

South Florida History

VOLUME 29, NO. 1, SPRING 2001, \$3.00



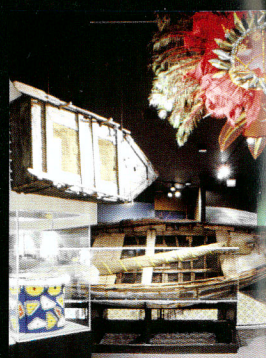
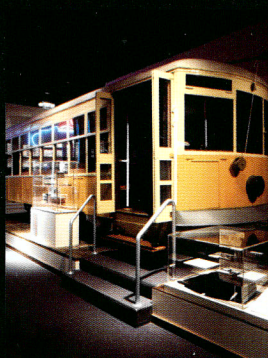
**FORT
DALLAS** REVISITED



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 Center 101 West Flagler St. Miami, FL 33130
305.375.1492 305.375.1609 fax www.historical-museum.org

Features this issue

South Florida History Volume 29, No. 1, Spring 2001

4 Editor's Notes

Sara Muñoz

5 Spotlight on...Education

Jodi Weitz

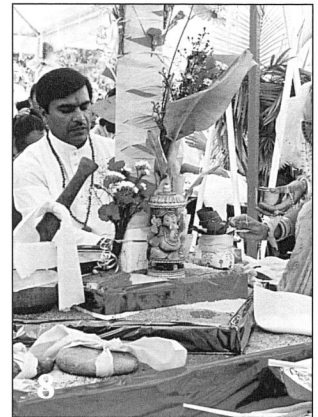
6 Around the Galleries

Happenings in the Historical Museum & member museums

8 Exhibits—The Indo-Caribbean Community Arts Project

Indo-Caribbean students view their cultural traditions through the lenses of cameras and camcorders

Stephen Stuempfle, PhD



10 A Buried Past: Combs Funeral Home

For more than a century, the Combs arranged funerals for most of Miami's prominent people

Geoffrey Tomb



16 Fort Dallas Revisited

Fort Dallas, relocated three times and occupied on six different occasions, remains a memorial to the earliest of Miami's pioneers

Arthur E. Chapman

22 Sir Winston Churchill Visits South Florida

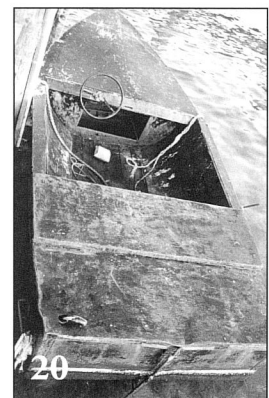
Churchill travels to Florida to receive an honorary degree from the University of Miami, the only one ever awarded outside of the traditional Spring Commencement ceremony

William E. Brown, Jr.

28 The Metal Hull Boat

The discovery of a Cuban vessel, now a museum artifact, leads to a man's account of his voyage from Cuba

Jorge Zamanillo



32 History In The Making

Miami's own Ellis Island, the Freedom Tower, is scheduled to reopen in May, 2002

Cover—Old Fort Dallas, 1904. HASF 52-3-65.

Editor's notes



As time goes by, changes take place, and the museum's publication has not been one to go untouched. Throughout the years, the quarterly magazine, once known as *Update* and now as *South Florida History*, has experienced many changes. It has made the transition from newsletter to magazine, from 26 pages to 36. The magazine has increased its content to include more articles on South Florida and the Caribbean basin, while presenting a wider range of themes. And with this issue, *South Florida History* continues to evolve.

As Stuart mentioned in the last issue, after two decades of serving as editor, he has decided to retire. And this is where I come in.

I want to begin by thanking Stuart for the many years of hard work he has dedicated not only to the magazine but to the museum as well. After skimming through his past editorials for an idea of what would be expected from me, I realized this was going to be even more challenging than I expected.

Along with a new editor comes a new *South Florida History*. As co-editor, I began to make small changes to the design and content. A line here, a line there, more color on the cover, a more updated layout. And now as editor, I have added three new sections to the magazine: *Exhibits*, which will feature the museum's permanent, temporary, lobby or traveling exhibits and *Spotlight on...* which will feature, on a rotating basis, each of the museum's departments. The third section, called *History in the Making*, will highlight current events of historical significance. In the table of contents, you will notice taglines below the articles' titles and, after every article, a few words about the author.

In this issue of *South Florida History*, you will visit the different locations Fort Dallas occupied from the mid-1800s to the present day (page 16). Having grown up in the Dominican Republic, I was surrounded by stone forts, forts that have stood on the same spot since the colonization era of the "New World." It never occurred to me that a fort could ever be relocated, much less three times, as was Fort Dallas. As you read through the article, you will see why there is confusion as to whether or not it really was a fort, and how and why its relocation was possible.

From forts to families, learn about a successful family business established in Miami in the late-1800s. For more than half a century, W. H. Combs Co. Undertakers and Combs Funeral Homes handled the funeral arrangements for most of Miami's prominent families (page 10). The obituaries for Julia Tuttle, Dr. James Jackson, Roddy Burdine, and popular Mayor E. G. Sewell, were only a few of the many that read "arrangements by Combs."

Among the other topics featured in this issue is Winston Churchill's 1946 visit to South Florida (page 22). Churchill, a true Renaissance man and one of the world's most prominent leaders of his time, received a honorary degree from the University of Miami and published the first of many wartime reminiscences while in the Sunshine State.

And last but not least, the story behind a small metal hull boat, now a museum artifact, and how it led to a man's emotional first hand account of his journey, along with four other men, from Cuba (page 28).

I hope you continue to enjoy reading *South Florida History* as much as I enjoy working on it.

South Florida History

Editor

Sara Muñoz

Editorial Assistance

Jodi Weitz, Becky Smith, Kelly Geisinger

Published Quarterly by
the Historical Association of Southern Florida

Miami-Dade Cultural Center
101 W. Flagler St., Miami, FL 33130
305.375.1492 • 305.375.1609 fax
publications@historical-museum.org
www.historical-museum.org
ISSN: 10773819

South Florida History is a journal of popular regional history published quarterly by the Historical Association of Southern Florida. Receipt of *South Florida History* is a privilege of membership in the Historical Museum, the Fort Myers Historical Museum, the Collier County Museum, the Clewiston Museum, the Boca Raton Historical Society and the Florida History Center & Museum.

The Historical Association of Southern Florida is a nonprofit cultural, educational and humanistic institution dedicated to providing information about the history of southern Florida and the Caribbean, and to the collection and preservation of material relating to that history.

The contents of *South Florida History* magazine are copyrighted © 2001 by the Historical Association of Southern Florida. All rights are reserved. Reprint of material is encouraged; however, written permission from the Association is required. Inquiries and contributions are encouraged and should be addressed to the Editor, *South Florida History*, Historical Museum of Southern Florida, 101 W. Flagler St., Miami, FL 33130. Phone: 305.375.1492. Fax: 305.375.1609; e-mail: publications@historical-museum.org. The Historical Museum disclaims any responsibility for errors in factual material or statements of opinion expressed by contributors.

This publication has been sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, Florida Arts Council and Division of Historical Resources, the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Affairs Council, the Mayor and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, and members of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views and opinion of the editors of *South Florida History* or the Florida Department of State, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of State.

Education

by Jodi Weitz

There is a popular belief that when visiting a museum, children must not make a peep. They should walk single file with their hands behind their back. No funny business. And they most certainly cannot touch anything!

At the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, quite the opposite is true. While teaching history is the main goal, the museum's Education Department has incorporated several engaging tactics to make every child's visit an interactive adventure.

Children are encouraged to speak up, ask questions and act out a variety of roles in historic dramas. Museum Educators lead students in participatory, hands-on activities as they stroll through the galleries, exploring 10,000 years of South Florida and Caribbean history. Replicas of artifacts are passed around, and students become wide-eyed at the thought of actually holding something that was used by humans thousands of years ago.

"The goal is to stimulate curiosity about the history and culture of this region, while encouraging children to become life-long museum visitors," said Stacey de la Grana, Director of Education for the Historical Museum.

With more than twenty different education programs offered in both English and Spanish, the Education Department can adapt curriculum to meet the needs of students from pre-kindergarten through college. Perhaps it is this flexibility that allows the museum to serve approximately 26,500 students each year.

Programs offered at the museum can include music, role-playing exercises and a behind-the-scenes tour of the collections given by the curators. But it's not all fun and games. Students must be armed with analytical and deductive reasoning skills in order to interpret and draw conclusions about life in South Florida and the Caribbean.

The education programs offered by the Historical Museum extend far beyond its walls. Students can experience an outdoor learning adventure at several historic sites, including the Barnacle, Cape Florida Lighthouse and Commodore Ralph Monroe's house. For the "Indiana Jones" types, the Historical Museum allows students to learn about prehistoric times on an actual dig, using fundamental archaeological methods and tools.

For the adult who is still smitten with the idea of being Indiana Jones for a day, or for those who just want to absorb a little history and culture in a leisurely outing, the Historical Museum offers a series of exciting and educational programs. Historian Dr. Paul George leads his annual Historic Tours through South Florida's unique neighborhoods on foot, boat, bus, Metrorail and bicycle. His weekend jaunts bring tour goers to the heart of Little Havana, Coral Gables, Stiltsville, Coconut Grove and Ft. Lauderdale, to name a few.

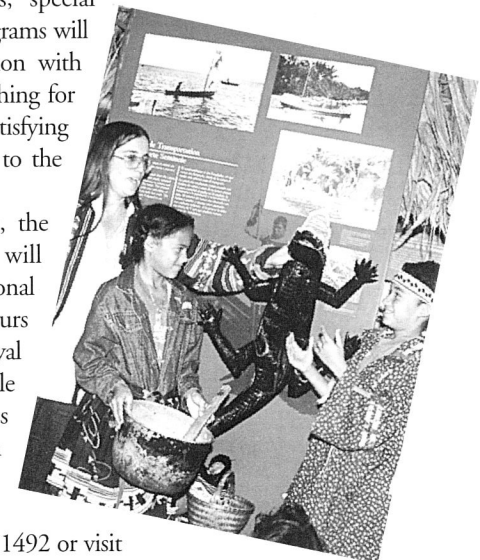
For those seeking a true historic adventure, the Historical Museum has partnered with Dragonfly Expeditions to create overnight excursions to the wild side of Florida. These journeys focus on the connections between Florida's people, history and environment that have drawn so many people to her shores. Through Dragonfly Expeditions, regular folks become temporary inhabitants of Florida's distinctive destinations.

The Education Department is looking to expand its adult education programs in the coming months, with a greater emphasis on serving senior citizens. A series of slide presentations are being developed utilizing the museum's extensive collection of historic photographs that are housed in its popular Research Center. These presentations will be delivered off-site at senior facilities, schools and college campuses and will focus on themes such as African-Americans in South Florida, the Jewish Floridian Diaspora and Miami: Then and Now.

Also on the horizon is the introduction of the Tropical Explorers Summer Camp. The camp consists of three one-week sessions geared toward children ages 7 to 12. Field trips to local historic sites will bring the past alive as campers explore the Miami Circle and Coconut Grove's pioneering community. The third session in the Tropical Explorers Camp will focus on Florida's role in the rock and roll evolution from its beginning in the early 1950s to the present. Campers will be inspired by the museum's special exhibition, aptly titled, *Florida's Rock & Roll Legends*.

Premiering on July 27, 2001 and running through January 20, 2002, *Florida's Rock & Roll Legends* will examine all genres of music, from jazz and gospel to hard rock and country. Highlighted acts will include Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, Allman Brothers Band, Gloria Estefan and Jimmy Buffet, among many others. An exciting menu of concerts, tours, special events and free family programs will be presented in conjunction with the exhibit, offering something for the whole family, and satisfying tastes that run from Elvis to the Backstreet Boys.

In the coming months, the Education Department will deliver a slew of sensational concerts, performances, tours and special events for its loyal members and visitors, while attracting new audiences and expanding its reach into the South Florida community. For more details, please call 305.375.1492 or visit www.historical-museum.org. —SFH



Around the galleries

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 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.

Florida's Rock & Roll Legends

July 27, 2001–January 20, 2002

This exhibit 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.

TROPICAL EXPLORERS SUMMER CAMP

Campers ages 7–12 can bring the past to life through historical dramas, music, art projects and field trips to historic sites. Become pirates, conquistadors, Seminole Indians, archaeologists, pioneers and rock stars during three one-week day camp sessions.

Each camp session is held Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Camp fees are \$90.00 per session for Historical Museum members; \$100.00 per session for non-members. There is a \$5.00 discount for multi-session participation. For

more information or to register your child for Tropical Explorers Camp, call 305.375.1628.

Session I Early Explorers

June 25–June 29

Explore South Florida history from its prehistoric beginnings to the pioneer days. Enjoy an archaeological expedition to the Miami Circle and capture a view of Biscayne Bay at the Cape Florida Lighthouse. Elaborate costumes, artifacts and role-playing exercises reveal the lifestyles and customs of early explorers, pirates and Native Americans.

Session II The Magic City: Then and Now

July 9–July 13

Uncover the magic city's past from its creation through the new millennium. Experience life in turn-of-the-century Miami and relive the lifestyles of early pioneers through hands-on activities. Campers become pioneers, flappers and soldiers during this journey through time. Visit the Barnacle State Historic Site for a taste of Coconut Grove's pioneering community and investigate downtown Miami's art deco architecture.

Session III History Rocks

July 30–August 3

Discover Florida's rock-n-roll history from the 1950s to today. Get a behind-the-scenes look at a working recording studio and experience the excitement of an on-air radio broadcast at Radio Disney. Create music videos, design record albums and become rock stars! Campers will be inspired by the special exhibition, *Florida's Rock-n-Roll Legends*.

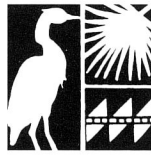
Yesterday's Visions for Sale at the Historical Museum

A treasure trove of revealing, dramatic and scenic photographs of South Florida's past are available to adorn the walls of your home or place of business.

With more than one million photographs and postcards, there's something for everyone.

Call 305.375.1492, or stop by the Historical Museum's Research Center for further details.





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.



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.



CLEWISTON MUSEUM, 112 South Commercio 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.



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.



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, 1–5 p.m. \$2.



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 a.m.–5 p.m. Research hours are by appointment Tues.–Thurs. from 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

The above institutions subscribe to South Florida History.

The *Indo-Caribbean* Community Arts Project

by Stephen Stuempfle, PhD

In January 1999, 10 middle and high school students from Miami-Dade and Broward Counties signed up for a research project organized by the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. Their mission was to document the cultural traditions that surrounded them as members of South Florida's Indo-Caribbean community. This community has grown rapidly during the past 20 years, as more and more people of East Indian descent have arrived in South Florida from Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname and Jamaica. Over the course of one year, the students investigated Indo-Caribbean life through photography and videography. They all had previously attended community events, such as Hindu

prayer services, weddings and festivals. But now they viewed these occasions through the lenses of their cameras and camcorders. They were guided in their work by Romeo Ragbir and Ralph Rampersad, two community leaders, and communication students from the University of Miami.

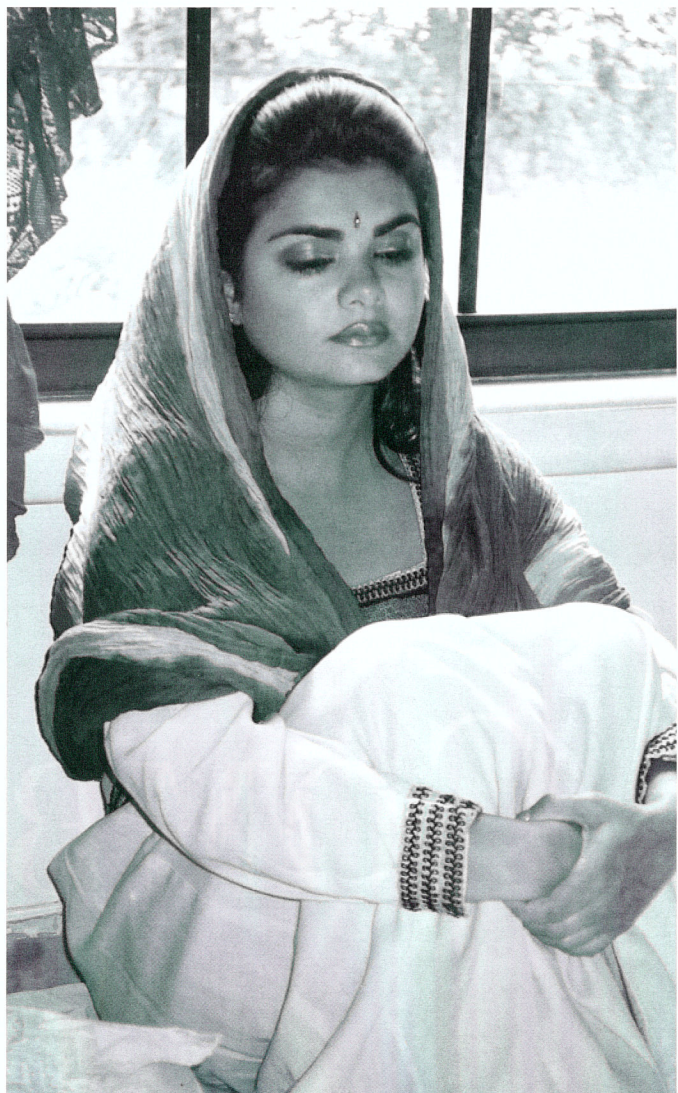
By March 2000, the students had completed their fieldwork and were ready to begin editing their material for public presentation. Hundreds of photographs were narrowed down to 56; hours of videotape were shaped into a 30-minute finished product. The photographs and videotape were linked together in a portable exhibition that premiered to a crowd of 700 at the October festival of Divali at Shiva Mandir, a Hindu temple in Fort Lauderdale. Later the exhibition was displayed at the Historical Museum, the South Dade Regional Library and the Broward Southwest Regional Library. It is currently touring the Miami-Dade library

system and, in the future, will be used again at Indo-Caribbean festivals.

The Indo-Caribbean Community Arts Project was made possible by a grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Community Folklife Program. Through the students' documentary work, there now is a permanent record of the experience of Indo-Caribbean people in South Florida's constantly changing cultural landscape. —SFH

Renee Ragbir (left) and Shivanan Ramanan documenting Romeo Ragbir at work on a tassa drum. Photo by Leslie Cypen.

Below left—Tassa drum, clay shells and goatskins at the home of Romeo Ragbir, Plantation. Tassa drums are played at Hindu weddings and festivals. Photo by Amrita Balroop. Right—Member of the wedding party for the marriage of Karuna Rajmoolie and Shamy Siewnarine, Cutler Ridge. Photo by Nikita Mahabir.



Left—Woman meditating at a prayer service at Shiva Mandir, Ft. Lauderdale. Photo by Ansuya Balroop. Above right—Karuna Rajmoolie (center) in her wedding ceremony. Photo by Nikita Mahabir. Above—Scraping the hair of a goat skin for a tassa drum. Photo by Amrita Balroop.

A BURIED PAST



Walter Hughs Combs opened the first "residence" funeral home on the southwest corner of Northeast First Avenue and Second Street in 1912. HASF 1989-245-60

COMBS

Much has been said and written about the importance of the Miami City Cemetery as the burial ground for so many famous founders and early settlers of the community.

Julia Tuttle, Dr. James Jackson, members of the Burdine family who founded the department store, first city mayor John B. Reilly plus veterans from all wars since the Civil War rest in peace in the 10.5-acre cemetery opened in 1897.

Yet little has been said about who put them there. Chances are, it was **Combs**.

by Geoffrey Tomb

FUNERAL HOME

For more than half a century, W. H. Combs Co. Undertakers and Combs Funeral Homes were the best-known names for famous last acts according to Miami historian Paul George, history professor at Miami-Dade Community College Wolfson campus [and historian for the Historical Museum of Southern Florida].

“For a large swath of the city’s early history they handled most of the prominent people,” George said. “Most obituaries you read say arrangements by Combs, burial at City Cemetery.”

The business dates from 1896 the year Miami was incorporated when furniture dealer Edwin Nelson provided a

sideline to his rough-hewn store: polished wooden coffins.

Spotting a sure-fire opportunity in a rapidly growing community, Nelson began offering to “lay out” the dearly departed right there in his store.

Things got more professional. In 1899, print-shop operator H. M. King opened a separate funeral business and Walter Hughes Combs, one of Florida’s first licensed embalmers, arrived the next year.

Combs, then 24, was a veteran of the hospital service in the Spanish-American War who had the foresight to graduate from the College of Embalming in Cincinnati. Raised in the citrus groves of Florida’s Orange County, he also had worked as a shipping clerk for the Louisville & Nashville Railroad before coming to Miami.

Started as escort

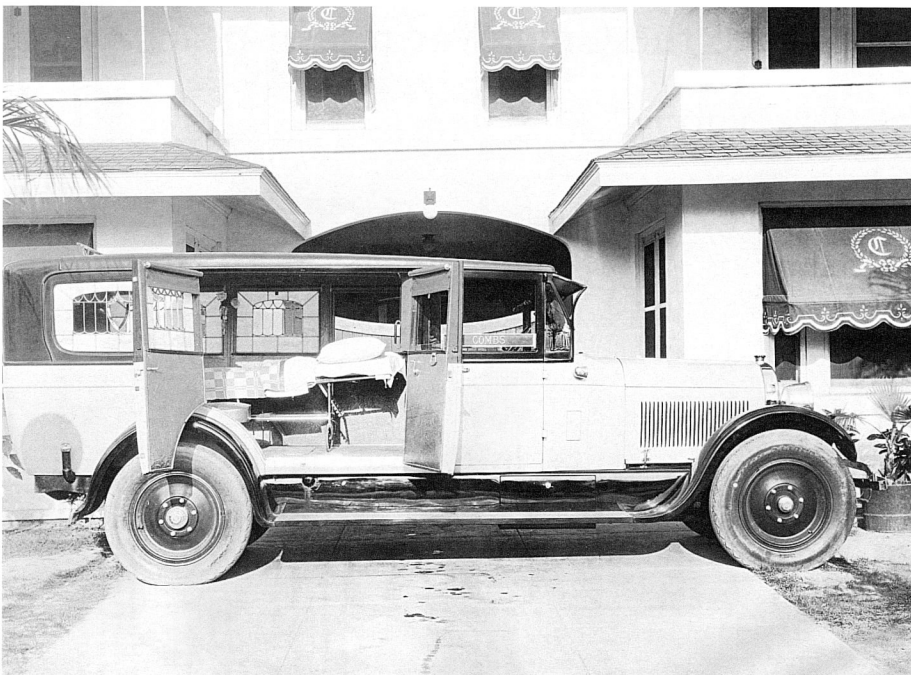
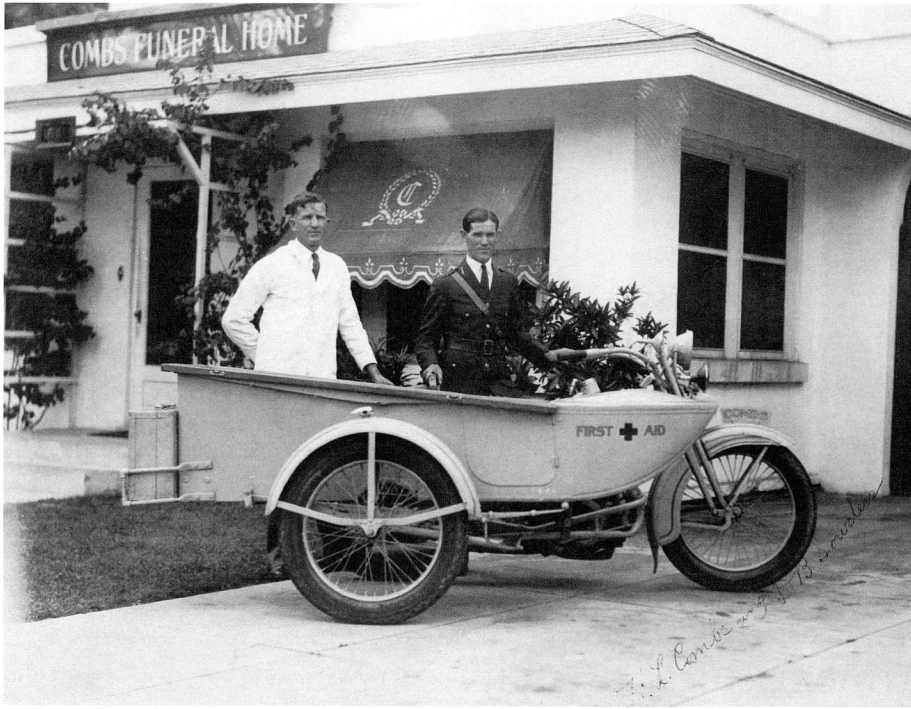
After helping organize the new fire department, Combs went to work for King. In January 1904, Confederate General John B. Gordon, a veteran commander of the greatest battles of the Civil War—Antietam, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg—and a final wing commander of Robert E. Lee’s at Appomattox, Va., died at his winter home near Miami.

King got the job, but Combs was assigned to escort Gordon’s body to Atlanta for a formal burial ceremony at the Georgia State Capitol. Henry Flagler provided a private railroad car for the trip.

Impressed, Combs returned to Miami determined to start his own business and make it more formal. In 1906, at the age of 30 he bought out Nelson and claimed the title of the city’s oldest funeral firm and “Miami’s pioneer funeral home.”

In 1912, Combs opened the area’s first “residence” funeral home, offering families a place to hold services and viewings outside their own homes. It was a white frame house with white fence on the southwest corner of Northeast First Avenue and Second Street in what is now downtown Miami.

A curtained black hearse drawn by two black horses was at the call. The business



Top—First aid motorcycle. HASF 1990-010-52. Above—Funeral home’s ambulance. HASF 1990-010-65.

also operated an ambulance. Victims could go either way.

In 1923, the business moved just south of the City Cemetery, at 1539 NE Second Avenue. By this time Combs' oldest son, Walter Jr., had entered the business.

Later, sons Jack and Paul and daughter Lorena would join the ranks.

All male family members and employees were required to wear white dress suits at all times, according to Beth Place, granddaughter of the founder.

Hurricane duty

The family won public acclaim during the 1926 hurricane, a killer storm that struck Sept. 17-18 with 138 mph winds and an 11.7-foot tidal surge. Water stood thigh-high over much of Miami Beach, and more than 200 died.

Working around the clock, the Combs family, led by Walter Jr., helped identify many of the dead and made sure all victims received a dignified burial.

When the supply of manufactured coffins ran out and with rail and ship traffic blocked due to storm damage, Jack Combs nailed together coffins out of hurricane debris, according to Place and Walter Lund, a grandson of the founding Combs.

The family keeps extensive archives of old photos and memorabilia, including a late aunt's album of obituaries of those buried by Combs.

The twin-building business connected by a portal driveway for hearses, was in a choice location two blocks south of the main gates to the City Cemetery, George said.

"It overlooked the cemetery and it overlooked Second Avenue where many of the great funerals passed on the way to the cemetery," he said.

Famous funerals

Among those was the funeral of Roddy Burdine, head of the department store and a civic leader. Much of the city shut down for his funeral, a Combs event, according to George.

The sudden death in office, in 1940, of Miami Mayor E. G. Sewell produced



Top—Left to right; Walter Combs, Jr. and Walter Combs, Sr. HASF 1989-245-84. Above—Coffins being made out of hurricane debris. HASF 1989-245-86.



Walter H. Combs, Jr signs death certificates after a hurricane. HASF 1989-245-83

another citywide mourning at a burial directed by the somber Combs crew.

A Combs also directed the funeral of Miami Beach founder Carl Fisher. It was held outdoors on the grounds of the Miami Beach Public Library, where loudspeakers were set up so thousands who gathered could listen to the eulogy delivered by John Oliver La Gorce, publisher of *National Geographic Magazine*. Fisher was sent on his last journey in a bronze casket.

Additional Combs Funeral Homes opened in 1934 at 1041 Washington Ave. on Miami Beach and, later, at a larger building with a chapel at 1850 Alton Rd. Expansion to Southwest 37th Avenue near Coral Gables came later.

Founder Walter H. Combs, Sr. who served as a member and chairman of

When the supply of
manufactured coffins
ran out and with
rail and ship traffic
blocked due to storm
damage, Jack Combs
nailed together coffins
out of hurricane
debris...

the Dade County School Board during much of the 1930s, died in January 1942. "Miami Mourns Walter Combs," was the headline in *The Miami Herald*.

Arrangements were by Combs. Burial was in City Cemetery.

The family later sold [the funeral homes], and no members remain employed in the business. Today, Place is director of clinical services at Shands Home Care in Broward. Lund, who retired from Eastern Airlines in Miami, operates Limrick Orchids in South Dade and is special events manager for A World of Orchids in Kissimmee.

Geoffrey Tomb was a Herald staff writer. Reprinted with kind permission of The Miami Herald.

Original article appeared in The Herald on Sunday, July 7, 1996.

HISTORICAL MUSEUM acquires FUNERAL RECORDS

by Dawn Hugh

Patricia Kolski recently donated the funeral records of the Kolski-Bess Combs funeral home to the Historical Museum's Research Center. Walter H. Combs started the funeral home in 1904 with the purchase of Nelson's Funeral Home, Miami's first funeral parlor. It is one of Miami's oldest continuously run businesses.

Combs quickly established the firm as one of Florida's largest and most modern. In addition to his business activities, he became involved in numerous civic and fraternal affairs in the community. In 1968, Bess Memorial Mortuary, which was founded in the 1930s, purchased Combs. The Kolski family acquired the business in 1977, and today it continues as Cofer-Kolski-Combs, under the direction of Patricia Kolski.



Patricia Kolski standing in front of the Cofer-Kolski-Combs funeral home.

HASF 2001-253.

The Research Center, realizing the importance of this gift to researchers and genealogists, set about finding ways to make the data in 97 volumes easily retrievable and accessible to the public. Enter Ann McFadden, author, genealogist and records researcher, who volunteered to index the records. Assuming that the volumes would take about 5 years to complete, Mrs. McFadden took the first volume and settled down to the painstaking task of abstracting each record and entering it into a computer. The job sometimes was made more difficult by the almost illegible handwriting of the early clerks.

As if spurred on by the spirits of the departed on the pages who were anxious to come "alive" again in some form, she completed the first book within a few hours, and then continued to work at

a feverish pace on the remaining volumes. By mid-February, she had completed the entire set and entered 31,000 names into the database.

Reflecting on her work, Mrs. McFadden, in her modest and unassuming manner, described it as her contribution to the Miami community. This underestimation belies the fact that the first ten years' worth of records are of enormous importance, as until 1916 death certificates were not required, and these remain the only record of these vital statistics.

The museum is grateful to Patricia Kolski for this invaluable contribution and to Ann McFadden for her generous donation of time. Copies of the records index are available on diskette and in bound form, please call Ann McFadden at 305.221.4726 for further details.

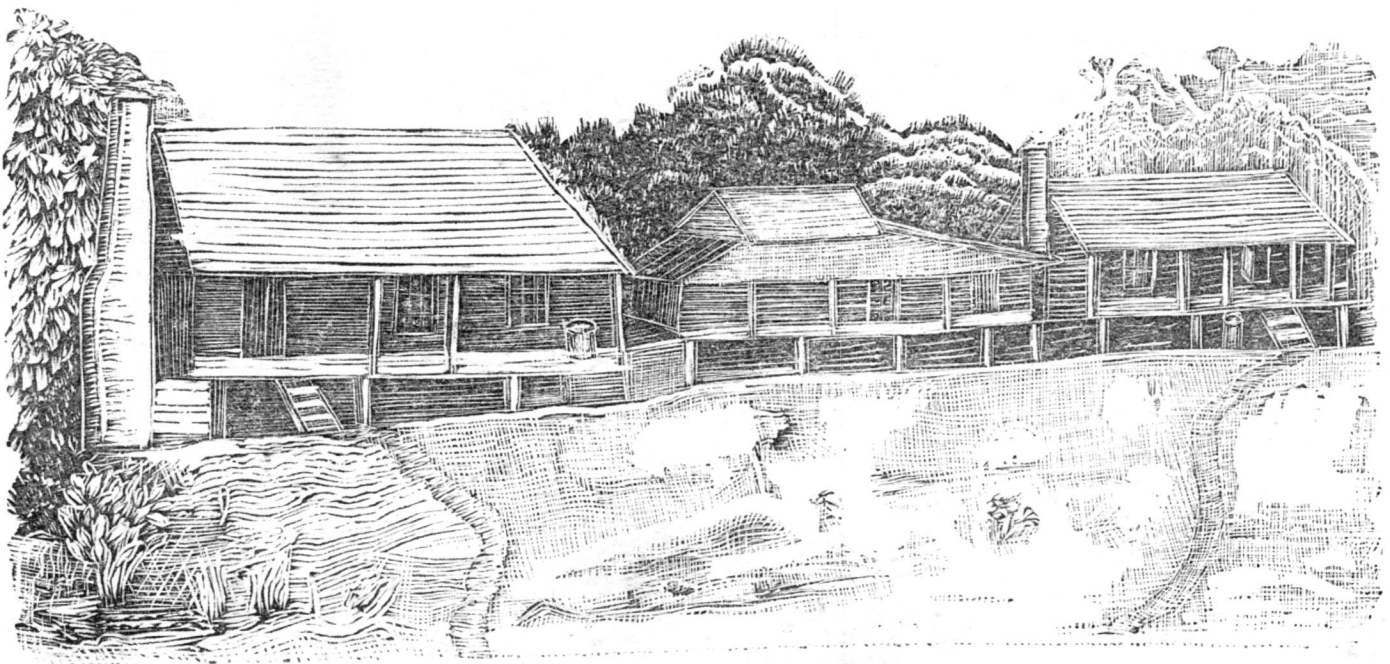
ANN MCFADDEN



Anne McFadden with Combs Funeral Home records. HASF 2001-277-1-14.

Ann McFadden began researching her family genealogy about 20 years ago. After finding as much as she could about her own roots, she started to do research for other people with Dade County connections. Among her published works are the Woodlawn North Cemetery records, 1913-1999; The Palm Cemetery in Narajana; the Dade County Cemetery and the Dade County voter's list starting in 1836. This list is now indexed on microfilm and housed at the Genealogy Collection at the Main Library of Miami-Dade Public Library System. At present she is working on the records of the Philbrick Funeral Home, 1920s to 1990s, that are housed at Special Collections, Richter Library, University of Miami. —*SFH*

F O R T D A



Fort Dallas. Maynard, Charles J. Miami, Florida, January 1871. HASF x-223-1.

When one thinks of the word “fort,” one might imagine a box-shaped wooden structure as typified by Hollywood’s western movies. Or perhaps one might think of the towering stone ramparts of the *Castillo de San Marcos* in St. Augustine. One seldom thinks of the type of fort Willard Robinson describes in his book, *American Forts Architectural Form and Function*. This other type seems strange, for many of them did not have any walls or defenses at all, and some consisted of only a collection of tents. Robinson’s study removes any doubt as to what constitutes a fort. In essence, any structure or structures so named by the military, are forts.

LLAS REVISITED

by Arthur E. Chapman

Just as many cities have their own “fort,” Miami has its fort. Miami’s fort, known as Fort Dallas, was of this third type, because it did not have any formal walls or defenses. However, Fort Dallas remains a surviving memorial to the earliest of Miami’s pioneers, albeit relocated in Lummus Park. Such historical sites are often surrounded by varying degrees of controversy, and Fort Dallas is no different.

...Many conflicting facts needed to be untangled concerning its size, location and period of occupancy. (Arva Moore Parks)

Some claim that it was never really a fort at all. Authors such as Nixon Smiley, in *Yesterday’s Miami*, claim that not only was Dallas not a true fort but that the structure standing in Lummus Park was not a part of Dallas at all. The facts clearly demonstrate otherwise. As to the other contentions of Mr. Smiley, there is considerable confusion. This confusion about Fort Dallas dates back to its origins, for few other military posts have had such a strange and perplexing history. One fact has, however, become very clear; “Fort Dallas...especially after 1840, was more important than has been previously recognized...” (Arva Moore Parks)

The origin of the fort is in itself extraordinary, for it was the Navy that first established this position for later use by the Army. Fort Dallas was even named after a Naval Commander, Alexander James Dallas. Commander Dallas was in charge of the West India Squadron, which was the largest squadron afloat in July 1835. The Secretary of the Navy, Mahlon Dickerson, issued orders to Commodore Dallas. This very close cooperation continued throughout the duration of the Wars, until 1858 when the Army closed all its posts in Florida. Commander Dallas was widely admired for his close support and cooperation with General Winfield Scott, so his name was retained by the army when they occupied the position.

U. S. Navy Lieutenant Levin M. Powell first established Fort Dallas as a tented post, not in Miami but on Key Biscayne, in 1836. The primary purpose of Fort Dallas was to serve as a Navy depot and a supply point, and to prevent commerce between the Native Americans and traders from Cuba or the West Indies. Another purpose was to have a military presence to counter and protect the settlers from hostile Seminole pressure. The proof of this need was the attack on the Cape Florida Lighthouse in July 1836.

Fort Dallas had three separate physical locations, and was occupied on six different occasions. The fort’s “mobility,” as well as the number of times it was occupied, has created much of the present-day confusion about Fort Dallas. The fort’s second location was on the south bank of the Miami River near its mouth in late 1836; the final location was on the north bank of that same river in 1855.

As mentioned previously, Fort Dallas was unusual, for although located in hostile territory, there was never any attempt to erect walls or palisades. In actuality, it comprised nothing more than tents or log barracks until the last phase of the Seminole Wars.

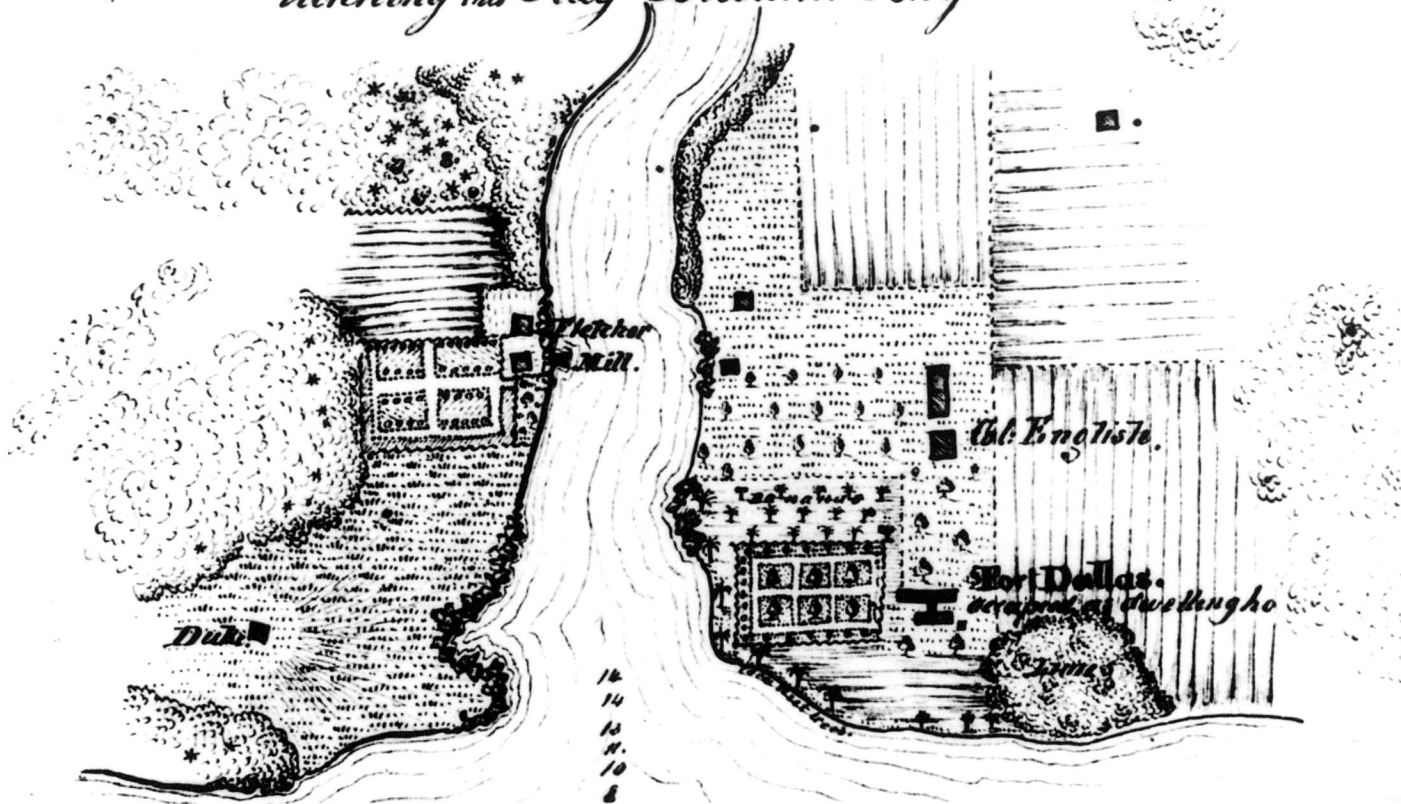
The second occupation of Fort Dallas lasted from February to April 1838. On March 29, General William Jesup ordered its closing by directing Colonel Bankhead with two companies of the Fourth Artillery to establish a different post on Key Biscayne. Captain L. B. Webster would construct the new post and his company, from the First Artillery, would garrison it. Jesup’s orders read, “The post at Fort Dallas will be abandoned and the stores removed to Key Biscayne (new site) or disposed of...” Captain Webster then built another of these tented forts, which he located near the Cape Florida Lighthouse and named Fort Bankhead.

As U. S. Navy Lieutenant Powell was sent to establish Fort Dallas in 1836 and then again to reactivate it in 1838 (to prepare it for use by the Army), it was the Navy who was actually responsible for the site selection and construction maintenance of what is generally regarded as an Army post.

The second activation of Fort Dallas resulted from General Jesup’s defeat of the Seminoles on the Loxahatchee River in January 1838, in the second Seminole War. The strategy behind the second activation was to provide a convenient site to assist in capturing and preparing the Seminoles for relocation to Indian Country (now Oklahoma). Moreover, the second occupation and site of Dallas served as a barrier against Seminole advances and provided a convenient point of Army entry into the Everglades. So Fort Dallas was never involved in any battles, though it did serve as a staging area for military movements into the Everglades.

No 6.

The mouth of the Miama River,
running into Key Biscaine Bay.



Fort Dallas on the north bank of the Miami River. National Archives.

The location of a fort on the south bank of the Miami River was of considerable importance to the Army for several reasons. Some evidence exists that Powell constructed block-houses (see Richard Fitzpatrick's claim for damages), but official records lack this information. In 1842, Lieutenant John T. McLaughlin, who patrolled the South Florida coast in late 1839, wrote Secretary Upshur about the value of Fort Dallas:

Although the point referred to, Fort Dallas, which has been under the occupancy of the land forces since the early stages of the war, cannot be approached within eight miles by the vessels of this squadron, yet its contiguity to the Everglades fits admirably for an auxiliary depot for our operations in Canoes into the Glades, and elsewhere on the east coast of the peninsula. I shall hasten therefore to take possession with a detachment of Marines, so as arrangements can be effected...

Here again was a marked difference in typical military operations. Lieutenant McLaughlin not only devised this plan of sending barges and canoes into the Everglades, but also willingly sought such assignments with the Army. As a result, McLaughlin found his duties consisted of the capture and transport of Seminole prisoners.

**The second activation
of Fort Dallas
resulted from
General Jesup's defeat
of the Seminoles on
the Loxahatchee River
in January 1838,
in the second
Seminole War.**

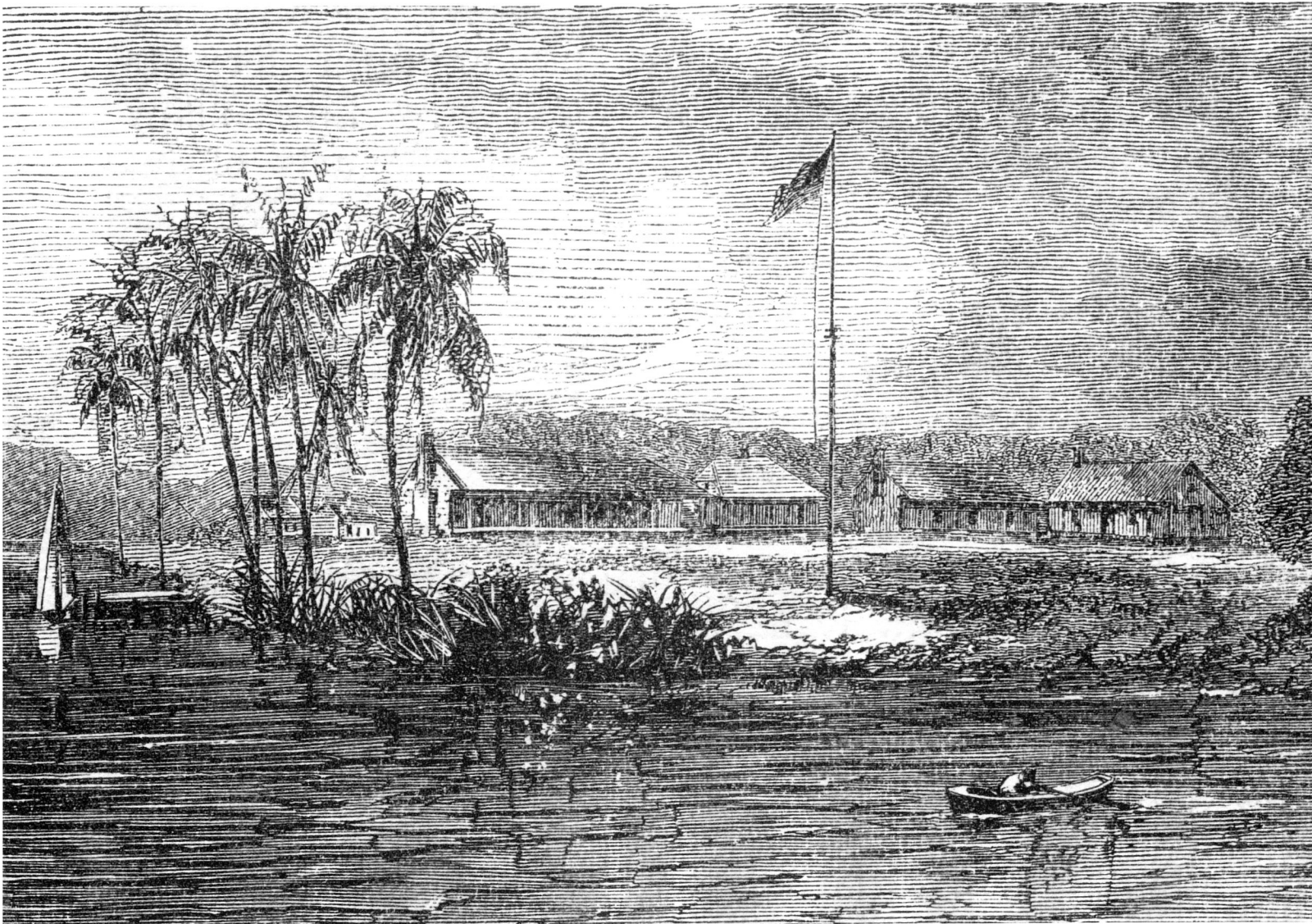
The third occupation and second location of Fort Dallas (south bank of the Miami River) occurred in October 1839 and lasted until January 1842. Again it was the Navy who supplied the post and prepared it for Army use. The new post Commander was Captain Martin Burke, Commander of Company I, Third Artillery. A section from Company I, Second Infantry was also under his command. For Captain Burke to move his troops to the new site of Fort Dallas, the Navy rowed them across Biscayne Bay. During this occupation, Dallas still consisted of a tented camp.

It may appear strange today that artillery and infantry units would be so mixed, but during the Seminole Wars it was a common practice to merge a company of artillery and infantry into a basic unit of fifty men. This group usually was commanded by a Captain. This is a marked departure from today's Army where artillery and infantry are kept separate and a basic company may contain as many as 250 men.

Dallas was normally manned by about 100 men, excluding officers. These men were divided into two basic companies. The largest number of men (four companies) stationed at Fort Dallas came with the fourth occupation in December 1841. But in January 1842, the fort was again closed and the troops transferred to Tampa Bay or to Fort Lauderdale. In October 1849, a single company reoccupied the position for almost fifteen months. Lieutenant T. W. Sherman then turned the post over to the Navy. This marked the fifth and final occupation of the fort on the south bank of the river.

The sixth and last occupation of Dallas began on January 3, 1855, and continued until May 1858 when the Army closed all its Seminole War forts in Florida. It was at this time that the post was located on the north bank of the Miami River. The troops occupied the unfinished stone buildings left from the Richard Fitzpatrick plantation, but constructed by his nephew William English. The army leased these buildings from Mr. Fitzpatrick for \$250 a year. At a later date, Fitzpatrick claimed damages to his property but the records fail to definitely establish just how the claim was settled.

The two unfinished stone buildings had actually been built by William F. English in the early 1840s. English, however, abandoned Florida for the California Gold Rush of 1849 before completing the structures. One was a two-story structure and the other a 95 x 17-foot slave quarters building. The unfinished condition of the buildings prompted the Army to place roofs on them during their final occupation. The Army also built floors,



Fort Dallas on the north bank of the Miami River. "Along the Florida Reef" Harper's New Monthly Magazine, March 1871. HASE.



J.W. Ewan, right, manager of the Biscayne Bay Company property on the Miami River north bank, stood in front of William English's old slave quarters, known as Fort Dallas. HASE, Ralph Monroe Collection 177D.

partitioned the buildings and created rooms. The main building was used for the officers, and the slave quarters for the enlisted men. In January, after all these improvements had been completed, the post reopened. The new acting Assistant Quartermaster was Lieutenant L. C. Morris.

In July 1855, Morris sought and received \$3,500 to construct two frame buildings for additional quarters, a kitchen, a storehouse and a guard and prison room. The last construction activity at Fort Dallas was a 75 x 31-foot stable, which was erected in February 1857. In May 1858, the Army left Fort Dallas for the final time. The structures remained intact until the hurricane of 1874, which destroyed all of the frame buildings. The barracks building (slave quarters) was then used as the Dade County Courthouse for several years.

When Julia Tuttle arrived in Miami after purchasing the Dallas site and the adjoining 640 acres from the Biscayne Bay Company in 1891, she placed Spanish tile on the floors of the two remaining stone buildings. The tile had been salvaged from a shipwreck. Mrs. Tuttle used the two-story building as her home, and various employees lived in the other stone (barracks) building.

In 1923, the Miami Womens Club leased the buildings for use as a library and for their meetings. The barracks then became a tearoom and quarters for the Everglades Chapter of

the Daughters of the American Revolution. The 18-month lease expired in 1925. That year, Dr. R. C. Hoge razed the main building and built the Robert Clay Hotel on its site.

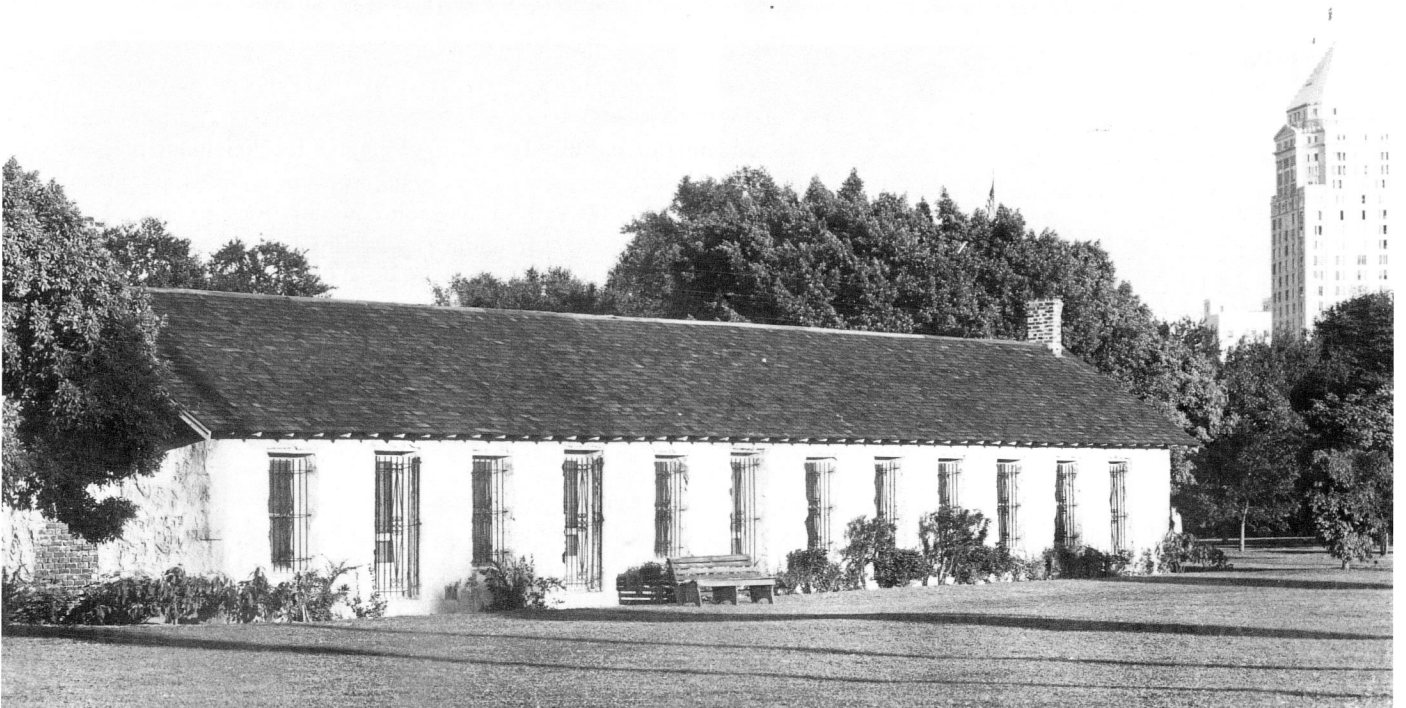
The Womens Club and the D. A. R. raised \$7,000 to save the barracks building by moving it to a site donated by the City of Miami in Lummus Park (N.W. River Drive and N.W. 3rd Street). This historic landmark was used by the D. A. R. as a meeting place and as a museum of American Revolutionary War relics until the 1990s.

First established by Lieutenant Powell, Fort Dallas represents a proud piece of Miami's heritage. All that remains of it are the old slave quarters that had later been converted into army barracks. Fort Dallas's history as a military post covers more than 90 years and involves three different locations and six separate occupations. The evidence clearly establishes the fact that the structure in Lummus Park that is referred to as a fort was indeed a part of the fort. Thus, 90 years after Lieutenant Powell established Fort Dallas, all remains of the fort and the Naval depot had been destroyed, except the slave quarters...which had been relocated into a new and meaningless location. —SFH

Arthur "Chappy" Chapman has written a number of articles for South Florida History.



Above—Fort Dallas removal, April 21, 1925. HASF 82-23-1. Below—The reconstructed Fort Dallas, Lummus Park, 1941. HASF 1989-245-96.



Sir Winston Churchill

visits South Florida

by William E. Brown, Jr.

SOUTH FLORIDA HAS BEEN HOST TO A GREAT MANY VISITING HEADS OF STATE, RELIGIOUS leaders, foreign dignitaries and members of royal families for diplomatic meetings and personal vacations. All such visits generate a certain degree of publicity, pomp and celebration. Few, however, rival the trip Sir Winston Churchill took to South Florida in 1946. The unusual timing of events in South Florida, England and on the world's stage contributed to a unique and memorable six-week visit.

At the time of his visit, Churchill was one of the world's preeminent politicians and leaders, though the previous July, in Great Britain's first national election in ten years, the Labor Party had defeated Churchill's Conservative Party. A true Renaissance man, Churchill was, among his many avocations, a statesman, historian and painter. Obviously, Churchill's 1946 visit to South Florida generated pages and pages of newspaper and magazine stories, and media of all types watched his every step.

Originally, Churchill planned one public appearance during his American stay. He was scheduled to deliver a major speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Mo., with President Harry S. Truman. This schedule was altered, however, when the University of Miami seized this opportunity to grant Churchill an honorary degree in a special ceremony.

Churchill's ninth visit to the United States began on January 9, 1946, aboard the Queen Elizabeth. Among his shipmates were several hundred Canadian troops, some returning home after more than five years military service overseas. In a shipboard speech



Above—Winston Churchill flashed the victory hand gesture to spectators. HASE, Miami News Collection 1989-011-19770. Below—Churchill. HASE, Miami News Collection 1989-011-19782.

*“The good cause
has not been overthrown.
Tyrants have been hurled
from their place of power...
Do not be anxious about the future!
Be vigilant, be strong, be clear-sighted
but do not be worried.
Our future is in our hands.
Our lives are what we choose
to make them.”*



to these gallant troops, Churchill delivered some heartfelt remarks, "The good cause has not been overthrown. Tyrants have been hurled from their place of power... Do not be anxious about the future! Be vigilant, be strong, be clear-sighted but do not be worried. Our future is in our hands. Our lives are what we choose to make them."

Churchill arrived in New York and immediately took a train to Miami Beach, Fla., arriving on January 15, 1946. Colonel Frank W. Clarke, a shipowner, friend and Canadian host to Churchill during the Quebec Conference of 1943, once more housed his comrade, this time at his North Bay Road estate. Accommodations at the residence of the Quebec shipping executive included "plenty of ashtrays and a six-foot wide bed." To ensure privacy, a 24-hour guard of Miami police joined Churchill's own Scotland Yard agent. To ensure an enjoyable visit, an unknown British subject provided Churchill with his favorite cigars, as 500 eight-inch black stogies arrived in an elaborate cedar chest on board a Pan American Airways clipper ship from Kingston, Jamaica.

The *Miami Daily News* reported on Churchill's arrival, stating that "he was in good humor and answered reporters' questions quietly and distinctly. The most pressing question concerned England's need for financial assistance, a \$4 billion request, in the aftermath of World War II. The British statesman noted, 'We suffered far more than any other country during the war... Some other countries were overrun but they were not fighting. We were fighting and used up our credit. We borrowed all we could and now we must use all we can get.'"

Walter Locke, a reporter, described Churchill:

"A round-faced, round-headed, benevolent, almost jolly gentleman without a vestige of a front! The collar of his shirt spreads open. A soft hat with brim upturned in front gives him a look of genial impishness not compatible with a brownie or kewpie doll... As he turns his back—the back never shown to an enemy—we see in a sagging of the shoulders a sign of the burdens they have borne. Such, in the flesh, is the giant of the spirit whose deeds will echo through the centuries, a body needing the rest beneath the southern sun which so richly it has earned."

Churchill maintained a vigorous schedule while in South Florida. Photographic spreads in local newspapers included extensive images of Churchill's temporary residence, with room-by-room descriptions. Two secretaries were required to keep up with his correspondence, as Churchill received some 300 letters each day. The secretaries handled routine requests for autographs, obligatory thank-yous, and the like. Churchill himself dictated about ten responses per day. In a letter to long-time friend Sir Hugh Taylor, Churchill wrote, "I hope to find sunshine and painting here, but today is grey and cold." Mrs. Clementine Churchill wrote her daughter Mary, on January 18th, that "Papa has not yet settled down to painting and is a little sad and restless, poor darling. I hope he is going to begin writing something." She subsequently added, "The weather has slightly improved and Papa has now started a picture of palms reflecting in the water."



Top—Left to right; Frank C. Clark, Churchill and Mrs. John C. Clark at the Hialeah Park Race Track. HASE Miami News Collection 1989-011-19768. Above—Among other things, Churchill spent his time painting landscapes during his visit. HASE Miami News Collection 1989-011-19793.

While in Miami, Churchill published the first of hundreds of wartime reminiscences. A short time prior to Churchill's visit, Captain Harry C. Butcher, Dwight Eisenhower's naval aide, published a series of articles that included diary extracts of conversations between Eisenhower and those he met. Churchill was not impressed by these second- and third-hand recollections, and he wrote the future president that, "I think you have been ill-used by your confidential aide... [the] articles are, in my opinion, altogether below the level upon which such matters should be treated."

At this same time, Churchill explored the publication of his own memoirs, the most lucrative exercise of his literary career. The literary rights to these memoirs proved a most desirable property. Emery Reves, a literary agent then in Chicago, flew to New York, took a train to Washington and flew to Miami in a British Embassy plane.

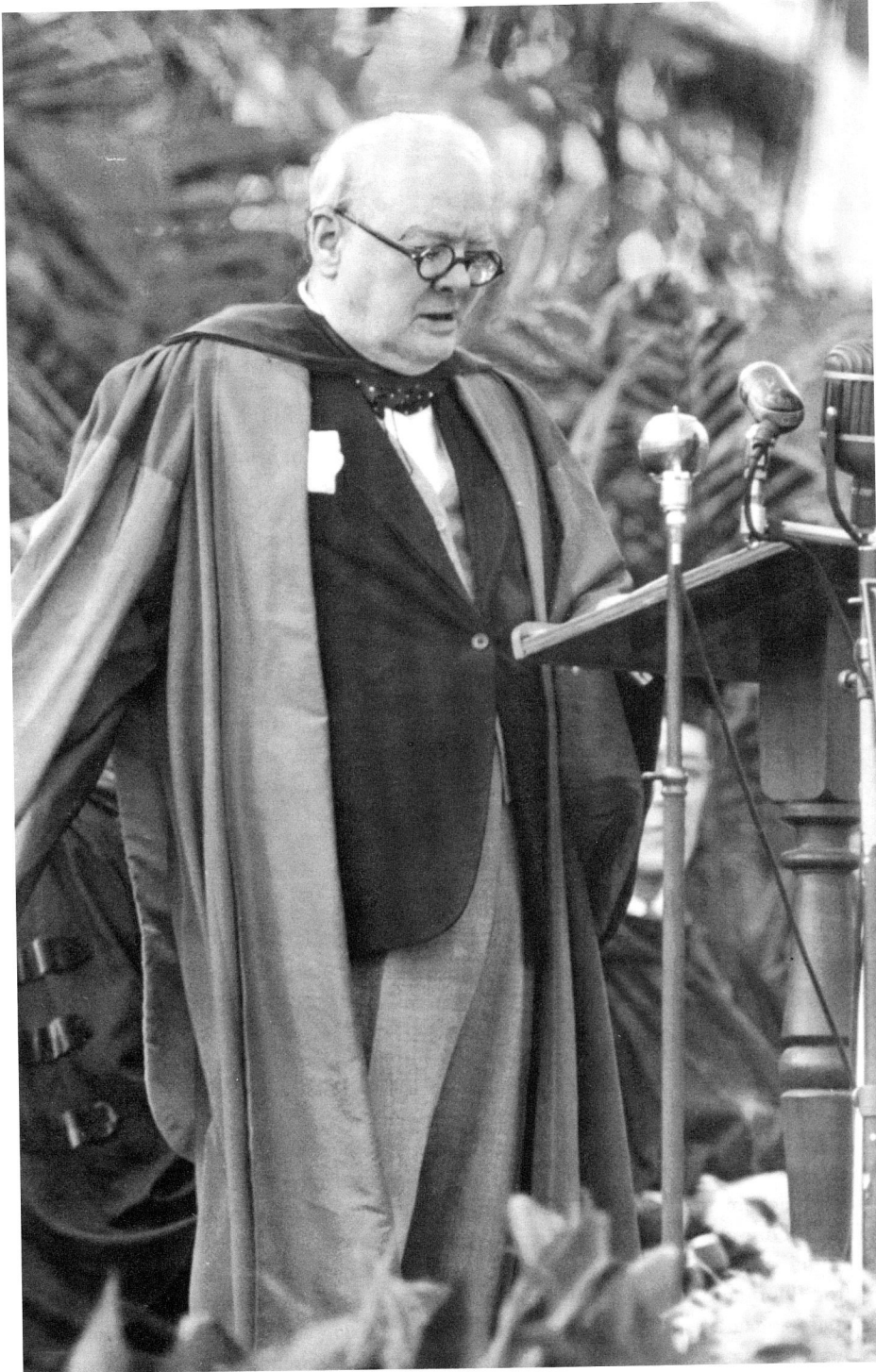


Churchill leaving the Hotel Nacional, enroute to the British Ambassador's home in Jaimanitas, Cuba. He is wearing what looks like a tank suit used during the war. HASE, Miami News Collection 1989-011-19769.

Churchill also corresponded with President Harry Truman while in South Florida. On January 29th, Churchill acknowledged Truman's offer "to place a powerful plane at my disposal and I am going to Cuba in it on Friday for a week." On February 1, Churchill, Clementine and daughter Sara flew from Florida to Cuba. His press conference at the Havana airport included responses to questions concerning the war crimes trials at Nuremberg and the veto powers of "the big five" of the United Nations. The business of British government did not escape Churchill while in Cuba, even as he prepared his Fulton speech. He returned to Miami Beach in late February, where an American cousin, Lilian Jerome, invited him to visit the homes of his American ancestors. Churchill declined, stating, "I am here on doctor's orders for rest and leisure... I do not think it suitable for me to become a member of the Sons of the Revolution, as we were evidently on both sides then."

Churchill ultimately decided to accept an honorary degree from the University of Miami because so many men of the Royal Air Force received wartime training at the University. Both the University and the local community scrambled to make last-minute arrangements for the ceremony. Dr. Bowman F. Ashe, President of the University of Miami, announced "after concluding arrangements with Churchill... the special convocation could not be held at the university buildings in Coral Gables because the largest hall available there 'won't even hold the student body.'"

The short time frame did not deter event planners, however. The ceremony received ample newspaper coverage, and a large crowd turned out for the special event. Published reports indicate the importance of this prestigious event to the Miami community. "Against a backdrop of unrivalled tropical beauty, approximately 30,000 people will witness the Orange Bowl ceremony



Churchill speaking before a crowd of some 17,500 at Burdine's Stadium. HASE, Miami News Collection 1989-011-19787.

Tuesday morning... The entire stadium...has been specially arranged...for the occasion... The ceremony will be broadcast locally over WIOD and WKAT. It will be carried over the CBS network...and six news reel men will take pictures of the ceremony. The green, orange and white hood of the University of Miami will be added to the crimson robe of Oxford, which Churchill will don tomorrow for the academic processional march to the platform."

On February 26, Churchill spoke before a crowd of some 17,500 at Burdine's Stadium, later renamed the Orange Bowl. Churchill spoke of the service that the University of Miami performed in 1941 by training Royal Air Force cadets, prior to the United States becoming a "belligerent." Churchill noted that more than 1,200 cadets "received a very high quality of technical, navigational and meteorological training." He also reminded the crowd that a very great many of these men "gave their lives shortly afterwards for their country and our common cause."

Churchill received an honorary degree at this special University of Miami ceremony, the first and only honorary degree ever awarded outside of the traditional Spring Commencement ceremonies. His speech notes record the humble feelings of a man who did not consider himself an outstanding student.

"I am surprised that in my later life I should have become so experienced in taking degrees, when as a school-boy, I was so bad at passing examinations. In fact one might almost say that no one ever passed so few examinations and received so many degrees. From this, a superficial thinker might argue that the way to get most degrees is to fail most examinations. This would however, ladies and gentlemen, be a conclusion unedifying in the academic in which I now preen myself, and I therefore hasten to draw another moral which I am sure we shall all be in accord; namely, that no boy or girl should ever be disheartened by lack of success in their youth but should diligently and faithfully continue and persevere and make up for lost time."

Churchill's extended remarks also reinforce the important role that the University of Miami and the South Florida community played in training American and RAF personnel. Churchill

was quite prophetic in his thoughts that institutions such as the University of Miami would be "making special arrangements" to accommodate returning war veterans, and that the fledgling University now stood on the brink of exciting times.

"I wish, also, on behalf of my country to thank the University of Miami for the wonderful help which they gave us in the late war by training cadets of the RAF before the U.S. became a



Churchill accepting an honorary degree from the University of Miami. HASE Miami News Collection 1989-011-19788.

belligerent. Upwards of 1,200 cadets of the RAF received here a very high degree of technical, navigational and meteorological training. They flew 5.5 million miles over Florida upon instructional courses, and the majority gave their lives for their country and our common cause... It is a consolation to learn that they left so many pleasant memories behind them among the 2,000 Miami households who received them with true American hospitality and afterwards followed their fortunes and their fate almost as if they were the sons of the soil... Millions of young men have had their education interrupted by the war. Their lives have been slashed across by its flaming sword. We must make sure that, in both our countries, they do not suffer needlessly for this particular form of the sacrifice they have made... I suppose, Mr. President [Ashe], that you are making special arrangements on a great scale to adapt conditions of university life to these veterans, as you call them (though they are pretty young to earn such a title), or warriors, anyhow, who come back after fighting their countries battles...

“The function not only honors the recipient of the degree but the institution which confers it as well... The academic world envies the University of Miami the distinction that is hers today. President Bowman F. Ashe and his faithful faculty, who nourished the institution from its faltering infant struggles two decades ago to its present strength, are proud of the educational stature to which the University has attained...”

Churchill's words remind us of a time and a place that at times feels like yesterday and yet often seems many lifetimes removed from today. Although the crowd fell far short of the 30,000 expected to jam the stadium, probably because of the cloudiness of the morning, those who attended the historic [sic] convocation took part in colorful and impressive ceremonies. —*SFH*

Bill Brown is the former head of Special Collections, University of Miami Library. He is now Coordinator for Research & Instruction at the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

The Metal Hull Boat



Metal hull boat docked in Marathon, Florida. HASF 1992-009-001.

One man's account of his voyage from Cuba

By Jorge Zamanillo

Objects or artifacts collected in museums always have a story to tell, whether it is a 3,000-year-old projectile point that helps us understand how our prehistoric predecessors hunted for food in the Everglades, or a collection of early 20th century photographs that provides glimpses of pioneer life in South Florida. Occasionally, museum curators have the opportunity to thoroughly document the history of an artifact, which sometimes leads to an exceptional story, such as the following account.

Rustic boats and rafts were a common sight to fishermen and boaters along the east coast of Florida in the early 1990s. Ever since the Mariel boatlift in 1980, Cuban citizens seeking political asylum from their socialist country have continued to attempt the voyage across the Florida Straits to the United States. By the mid-1990s, this wave of immigration turned into a dangerous affair, with Cubans risking their lives on makeshift rafts composed of inner tubes tied together or simple wooden platforms with a crude sail. Strong Gulf Stream currents can carry a boat from western Cuba all the way to east central Florida in a couple of days. Rafts washed in with the currents so frequently that they became a common sight on the beaches of Miami. Many boats were found empty, providing no clues regarding the fate of the passengers. Some Cuban refugees were rescued by cargo ships offshore, but many times the passengers on these vessels never made it to land.

In December 1991, a former trustee of the Historical Association of Southern Florida recovered a small metal hull

boat that had washed up near Marathon, Florida and gave it to the museum. Although the boat was found before the larger wave of “rafters” began arriving in Florida, the rustic vessel was believed to be Cuban in origin. Further inspection of the boat revealed a wallet, seemingly left behind by one of the passengers of the boat. The wallet contained a passport, driver’s license, photographs, and even traffic citations, all belonging to a Cuban citizen named Yuri Cardentey Carrasco. Attempts were made in the early 1990s to locate Yuri, but all efforts, including broadcasting a message on a local Spanish-language radio station, were unsuccessful.

In November of 2000, my efforts to locate the owner of the wallet proved more fortunate. After several failed attempts to locate Yuri through old addresses, disconnected phone numbers, and several unwelcome phone calls to everyone in the phone book with the same surname, I finally located Yuri by calling directory assistance. Yuri had dropped his second surname, as is customary for many Cuban immigrants upon establishing residency in the United States.

Finally, I had the opportunity to meet and interview Yuri. During a two-hour interview, Yuri was gracious enough to detail his account of the voyage that brought him and four other men to the United States in 1991. During the interview, he also provided a glimpse into the conditions and circumstances in Cuba that led others to flee the island in such a desperate fashion throughout the early to mid-1990s. The following is his account, translated from Spanish and edited for narrative purposes.

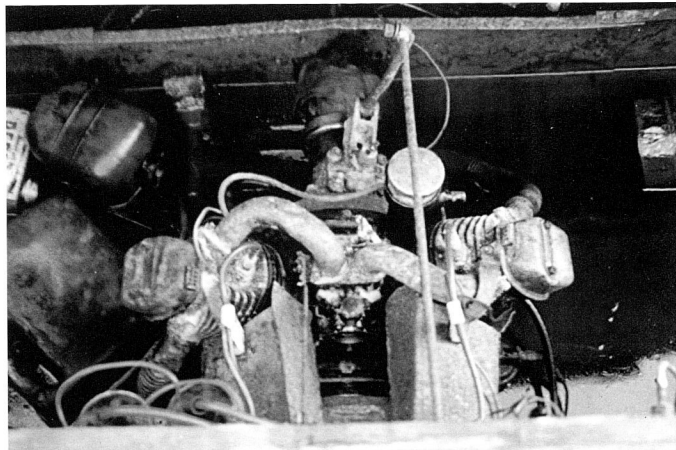
In April of 1991, Yuri Cardentey and his close friend Juan Manuel Romero began the construction of a small 14-foot metal hull boat in the back yard of Juan's small wooden house. This wasn't the first time Juan Romero had attempted to build a means of escape from Cuba. In 1985, Juan had unsuccessfully tried to build a hydroplane. He envisioned leaving the island by air, along with Yuri, on the small lightweight plane and began construction on the craft. But after three months of just building the large propeller needed, they realized they did not have the materials needed to build the plane or the knowledge to fly it.

Six years went by and Juan and Yuri made no further attempts to leave the island, but it was always on their mind. Yuri had a good job in food sales, a decent place to live, and a vintage American automobile. Along with both parents, he also had two sisters, a daughter and other relatives in Cuba. Although comfortable at the time, Yuri knew things were getting worse in Cuba and that he would have to leave soon. Juan Romero was not as fortunate. He was having problems making ends meet and lived, along with a wife, two children, and a third on the way, in a small rundown house with earthen floors. He was in a more desperate situation than Yuri was, but both had the desire to leave Cuba. They decided they would build a boat to attempt, once again, to reach Florida.

Working in their spare time and days off from work, Yuri and Juan completed the boat in less than six months. Most of the time was spent looking for parts and materials to build the craft. The hull was made from scrap metal sheets and lined in the interior with particleboard. Sheet metal screws, scavenged inconspicuously from his dad's workplace, were used as rivets along all the exterior seams. A Russian automobile motor served as their inboard power, with a large 20-gallon gas tank hidden under the bow of the boat. A simple rudder attached to an automobile steering wheel controlled their direction. With an enclosed stern for the motor and a sealed bow for fuel, the only space left for the passengers was a small 4 x 5-foot area.

On October 1, 1991, Yuri and Juan hitched their boat on a makeshift trailer to a friend's car and launched from the Rosario River near Pinar del Rios (west of Havana) where they lived. Unfortunately, their first attempt did not succeed. A broken engine part forced them to hide the boat in the nearby mangroves along the riverbanks and return home. While searching for the replacement part on October 2, they came across an acquaintance who was a mechanic. Along with helping them with their missing part, he informed them that he had a brother, also a mechanic, who wanted to leave Cuba. They agreed to take the brother, Alberto Quintana, along, but when he showed up he also had two other friends with him, Joel and Alfredo. The small passenger area for two would now accommodate five.

On October 3, the five men returned to where the boat was hidden, full of apprehension and fear. They had scouted out the river ahead of time for a place to launch and to check for obstructions, depth and currents. They also knew that there was a military base near the mouth of the river, further into an inlet



Top—The Russian automobile motor that served as the boat's inboard power. HASE Middle—Yuri standing next to boat. Courtesy of Yuri Cardentey. Above—Rosario river, near location where boat was launched. Courtesy of Yuri Cardentey.

along Puerto Esperanza. While preparing to launch, they started to contemplate the possibilities of the military having seen their boat and waiting to ambush them. At exactly 8:00 p.m., they left their fears behind and headed out towards the open sea, with enough food and water for one week, 20 gallons of fuel in the large tank, four 5-gallon cans of extra fuel and two oars in case their engine failed.

With no moonlight and a heavy chop, the night seemed endless. They could see the lights along the Cuban skyline throughout the night. With a diver's wrist compass, they headed north-northeast in an attempt to reach the stronger currents, while also heading further east towards the Florida Keys. The five men, using the fuel cans as seats and braving the strong choppy ride, became wearier. By dawn their hopes were raised by expectations that they had reached international waters, judging by the visibility of the island from the boat. During the morning hours, Yuri recalls changing from his pants to shorts. His wallet was in his pants pocket, so he doesn't understand why the wallet was found on the boat without his pants.

At 2:00 p.m. on October 4, a Honduran freighter ship sighted the small vessel 30 miles north of Havana in international waters. Their boat had actually traveled more than three times that distance, since it left from Pinar del Rios, which is approximately 90 miles to the west of Havana. The ship signaled the U.S. Coast Guard, which arrived approximately two hours later. By 8:00 that night, they were in Key West, exactly 24 hours after the beginning of their trip. No one awaited their arrival in Florida. With the exception of one of the men who had grandparents in New Jersey, they had no relatives in the United States and no friends or acquaintances to help them get settled in South Florida.

On January 14, 2001, Yuri, Juan, and Alberto, the three passengers who still live in Miami, had the opportunity to see, once again, the boat that they built. It is currently stored in the Historical Museum of Southern Florida's off-site storage facility.

Along with family members and Yuri's parents, visiting from Cuba at the time, the three men reminisced about their trip, their hardships in Cuba, and their new lives in the United States.

Thinking back, they see no way they could have made it to the United States on the fuel they had. Based on their fuel consumption during 18 hours at sea, they had only about two hours of fuel remaining and approximately 60 miles to travel.

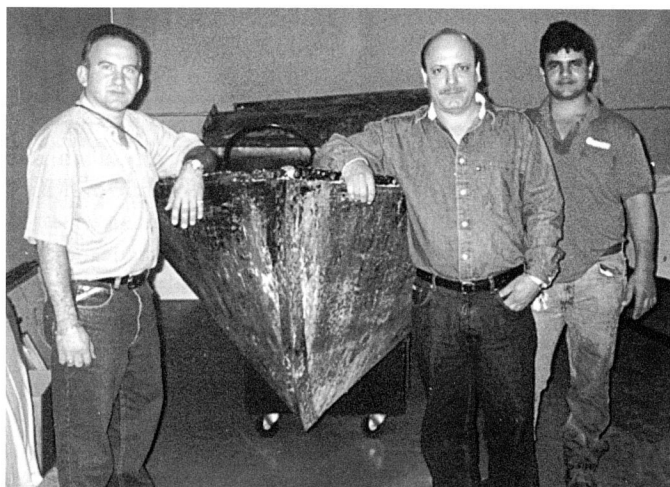
Yuri Cardentey is now a U.S. citizen and owns an automobile paint and body shop in South Dade, where he lives with his wife and daughter. He has visited Cuba four times since his arrival in 1991, and married his current wife during one of those trips. Yuri continues to

support his family in Cuba and realizes that at his parents' age, a change in lifestyle would be too drastic if they were to come to Miami. Yuri was even offered a chance by an immigration

agent to remain on the island on one of his trips but turned down the offer. Every time he returns to Cuba, he realizes how bad it really is there, not only compared to the life he has in the United States but in terms of the Cuba he knew a decade ago. He knew when he left that the time was coming for a bigger wave of emigration from his country, and he is glad he did not have to come over in a raft.

When asked about their ordeal in leaving their homeland, their expectations of life in the U.S., and if they had any regrets, Yuri and his wife Anaylys felt the same way: "This is the closest to paradise we can be...when Cubans arrive in this country they have to accept that they are starting a new life...they have to imagine themselves being reborn...learning how to live in a new country, a new city, making new friends and new customs... It's fine to keep your own customs but you have to be

able to let go of the past... If not, you will never be happy, only full of regrets." —*SFH*

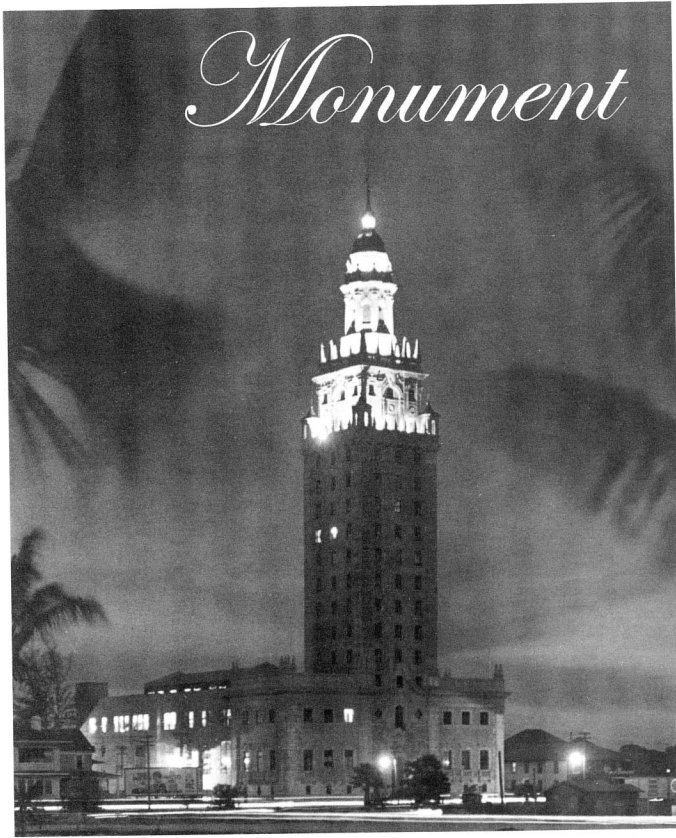


Left to right, Yuri, Juan Manuel and Alberto visiting the Museum's off-site storage facility. HASEF

“This is the closest to paradise we can be...when Cubans arrive in this country they have to accept that they are starting a new life...they have to imagine themselves being reborn...you have to be able to let go of the past...If not, you will never be happy, only full of regrets.”

Jorge Zamanillo is Curator of Object Collections at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida.

History in the Making



Monument

to the Cuban struggle for Freedom

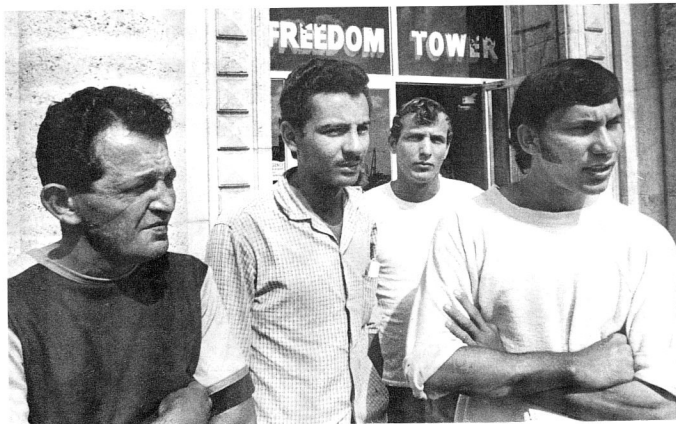
The Freedom Tower, once the headquarters of the *Miami News & Metropolis* and later a processing station for hundreds of thousands of Cuban refugees, is scheduled to reopen its doors to the public on May 20, 2002, the 100th anniversary of Cuban independence.

The Mediterranean-style landmark bought by the Mas Canosa's family in 1997 will feature an interactive museum, a library and research center chronicling the Cuban exile experience in South Florida.

El Refugio or Miami's own "Ellis Island," as some may call it, will also offer meeting and assembly spaces, offices for nonprofit organizations, such as the Cuban American National Foundation, and preserved relics of the *Miami News*.

"This building, which long served as a beacon for hope, will be assured its rightful place for posterity and monument to the legacy of Cuban Americans, for whom these halls became the way to freedom..."

—Jorge Mas Canosa



When the present NEWS TOWER (as indicated by heavy shaded portion of above) was built in 1924-1925 the foundations were laid with a view to future expansion. That day is soon at hand, for the present facilities are already taxed to a straining point. Above is an artist's conception of the enlarged NEWS TOWER which, at present rate of progress, should be a fulfilled achievement long before the turn of another half century in the history of the Miami Daily News and The City of Miami.

MIAMI DAILY NEWS "Florida's Great Evening Newspaper"

Left to Right—Freedom Tower. HASF 1995-234-28. Plans for future expansion of the News Tower, 1946. HASF x-980-1. Cuban refugees rescued off of Marathon Key stand in front of the Freedom Tower in the early 1970s. HASF Miami News Collection 1989-011-4556.

OUR MEMBERS CARE...OUR MEMBERS GIVE

This list recognizes our new members who joined and past members who rejoined the Historical Museum from July 1, 2000 through December 31, 2000. Thank you for your investment in our region's heritage through membership.

Fellow Patron

Mr. & Mrs. William G. Earle

Benefactor

Dr. Raymond McGuire

Sponsor

Ms. Elizabeth Ernst
Dr. Maria Dolores Espino
Mr. Anselmo Febles
Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Foersler
Ms. & Ms. Bill Huggett
Ken-Kraft Press, Inc.
Mr. & Mrs. Arsenio Milian

Donor

Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Albury

Tropee Family

Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Campbell
Mr. & Mrs. Rene Caro
Mr. & Mrs. Manuel Franco
Mr. Michael Gazda & Mrs. Sandra Murado Gazda
Ms. Jill Granat
Ms. Vilma Llerena
Mr. Michael Morris & Ms. Melissa Latus
Mr. & Mrs. Nelo Patton
Ms. Paige A. Roden

Family

Ms. Martha Allen
Mr. & Mrs. Dan Alter
Mr. & Mrs. Juan Antunez
Mr. Ron Bagwell
Ms. Elsa F. Bailey
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Bauer
Mr. Richard Bock
Ms. Carmen Bofill & Ms. Marianna Romero
Ms. Margaret Bradley Davis & Mr. Joe Richards
Ms. Nancy Brook
Ms. Kathy Brown
Ms. Selah Bryan
Ms. Omara Casas & Mr. Carlos De Leon
Ms. Sonia Clark
Ms. Jennifer M. Clarke
Ms. Kim Connert
Ms. Christin Croci
Mr. Robert Curbelo, Jr.
Ms. Jean Cuson
Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Davis
Ms. Debora Diaz
Mr. & Mrs. John B. DorenKott
Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Erskine
Ms. Marian H. Fassbach
Ms. Maria E. Fernandez
Ms. Lisa Figueredo
Ms. Carol Fink & Mr. David Smith
Ms. Claudia Fleming
Mr. Pedro Fonteboa
Ms. Barbara Gabelman
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Galloway
Ms. Lottie Garcia & Mr. Richard Hurtig
Mr. & Mrs. Manuel Gimenez
Mr. & Mrs. Neal Glenn
Ms. Carol Goetz
Mr. & Mrs. K. Randall Groh
Mr. Stan Grubman
Mr. Todd Hays
Ms. Helena Hershfield & Mr. Allan Hershfield
Mr. & Ms. David Hester
Ms. Martina Hopkins
Ms. Stephanie Howe
Mr. & Mrs. George Hudson
Mr. Jack Hunter
Mr. William L. Hunter
Mr. & Mrs. Abe Ing
Ms. Dania Irvin
Ms. Natalee L. Jenks
Mr. & Mrs. Lester R. Johnson

Ms. Wendy Kirby
Mr. & Mrs. Phil Klimoski
Ms. Kerry Kolsch
Ms. Miekko Kubota
Ms. Nancy G. Laffin
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Llavona
Ms. Frady Llerena
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Lynn
Ms. Caridad Marill
Ms. Valen Mayland
Ms. Laura McKinney
Mr. Alejo Menendez & Ms. Susanne Ragnarsson
Mr. & Mrs. George Miller
Mr. Robert Miller
Ms. Sue Miller
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Ochipa
Mr. & Mrs. Kenny Oliver
Mr. Manny Palgon & Ms. Abbey Chase
Ms. Elena Pastoriza & Ms. Mayra Zaldivar
Ms. Charlene Peacon
Ms. Terry Pettit
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas E. Pfeiffer
Ms. Viviana Piedra
Ms. Sandee Polin
Mr. & Mrs. William Pomerantz
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Raines
Mr. & Mrs. Christopher Recicar
Ms. Alina Riesgo
Mr. & Mrs. Alec Rosen
The Rev. Jacquelyn Rowe
Ms. Joan Ruffe
Mr. & Mrs. Alexander Sanchez
Mr. George E. Sedano
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Seiden
Mr. & Mrs. John Shapiro
Ms. LouAnn Short
Ms. Kimberly Silfies
Mr. & Mrs. David Siljee
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Silver
Ms. Martha Singleton & Mr. Walter Walkington
Ms. Patricia Steverding
Ms. Debby Stewart
Ms. Alison Strachan & Ms. Kathy Barber
Mr. Eduardo Tarafa
Ms. Alicia Ulmo
Mr. Juan C. Urbina
Ms. Mayling Urrea
Ms. Nathalie Vinueza
Mr. & Mrs. Ted Weiss
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Yaniga
Ms. Paula York & Ms. Sarah York
Mrs. Audrey Zurawel

Individual

Mr. Roberto C. Acosta
Ms. Morella Aguilar
Ms. Lesley Allen
Ms. Christine Atherton
Ms. Patricia A. Atkinson
Ms. Shelly Baer
Ms. Nancy Baldwin
Ms. Beth Barry
Ms. Alexandra Bassil
Ms. Irma Bayona
Ms. Gita Beharry
Ms. Cathy Bennett
Ms. Nancy Bernal
Ms. Elsa Biaggi
Ms. Olga Bodan
Ms. Jane Boynton
Ms. Jan Brown
Mr. Scott L. Bryan
Ms. Mimi Budd
Ms. Robin Caple
Ms. Elena V. Carpenter
Ms. Victoria Carpenter
Ms. Lula Chadderton

Ms. Cecilia Cooper
Ms. Pat Crosby
Ms. Nancy d'Albenas
Ms. Zena Decky
Ms. Carol Delaney
Ms. Teresa F. Diaz
Mr. Phil Follins
Ms. Jean Fountain
Ms. Susie Garcia
Mr. Victor Garlock
Ms. Susan Gaunt
Ms. Linda Goodman
Ms. Tina Goolsby
Mr. William J. Graef
Ms. Hilda Halevy
Ms. Barbara Hampton
Ms. Inge Hartnett
Ms. Maureen Henry
Dr. Mary-Alice Herbert
Ms. Nataly Herbert
Ms. Nimia Hernandez
Ms. Karen K. Hobson
Ms. Gail Jordan
Ms. Esther Karamanlakis
Ms. Betty King
Ms. Kay Knowles
Ms. Susan Kong
Ms. Jodie Kozdron
Mr. William L. Lashar, Jr.
Mr. Jim Lewk
Ms. Laura Linardi
Ms. Kathleen Maguire
Ms. Elizabeth Martinez
Mr. Victor Martinez
Ms. Donna Mathews
Ms. Vonda McCoy
Ms. Sylma Millares
Mr. Carlos Miyares
Ms. Haydee Morales
Ms. Janet Mosely
Ms. Linda M. Myer
Ms. Marlene Nelson
Ms. Gladys Nesbitt
Mr. Jose G. Nieto
Ms. Marilyn Denise Noe
Ms. Jeanette O'Connor
Ms. Betty Oglesby
Ms. Lourdes Ori
Mr. and Mrs. Marty Palmer
Ms. Aurora Penalver
Ms. Marta Perez-Pendas
Mr. Sheryl T. Poindexter
Ms. Justine Postal
Ms. Ann R. Prospero
Ms. Trish Ramsay
Ms. Fran Ristling
Ms. Cira Rodriguez
Ms. Beatriz Roman
Mr. H. Paul Root
Mrs. Agnes Rush Bowles
Ms. Nancy Saade
Ms. Judith Schalit
Mr. Irwin Schneider
Ms. Lee Schuster
Mr. David Siegel
Ms. Kimberly Smith
Mr. Frederick B. Spiegel
Ms. Martha M. Stobs
Mr. John Stuart
Ms. Jackie Thayer
Ms. Holly K. Thompson
Ms. Cheryl Van der Lann
Ms. Ann Vendrell
Ms. Barbara Walsh
Ms. Diane Ward
Ms. Carolyn Wörthington

Ms. Lynn Young

Tropee Individual

Ms. Maria C. Abello
Ms. Kelsy Abernathy
Ms. Anabelle Abaira
Mr. Edward L. Acle
Ms. Marlene Alegre
Ms. Charita Allen
Ms. Denise Andrews
Mr. Victor Antunez
Ms. Maria Bacallao
Ms. Michelle Baeza
Ms. Patricia Barona
Ms. Nereida Berkeley
Ms. Tania C. Bobe
Ms. Diana Brulay
Mr. Cameron Burg
Mr. Rick Burt
Ms. Marc A. Cabrera
Ms. Carolina Calzada
Ms. Carmen Campos
Mr. Nibaldo J. Capote
Ms. Elizabeth Caro
Ms. Iliana Cruz
Ms. Courtney Damon
Mr. Sean Davis
Ms. Lourdes Diaz
Ms. Sandra Fairman
Mr. Manuel Fermín
Mr. Sixto J. Ferro
Ms. Carol Foster
Ms. Sunny Fraser
Ms. Adriana Fundora
Mr. Dan Gallik
Mr. Alexander Galvez
Ms. Tamara E. Garcia
Ms. Lola Garcia de Quevedo
Ms. Marilyn Garrido
Mr. Alexander Gary
Ms. Christina Getty
Mr. Eduardo Gonzalez
Mr. Mark S. Grogan
Mr. Oscar Hernandez
Ms. Michelle Herrera
Mr. Donald G. Hiller
Mr. Horst Hohl
Ms. Carol Holden
Ms. Katrine Jensen
Ms. Catherine Kelly
Mr. Nick Lambrou
Mr. Craig S. Likness
Ms. Grace C. Lopez
Ms. Marika Lynch
Ms. Jennie S. Malloy
Ms. Ann Merlin
Mr. Johnathan Parker
Ms. Julie Paugam
Mr. Luis J. Perez
Mr. Francisco Recio
Ms. Jennifer M. Rosario
Mr. Gonzalo Ruiz
Mr. Hugh A. Ryan
Ms. Adalyn Saladrigas
Ms. Lisa Schmick
Ms. Tamara Sisler
Ms. Elizabeth Skjoldal
Ms. Andrea Spurgeon
Ms. Lexia Suarez
Ms. Jennifer Tisthammer
Mr. Mike Trebilcock
Ms. Hortensia Trias
Ms. Monica Y. Velazquez
Mr. Richard B. Watson
Ms. Krissy Wiborg
Mr. Paul D. Zamek

If you would like to change the listing of your name, please contact the Membership Coordinator at 305.375.1492 or send an e-mail to membership@historical-museum.org

INVOLVED?

We Want You To Be!

The TROPEES are a dynamic group who offer a unique format for involvement with the Historical Museum.

Cocktails, lectures, tours and incredible fund-raising events always with a historical twist and always to help support the Historical Museum.

GET INVOLVED WITH THE TROPEES!

JOIN the fun! Become a member
SIGN-UP on a committee
VOLUNTEER to work at an event
SPONSOR an Event

INTERESTED?

CALL (305) 375-1492

FRAMES USA Art Gallery
30 MIN. CUSTOM FRAMING

Your Picture Framing Source
posters ★ diplomas ★ photos ★ art ★ mirrors

We specialize in conservation framing

Bird Ludlam Shopping Center
6822 SW 40th Street
Miami, FL 33155

Tel: (305) 666-3355
Fax: (305) 665-6008

Casa Monica
HOTEL

95 Cordova Street • St. Augustine, Florida 32084
904-819-6005 • 800-648-1888 • Fax 904-827-0426
E-mail jonib@grandthemehotels.com • www.casamonica.com

BREITLING
1884

OMEGA

RAYMOND WEIL
GENEVE

HEUER

H. & H. JEWELS
"Fine Jewelry Designs"

MARK BYRD

3138 Commodore Plaza #8
Coconut Grove, Florida 33133
(305) 442-9760

Curbside
FLORIST & GIFTS
Gourmet Baskets • Fruit Shipping
1-800-776-2668

16115 S.W. 117 Ave. #10
Miami, FL 33157

(305) 233-2668
Fax: (305) 255-1978

Charo Oquet: Installation
May 19 - July 15, 2001

Open 10 am - 4 pm
every day except
Thursday, 10 am - 8 pm
Sunday, 1 pm - 4 pm
Monday, closed

**Art and Culture Center
of Hollywood**
1650 Harrison St., Hollywood
954. 921. 3274

Randy F. Nimnicht Fund

When Randy Nimnicht retired in December 2000 as President & CEO, he had served the Historical Museum for twenty-six years. Randy's vision steered the institution from a fledgling volunteer organization to a professional institution accredited by the American Association of Museums. Every program, every innovation bears his footprint. Thanks to Randy, we are the community's most important historical resource.

The Historical Museum is pleased to establish the *Randy F. Nimnicht Fund for Interpretation of South Florida & The Caribbean*. The fund, part of the museum's endowment, celebrates a lifetime of achievement.

Please join us in this lasting tribute to Randy by making a gift to the fund in recognition of twenty-six years of outstanding leadership.

For more information, call Marcia Kanner or Cuqui Beguiristain at 305.375.1492

In one exhibition...

Historical Museum of Southern Florida
Florida's
ROCK 'N' ROLL
Legends
July 27, 2001 - January 20, 2002

FIFTY years of screaming fans. DOZENS of rock 'n' roll's biggest names and brightest superstars. More than 2,500 square feet of exhibition space devoted to telling the history of popular music in the Sunshine State.

Don't miss it.

Miami-Dade Cultural Center 101 West Flagler Street 305.375.1492 www.historical-museum.org

Travel back in time and explore
10,000 years of South Florida and Caribbean history at the
Historical Museum of Southern Florida's

Tropical Explorers Camp



Campers **ages 7-12** can bring the **past to life** through historical dramas, music, art projects and field trips to historic sites. Become pirates, conquistadors, Seminole Indians, archaeologists, pioneers and rock stars during three one-week day camp sessions.

Session I **Early Explorers**

June 25-June 29

Explore South Florida history from its prehistoric beginnings to the pioneer days in the mid-1800s.

Session II **The Magic City: Then and Now**

July 9-July 13

Uncover the magic city's past from its creation through the new millennium.

Session III **History Rocks**

July 30-August 3

Rock around the clock and discover Florida's rock-n-roll history from the 1950s to today.

For more information, call **305.375.1628**

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 608
MIAMI, FL