapman responded, "Very well, he died for a noble cause," but, subsequently, he saw that Victor's letters were published in 1917 as a tribute to his son.

On wings unruffled by the wind's chance breath  
 He sought, and seeks his goal with steadfast flight,  
 Victor, indeed, in name, in life, in death!"

At Harvard, the 'Victor Emmanuel Chapman Memorial Fellowship' was established to preserve his name for future generations and is still active at the turn of the 21st century. In Florida, the ideals espoused by Victor Chapman were commemorated by the United States when an aerial gunnery field was renamed in his honor along Biscayne Bay south of Miami. The airfield may now be gone, but the creation of Chapman Field Park and its preservation of native plant communities along the bay may be an even more fitting tribute to a man who found glory in the great outdoors. —SFH

# September Morn

by Betty Jones and Eugene Threadgill

In Miami, "September Morn" dawned in July of 1913 and opened eyes all over the little resort town.

"September Morn" was a painting that delighted some and horrified others in the days before the first World War and Prohibition. The celebrated painting by Paul Chabas revealed a young girl emerging from an early morning dip in a lake—without her bathing suit.

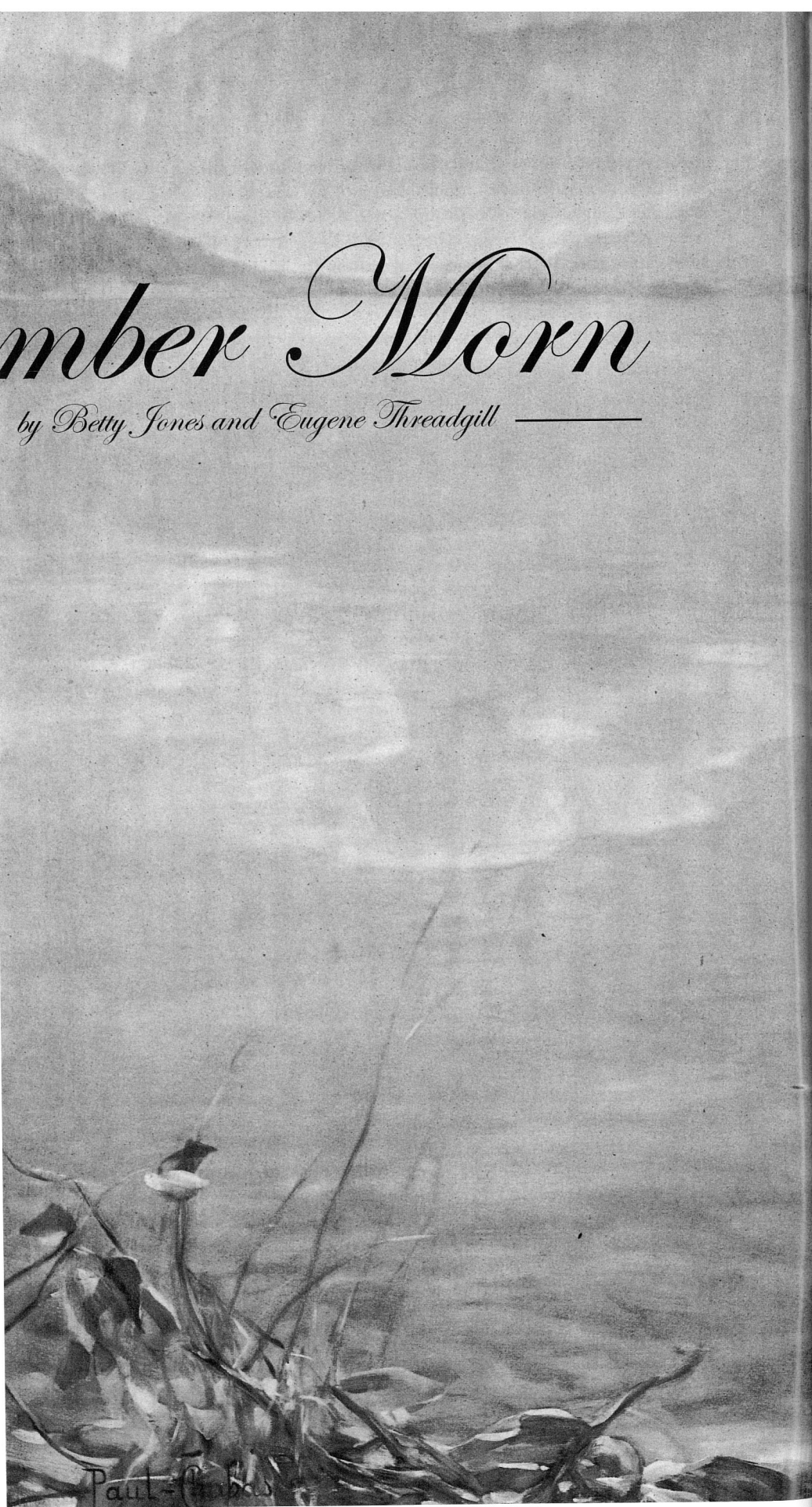
By today's standards, the picture seems almost innocent, but Miami was a different world in 1913. Eugene Threadgill and Betty Jones have sent us the story and newspaper clippings of what happened when their grandfather, Julius Smith, displayed the picture in the window of his bookstore.

In 1909, our grandfather, Julius Smith, acquired a tract of land on 12th Street and built and opened Smith's Bookstore. That year, Amy Smith, Eugene's mother, graduated from Miami High School, and she and her older brother, Earl Smith, Betty's father, went to work in their father's bookstore.

In July 1913, our grandfather purchased several copies of a painting by French painter Paul Chabas entitled "September Morn" that had created a stir in New York and Atlanta. The painting showed a young lady rising from a dip in the lake. A copy was put into a frame and placed in the window of Smith's Bookstore.

A women's organization protested, and the chief of police ordered the painting removed from the window.

"September Morn" painted by Paul Chabas (French, 1869-1937). Oil on canvas 64 1/2 x 85 1/4", 1912.  
Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.







The *Miami Metropolis* printed several articles and many letters referring to the controversy. Finally, after a judge refused to order the painting taken from public view, the sheriff purchased all of the remaining copies, and Smith's Bookstore did not restock its supply.

The newspaper articles and the Public Pulse letters show that the residents of Miami in 1913 were quite articulate, very literate and extremely witty.

### Excerpts from *The Public Pulse*

After reading several articles in your "Public Pulse" column, and viewing Miss "September Morn" in her awkward pose, and nakedness, and noting the very unreal and inartistic drawing and pose of the picture, I must say that I am greatly surprised that any Christian man or woman would so far forget the origin of clothes for the human form viz: God created Adam and Eve and placed them in their innocent nakedness in the Garden of Eden. There they lived in innocent simplicity until the devil tempted them to sin. Then to their horror they discovered their nakedness. To hide their sin the devil suggested clothing for their nakedness made of fig tree leaves. Then does it not logically follow that clothing was an invention of the devil to hide the sins of Adam and Eve.

If one resides in tropic lands any length of time, especially tropical America, one soon becomes less accustomed to the half and less clothed, and often nude forms of children and in many cases grown men and women and will wonder that they were ever so prudishly silly as to be shocked by the viewing of a nude form. The beautiful curved lines, the fascinating motions, the play of highlight and shade, the play of muscle, with ever-varying forms is a study in nature of God's most perfect handiwork, modeled after His own image.

In the tropics one only sighs for clothes when viewing some poor deformed human being. I would not abolish clothes, as it would be a monstrous cruelty to the millions of civilization's human fashion deformities.

Respectfully submitted,  
Capt. A. D. Hill

"September Morn" may be a beautiful production of art and it is perhaps to be regretted that the great majority of men and almost boys under twenty cannot see art as art, when it is dressed up in undress.

In connection with this it may be stated that almost every city, Miami not excepted, has its quota of "living pictures" parading before men's eyes which certainly do not fill their minds with Sunday school thoughts; it is not so long ago that a man accosted a lady on the streets of Miami in a manner not very complimentary to her. She promptly and strenuously resented his remark whereupon he as promptly begged her pardon, coupled with the remark, "for the life of me I could see no difference in your dress and manner and some other women who advertise 'their goods' upon our public streets." Can women tell

us how men can long remain virtuous under such pressure?  
G. Holmes, M. D.

Dear me, how just perfectly peeved Dr. Holmes must have been following his first glimpse of "September Morn," and how natural that he should, as one of the many self-appointed censors of the morals of Miami, rush to the rescue of the gilded youth and men further advanced in years already steeped in naughty wishes and unholy desires, by insisting that the offending picture should be removed from view. He did not approve of it, and others should not.

The doctor's communication is precisely what might have been expected from a hide-bound puritan who had never been outside his own country, and whose knowledge of art was limited to a daub in the parlor depicting a shipwreck at sea—special price \$1.98—or perhaps that other classic "Gates Ajar," which invariably hangs over the mantel, banked on one side by a china dog and on the other by a pretty conch shell that always murmurs of the sad, sad sea, but coming from a man possessed of the erudition of Dr. Holmes, from one who has reached the eminence in his profession that he has attained, the screed appearing in Tuesday's *Metropolis* over his signature can be explained only as an obsession that time and mingling with the people of the real world will dissipate.

Were it not that Miami has so recently "arrived" and is so rapidly filling up with people whose horizon of the things beautiful in life is not so restricted, one might wonder after this if the city would ever emerge from its chrysalis state and take on these new ways which make for the refinement and culture of its masses as against the bigotry and intolerance of former years, those inevitable concomitants of the backwoods village.

Yours truly,  
Eugene C. Stahl

### *Miami Metropolis* Editorial

"What Awful Rot"

It is sometimes extremely difficult to deal patiently with the foibles of a certain class of individuals.

A dainty picture, exhibited in the window of a local bookstore, has given opportunity for a certain class of purient-minded people to exploit their peculiar ideas on morality.

The picture is a copy of a celebrated painting which has received a vast amount of notice all over the country because some people have criticised it as being an improper picture to show in public. If it had not been for just that sort of advertising, very little attention would have been paid to it, although, as a work of art, it is entitled to all the praise that can be given it.

And what is it that has aroused all this fuss. The gifted painter has caught the spirit of the early morning hours at the beginning of autumn; a wood nymph has just stepped out from the shelter of her native trees and is standing ankle deep



in the water of a lake, clothed only in innocence and modesty, a dainty, artistic subject, well brought out by the painter's brush. There is not in it a suggestive line and not one that gives any other thought than that it is a beautiful production well worth the admiration of all clean-minded people.

But there are those who cannot see an object like that without having thoughts which the painter never intended should come from the work. It is essentially a bad mind that can see evil where no evil is intended and where it needs a constrained interpretation of the subject to make evil of it. Unfortunately, we have a few of just that kind of people in Miami and either because others have criticized this beautiful picture or because they see something evil in it, themselves, they want it suppressed or secluded.

Such things, of course, have to be, so long as we have a class who give themselves up to impure and vicious thoughts, but it was not well to exploit the fact that Miami is so ignorant and uncultivated that it cannot appreciate and enjoy a real work of art.

#### Excerpts from *Metropolis News Stories*

But law or no law, the women of the purity league are determined to have the picture hidden from view. Mrs. E. C. McAllister, president of the league, said this afternoon that she had been receiving calls all day from the women of this city asking her to do something to have the picture taken down.

"We are doing all we can," said she, "and I believe we will succeed. They tell me she is nothing but a girl, but even if she is, I think she is entitled to at least a bathing suit."

Said Chief of Police Ferguson: "You can't have a picture like that on display in Miami. She hasn't any clothes on at all."

Sheriff Dan Hardie purchased the last three copies of "September Morn" today. The sheriff stated that while he did not care for classical music he was in love with beautiful pictures. —SFH

#### AT THE CROSSROADS

*Continued from page 9*

Altars or "thrones" are built for a variety of religious occasions and have become very ornate in Miami. Designers of thrones coordinate the colors, materials, objects and symbols that correspond to the deity for whom they are created. The three types of altars are consecration thrones, observance thrones and ritual thrones. Consecration thrones are built when a practitioner is initiated into the Orisha priesthood. Observance thrones are constructed on the anniversary of the ordination of a priest. Ritual thrones are erected when oracles instruct a priest to perform a specific ceremony. Observance and ritual thrones also contain foods such as fruits, pastries, puddings, breads, and other offerings that are distributed to those present at the end of the ceremony.

In addition to the many visual art forms celebrated in the exhibition, music is a major part of the Afro-Cuban Orisha religious tradition. Percussion, singing, chanting and dancing serve as major vehicles through which practitioners harness *ashé*, the divine energy that animates the earth and all that exists. At the most important ceremonies, music is provided by *batá*, a trio of hourglass-shaped drums.

During the past several decades, the Orisha religion has had a substantial impact on Cuban-American popular culture. For example, popular singer Willie Chirino advises a visitor at an Orisha celebration not to touch the foods laid out

for Shangó in a song called "Mr. Don't Touch the Banana." In addition, contemporary artists in Miami often evoke Orisha symbolism, motifs and colors.

In conjunction with "At the Crossroads," the Historical Museum will present related educational programs such as panel discussions and music and dance performances. For more information, call 305. 375.1492. —SFH

#### EDITOR'S NOTES

*Continued from page 5*

Count Basie, Miles Davis, Coleman Hawkins, Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Cannonball and Nat Adderly, Sarah Vaughn, Ornette Coleman, Josephine Baker, Aretha Franklin, Dinah Washington and Thelonious Monk.

Eve also provided us with marvelous photographs, capturing the feel of an era now lost to us. A story like this illuminates a part of our society too often neglected and glorifies how rich America's popular culture can be.

I hope future editors can come up with more stories about Funky Nights, wacky Tamiami Trail Blazers and Martini-guzzling birdwatchers—the great characters that make South Florida such a wonderful place to live and work.

For me, it's been a great ride. Thanks to all of you who made it possible and best of luck to Sara Muñoz, the capable editor who will move the magazine even further ahead into the twenty-first century. —SFH

## Historical Association of Southern Florida Annual Meeting 2001

Thursday, April 26, 12:00 p.m.

Keynote Speakers—J. Andrew Brian, William Ho, Randy F. Nimnicht

# book review

## MIAMI IN VINTAGE POSTCARDS

by Patricia Kennedy. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, SC. 128 pages. \$18.99.

## MIAMI BEACH IN VINTAGE POSTCARDS

by Patricia Kennedy. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, SC. 128 pages. \$18.99.

by Stuart McIver

Turn to page 27 in *Miami Beach in Vintage Postcards* and you will see an aerial view of the 1918 Star Island far different from the Star Island replete with ritzy mansions these days.

The picture is a postcard showing the first of several man-made islands made by bringing the sandy bottom of Biscayne Bay top-side to create a platform for future luxury homes. It is not a beautiful scene, but it is an

interesting one, documenting a significant event in the evolution of a great resort.

Most people believe postcards of Florida are produced to hype the land's tropical splendor, they are created to provide income for the company selling them. Some are indeed beautiful, others primarily picturesque or interesting to gaze upon.

The postcards selected by author Patricia Kennedy in her books on Miami and Miami Beach constitute a pleasing balance between the usual gaudily pretty resort scenes and such engaging sights as Miami's pleasing but hardly flashy Majestic Hotel, housing among other things the Wee Tappie Tavern. Good contrast is displayed by Miami Beach's Art Deco hotels when they were brand-new and Homestead's 1940s Krome Avenue, billing itself as the "Gateway to Everglades National Park."

In showing the reader the hotels of Miami and Miami Beach, these books offer an accessible history of the changing architecture of South Florida. They also show attractions which enchanted earlier visitors, such as the Musa Isle Indian Village and the Dutch windmill at the Miami Beach Casino's swimming pool. But they also show the destruction wrought by the 1926 hurricane, hardly a lure for future tourists or investors.

For many Americans collecting postcards has become an active hobby, spawning a modest industry for dealers who can sell from small shops or at postcard fairs where the faithful buy, sell and trade.

During the 12 years she lived in Miami, Patricia Kennedy actively collected South Florida postcards. Though she lives now in Andover, Massachusetts, she stays in touch with the Sunshine State, spending the winter months in the Palm Beaches, where she entertains as a professional pianist.

Her two books about Miami and Miami Beach are illustrated primarily by cards from her collection, reproduced in black and white. These books are a welcome addition to Arcadia Publishing's Postcard History Series. Both open with a brief history of the subject city, then show us a variety of postcards enhanced by full captions.

Picture postcards first began to appear in Europe in the mid-1870s, then spread to America. The period from 1902-1914—shortly before the telephone became a simple way to communicate—is considered by collectors to be the "Golden Age" of postcards.

The "Golden Age" for Kennedy's books emerges as the period between the end of the First and the beginning of the second World War. The postcard industry did a good job of documenting the 1920s real estate boom, the crash that followed and the tough days of the 1930s as Floridians battled their way out of the Depression.

For South Florida readers, these books on Miami and Miami Beach are a welcome addition to Arcadia Publishing's Postcard History Series.

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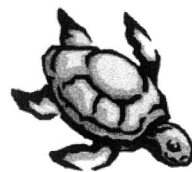
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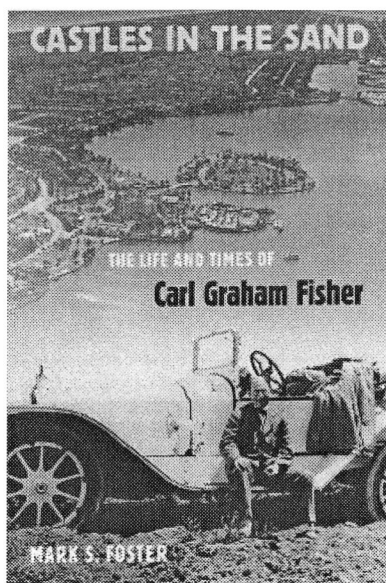
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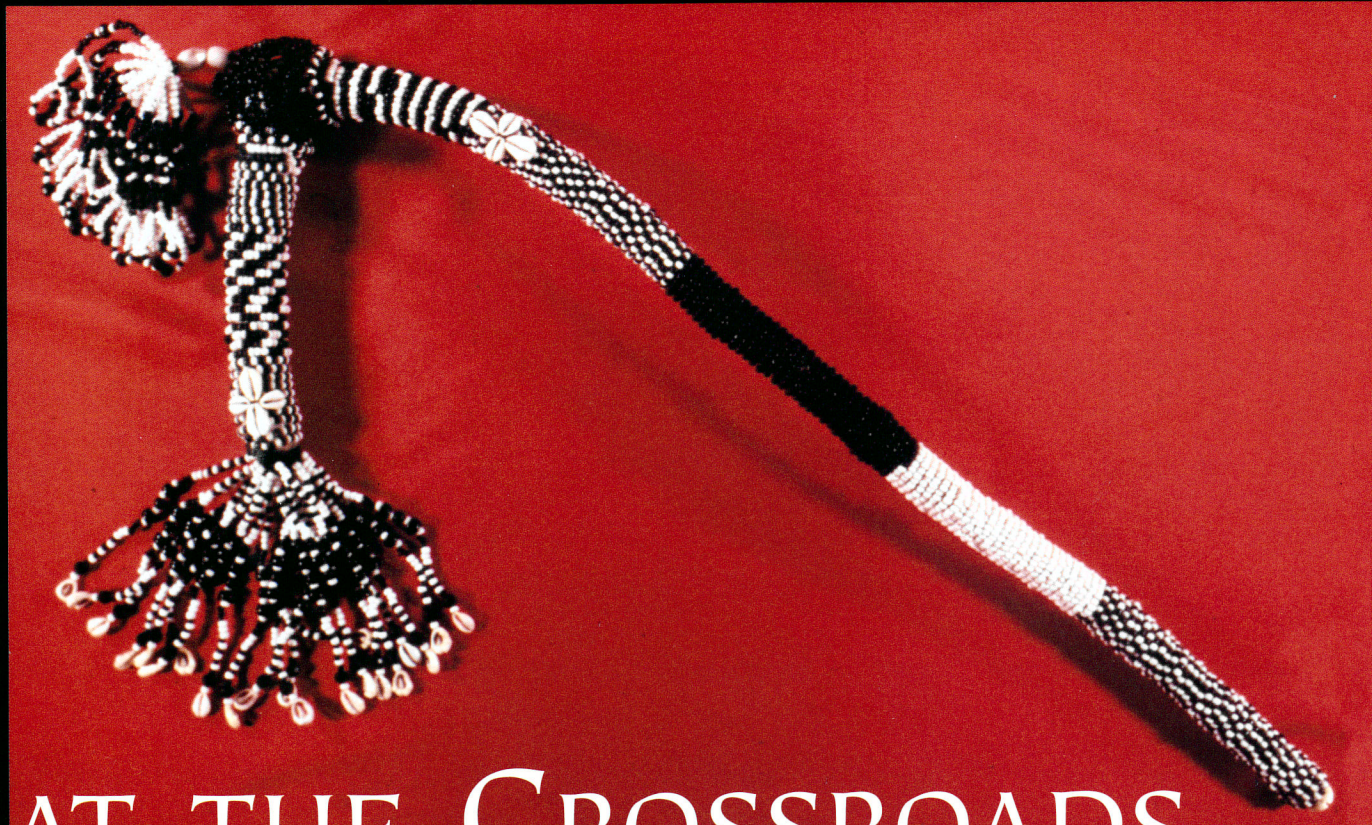
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