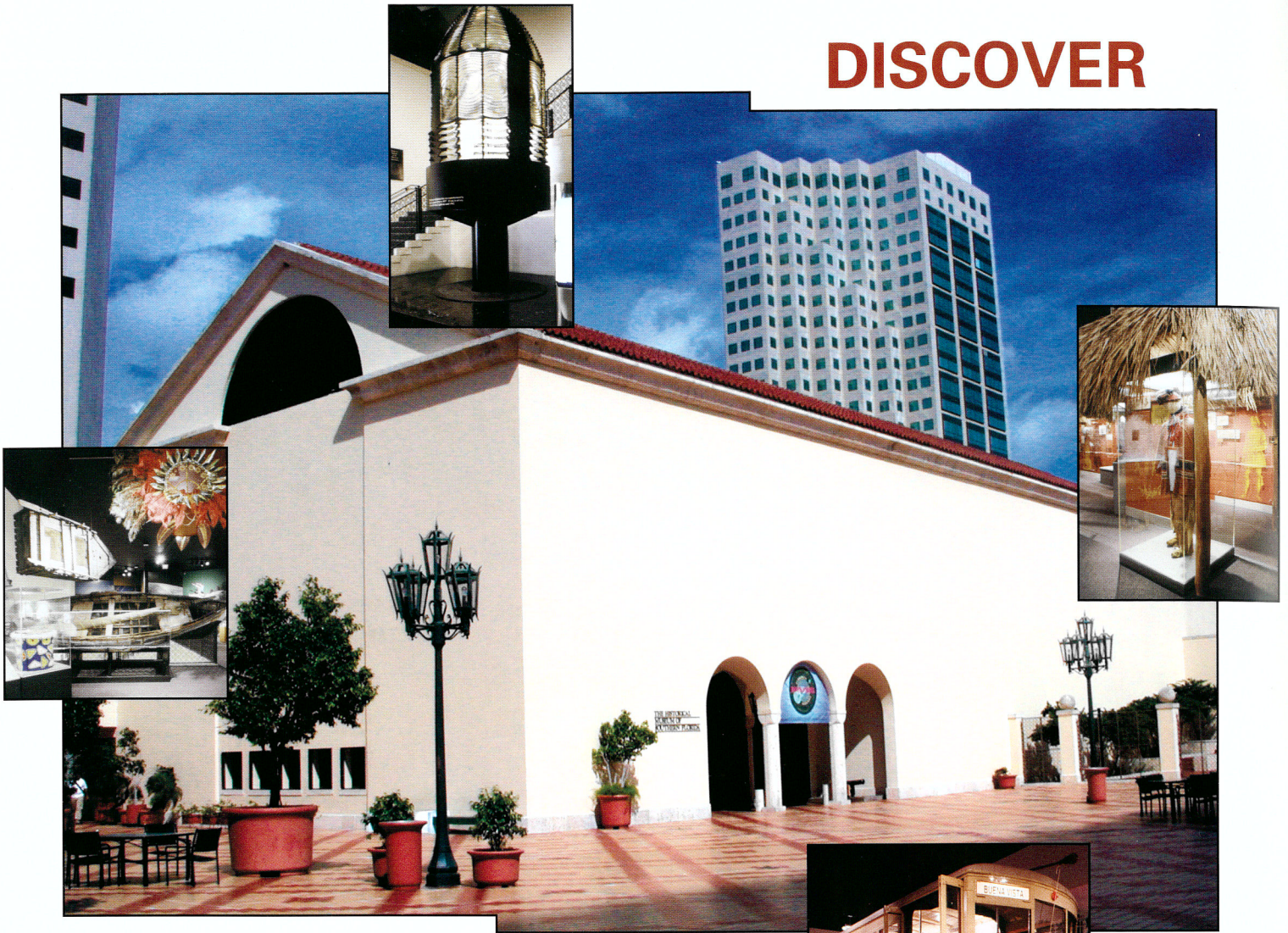


South Florida History

VOLUME 30, NO. 2 & 3, 2002 \$3.00



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**HISTORICAL MUSEUM
OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA**

Miami-Dade Cultural Center 101 West Flagler Street Miami, FL 33130
305.375.1492 www.historical-museum.org

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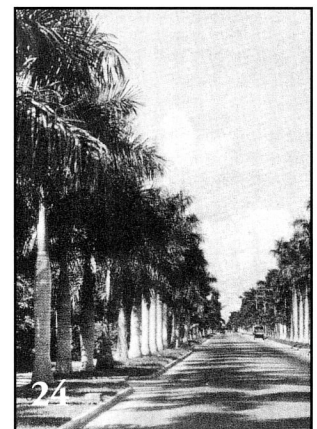
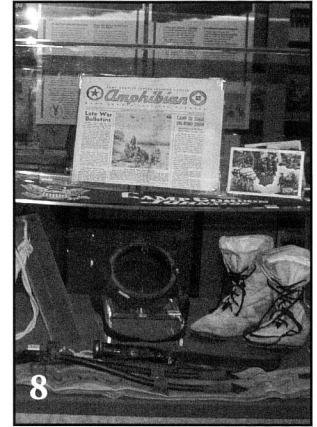
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Cover—Collage of World War II artifacts and memorabilia. A photograph by Al Diaz and Raul Rubiera that appears in *The Biltmore Hotel: An Enduring Legacy*, by Sam LaRoue and Ellen Ugucioni (Miami: Arva Parks & Company and Centennial Press 2002).

Editor's notes



Unlike many of the past issues of *South Florida History*, this issue does not focus on only one theme but many. From the creation of an airline and the transformation of a hotel to the development of a neighborhood and the raising of earthworms, this issue, as you will see, is filled with a wide array of articles.

Explore the history behind E. Harold Threadgill's Ta-Miami Air Line (page 12). Intended to serve the Miami-Tampa-Jacksonville areas of Florida, the airline was chartered on February 10, 1923, survived the death of a pilot one year later and was terminated after the 1926 hurricane impacted the economy of Southern Florida.

Read on to learn more about the elegant Biltmore Hotel becoming the "Army Air Forces Regional Station Hospital at Coral Gables" in 1943 (page 14). Area hotels

that served as hospitals during WWII were "difficult and inefficient to administer. The sprawling Miami-Biltmore seemed the ideal place to consolidate all of the smaller units into one facility."

After reading about the Biltmore's transformation, discover Dean Park, a neighborhood developed by John Morgan Dean, which allowed for modern "mobility" as well as the custom of Southern communities to socialize on shaded sidewalks and front porches (page 24). In mapping out streets for Dean Park, Dean combined a businessman's understanding of urban growth with a farmer's appreciation of tropical beauty.

Last but not least, get the dirt on an earthworm scam that cost residents of South Florida thousands of dollars in the late 1970s (page 37). According to earthworm brokers, fishermen weren't the only people who bought earthworms. They claimed there were several lucrative markets for worms, and guaranteed profits for anyone who wanted to raise them and sell them back to the worm brokers. A "small capital investment was required."

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sara Muñoz".

Note: After many months of compiling articles, searching for photos and pushing back deadlines, due to circumstances beyond my control, I can finally say this issue of *South Florida History* is done. You may notice the date on the cover is 2002. That is not a typo. Slowly but surely we will get this magazine back on schedule.

If you or someone you know is interested in submitting an article or book review, please contact me at publications@historical-museum.org or 305.375.1492. Your time, energy and thoughtfulness in submitting a contribution are greatly appreciated as we strive to spread an understanding of our region's rich past. I look forward to receiving your submission.

South Florida History

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Sara Muñoz

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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.

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Collections

by Rebecca A. Smith

The Historical Museum contains many treasures, one of the most significant being its visual materials. Maps are among the most beautiful and informative of these picture collections.

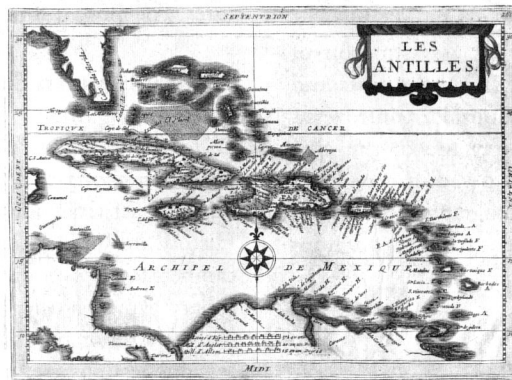
The collection contains 1,200 maps of Florida, South Florida and the Caribbean, dating from the late 1500s to the present. The maps may be artifactual or informational, manuscript or printed, originals or reproductions, decorative or functional. The maps may be sheet maps, maps from atlases, navigational charts, road maps, postcards, fire insurance maps, aerial photographs and so on.

Books and periodicals expand the maps collection. Travel books, histories and atlases contain one or many maps. Periodicals, such as *The Map Collector*, provide information on the art of collecting. Reference books documenting maps include bibliographies, biographical dictionaries, library catalogs, historical atlases, exhibition catalogs and conservation manuals. Some

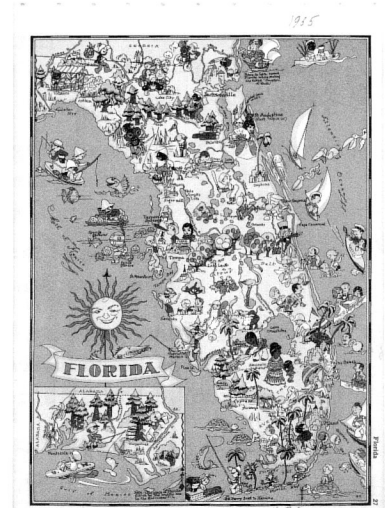
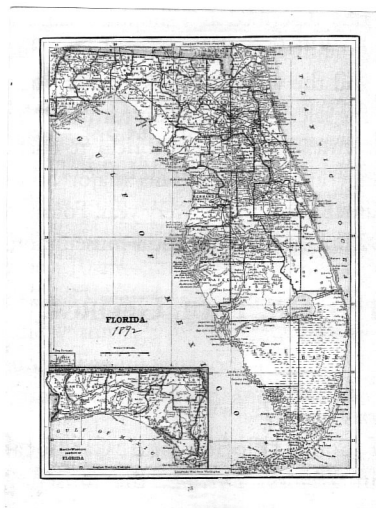
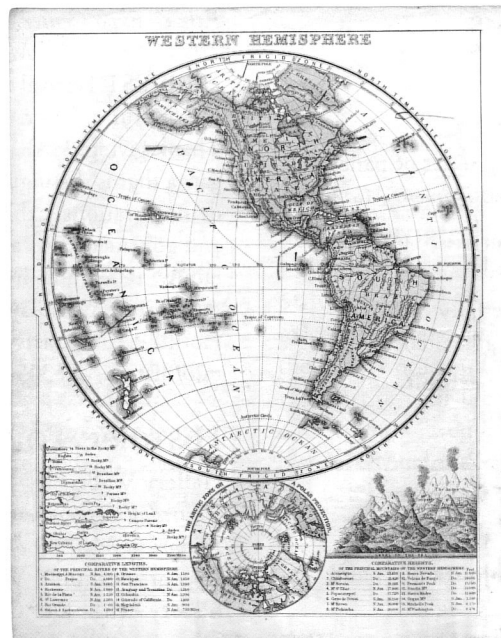
archival materials also pertain to maps, such as Roland Chardon's papers relating to the historical geography of Biscayne Bay.

During the past 50 years, the map collection has been built through the generosity of many people. Individuals have given maps, both rare and everyday, and funds for the purchase and care of maps. While the museum does purchase objects for its collections, the collections mainly grow through donations.

The Historical Museum's Research Center houses the map collection. The Research Center contains extensive materials on the history of Florida, especially from Lake Okeechobee south. Other holdings include selected materials on the history of the Caribbean and publications documenting collections. The Research Center is open Monday-Friday, 10 am-4:30 pm, appointments recommended. To find out more, call 305.375.1492 or visit www.historical-museum.org.—SFH



Clockwise from above—Les Antilles, Ca. 1734. HASF 1996-916-13, Robert C. Rogers Collection. Florida. [1935] HASF 1996-916-26, Robert C. Rogers Collection. Western Hemisphere, 18-. HASF 1996-916-8. Florida, Ca. 1892. HASF 1996-916-34, Robert C. Rogers Collection.



HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

Miami-Dade Cultural Center, 101 West Flagler Street, Miami, 305.375.1492, www.historical-museum.org. Open seven days a week, Monday–Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm; third Thursday 10 am to 9 pm; Sunday noon to 5 pm. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Parking available at 50 N.W. 2nd Ave. Adults \$5; Children 6-12 \$2; HMSF members and children (5 and under) FREE.

EXHIBITIONS

Assignment Miami: News Photographers

June 19, 2003–January 18, 2004

This is the first exhibition to explore the history of newspaper photography in Greater Miami. Photographers have helped define many of the most dramatic events in Miami's history, such as the 1926 hurricane, the attempted assassination of President-Elect Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933, the riots and the Mariel boatlift of 1980 and the Elián González controversy. They have also documented the day-to-day life of the city. Visitors will gain a sense of the process involved in newspaper photography through more than 250 photographic prints, as well as examples of photographic equipment from throughout the twentieth century.

First Arrivals

Ongoing

First Arrivals is the latest renovation to the Historical Museum's permanent exhibition, *Tropical Dreams: A People's History of Southern Florida*. Visitors have the opportunity to discover and explore archaeological findings from the Cutler Fossil site, the Miami Circle and other important sites.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Third Thursday Evenings

Third Thursdays, 6:30–8:30 pm FREE

Historical Museum of Southern Florida

Join the Historical Museum for a fascinating series of panel discussions organized in conjunction with *Assignment Miami: News Photographers*.

September 18–Photographing Miami:

Witnessing the Life of the City

Guest speakers: Michael Carlebach and Maggie Steber

Opening of the new lobby exhibit,

Carl Juste: Miami Portraits

October 16–Photographing Major News Events: Mariel, Haitian Refugees and Elián González

Guest speaker: Michael Carlebach

November 20–Producing Pictures: Photojournalists and Photo Editors

Guest speaker: Maggie Steber

Family Fun Days

Second Saturdays, 1–4 pm FREE

Historical Museum of Southern Florida

Through a variety of hands-on activities, participants discover and experience the richness of South Florida's multi-ethnic cultures. For more information, call 305.375.1492.

Tropical Explorers Summer Camp

June 16–August 8

Historical Museum of Southern Florida

Eight week-long camp sessions loaded with exciting indoor and outdoor activities ideal for children 6 to 12 years of age. The Historical Museum's experienced educators and counselors guide campers to discover the treasures of South Florida's history through gallery games, music, arts and crafts, field trips and much more. There's a different session every week and different activities per session. Sessions are Monday through Friday, from 9 am to 5 pm. Campers can be dropped off at the Historical Museum at 8:30 am and picked up no later than 5:30 pm. For more information and registration, call 305.375.1628.

HARVEST Festival

November 23 & 24, 10 am–5 pm

Fair & Expo Center (Home of the Miami-Dade Youth Fair)

10901 Coral Way, Miami, Florida

HARVEST Festival is the Historical Museum's largest event and major fund-raiser. Always celebrated the weekend before Thanksgiving, HARVEST is best described as a shopping extravaganza that is distinguished by the high quality crafts, the product demonstrations, exhibitions and the variety of folk arts, antiques and gourmet foods available for sale. Truly an event for the entire family, it features live music entertainment, historical re-enactments and a display of vintage automobiles. This major South Florida event attracts more than 18,000 visitors every year. For more information, call 305.375.1492 or visit www.historical-museum.org.

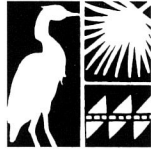
HISTORIC TOURS WITH DR. PAUL GEORGE

Gallery Walk

Thursday, September 18, 6–8 pm FREE

Historical Museum of Southern Florida

Explore 10,000 years of South Florida and Caribbean history with Dr. George in *Tropical Dreams*, the museum's permanent exhibition.



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 through Friday, 9 am–5 pm. 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. Hours of operation are Tuesday through Friday, 10 am–4 pm.



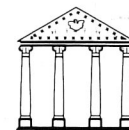
CLEWISTON MUSEUM, 112 South Commercio Street, Clewiston—863.983.2870. The Clewiston Museum, founded in 1984, is a growing museum, collecting and displaying items, large and small, important and trivial, which reflect the past of Clewiston and its surrounding area. The Clewiston Museum is open 1–5 pm 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 am–4 pm. 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 am–5 pm and weekends 1–5 pm. Closed on Mondays. \$4 adults; \$3 seniors; \$2 children. The Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse is open Sunday through Wednesday, 10 am–4 pm (must be 48" tall to climb). For information: 405.747.8380. \$5. The Dubois Pioneer Home is open Sunday and Wednesday, 1–5 pm. \$2.



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM BEACH COUNTY, 139 North County Road, Suite 25, 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 Monday through Friday, from 9 am–5 pm. Research hours are by appointment Tuesday through Thursday from 10 am–3 pm.

The above institutions subscribe to South Florida History as a benefit for their members.

*Florida
remembers*
World War II



Artwork from the cover of a State of Florida promotional booklet distributed to encourage service members who trained in Florida to return after the war. Courtesy of The Museum of Florida History.

An exhibition at the Historical Museum through June 1, 2003

by Brooke Roberts-Webb

For the Americans who lived through it, memories of World War II are often bittersweet. The war demanded constant sacrifice of men and materials, but it was also a time of awakening for those whose lives may have otherwise been restricted or routine. Few, if any, came away unchanged by their wartime experiences.

Certainly the state of Florida was transformed by the war. When the U.S. entered the war in 1941, Florida was a state of only two million people; mostly rural and dependent on agriculture. The war years would leave an indelible mark, altering the population and economy of Florida forever.

The latest exhibition at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, *Florida Remembers World War II*, explores the contribution of Floridians to the war effort and the effect the war had on the state. Created by the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee, the exhibition encompasses over 400 artifacts and photographs, including military uniforms and accoutrements, ration cards, war bonds, propaganda posters, personal effects and captured enemy war souvenirs. A number of artifacts and photographs are from the Historical Museum's own collections. The exhibition is enhanced by the sounds of 1940s radio shows and by computer kiosks with links to images and news clips from the era.

Florida Remembers World War II examines the massive upheaval of normal life that gearing up for the war presented. The military constructed bases, airports and training facilities throughout the state. Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Daytona and many other cities were inundated with servicemen and -women. An Army Air Force t-shirt from Miami Beach on display in the exhibition recalls the thousands of servicemen stationed in this resort area when the U.S. government appropriated local hotels to house and train soldiers.

Life changed for civilians, as well. Those on the home front led scrap metal drives, sold war bonds, and entertained soldiers. Many women did the previously unthinkable and signed up for newly organized women's auxiliary military jobs. Even children aided the war effort by building model planes to train pilots in aircraft identification.

An artifact in the exhibition, a jacket bearing the markings "PW," attests that the war had truly come to Florida. Some 10,000 German prisoners-of-war were sent to camps in Florida, including ones in Kendall and Homestead. The



Top—War bonds, ration cards and scrap metal drives were part of normal life for those on the home front. HASF. Above—A naval aviator's flight suit with an inflatable floatation vest. HASF.



Top—Early diving gear worn by Navy “frogmen.” HASF. Above—Uniforms make the man: a U.S. Maritime Service Officer’s bridge coat and hat, left; U.S. Coast Guard Officer’s uniform, right. HASF.

prisoners were often sent to work in the fields, filling positions left empty by U.S. fighting men.

The personal stories told in the exhibit exemplify the sacrifice and determination of many Floridians during this time of conflict: Mrs. Bailey of Punta Gorda who sent six of her sons off to fight; Ernest “Boots” Thompson pictured in the original photograph of the U.S. Marines landing on Iwo Jima; and Pensacola native James Polkinghorne, who posthumously received the Purple Heart for his duties as a pilot for the famed Tuskegee Airmen.

With the defeat of the Axis Powers in 1945, Florida looked forward to postwar prosperity and population growth. Thousands who had trained in Florida remembered the good climate and good times of the Sunshine State, and opted to return once peace prevailed.

One soldier who felt the tug of Florida’s shores was Seymour Lichtenfeld, who was among the veterans to speak at HMSF’s Third Thursday panel discussion on March 20. He was repatriated to Miami Beach for a little “R and R” at the war’s end. Peering down the rows of hotels along Collins Avenue, the young engineer saw abundant opportunity; with “sand in his shoes,” Lichtenfeld chose Florida as his new home.

Asked what artifacts in the exhibition brought back personal memoirs, Lichtenfeld said certainly the M-1 Garand, the standard rifle for the U.S. Army at the time. “That was my sweetheart. I slept with her, I lived with her, she was my life,” the former infantryman recalled.

For some, the exhibition will stir old memories, and, for the younger generation, open their eyes to the immense effect the war had on Florida. According to historian Dr. Paul George, the war “led to vast population growth, new development, and wide exposure of the sunshine state to a large number of people, which propelled Florida into its post-World War II prosperity.”

Regardless of age, all who visit *Florida Remembers World War II* will pay homage to those who defended the nation and will celebrate the huge role Florida played in one of the most critical times in recent history.—*SFH*

Brooke Roberts-Webb is an Assistant Curator of the Object Collection at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida.



Clockwise, from top left—Women at war: Women's Army Corps (WAC) winter uniform; Floridian Jacqueline Cochran (pictured) was chosen to head up WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots). HASF. Prisoner of War shirt and a radio made by German POWs; image of German POWs harvesting Florida's citrus crop. HASE. Medals, a Missing-in-Action telegram, and the interment flag of fallen marine Ernest "Boots" Thomas tell the story of the price of war. HASE.

THE TA-MIAMI AIR LINE

by Eugene E. Threadgill

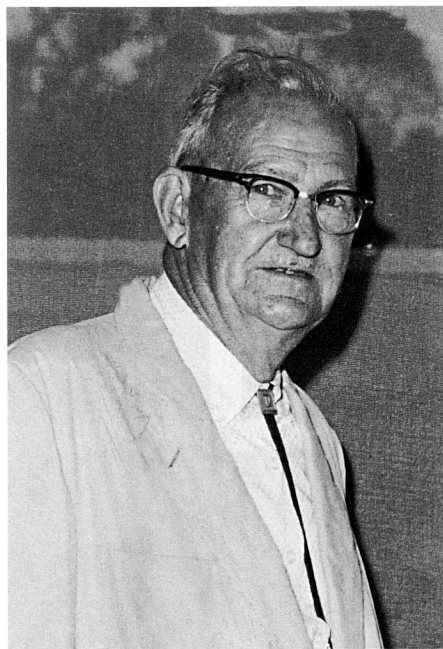
THIS IS THE HISTORY OF THE TA-MIAMI AIR LINE, which was chartered on February 10, 1923, survived the death of a pilot one year later, and was terminated after the 1926 hurricane impacted the economy of Southern Florida. The founder of the company, E. Harold Threadgill, was a pioneer in the field of aviation. As a young man, he and a friend obtained a description of the Wright brothers' plane and attempted to duplicate it. Their plane wouldn't fly, but the effort gave Harold Threadgill sufficient experience that he obtained a job as an engineer for one of the early "barnstormers" who traveled around to shows. Because his employer frequently over drank, Harold had to learn to fly to replace him at air shows. When World War I started, Harold taught aviation engineering to military trainees. At the end of the war, Harold and wife Amy Smith were living in Chicago, where he worked for the Moler Aviation Engineering Company. When Harold's father-in-law, Julius Smith, a long-time Miami resident, active in civic affairs, died in May 1919, Harold and Amy returned to the Smith family home, Banyan Place, where they settled in with Amy's mother, Luella Smith. At that time, Banyan Place was on the waterfront of Biscayne Bay. So Harold purchased two or three pontooned Curtiss Jenny's, which he could dock in front of the house, and fly around the Miami area.

About the time that Harold settled in Miami, his friend Arthur Chalk started his airline from Miami to the Bahamas. That prompted Harold to examine the possibility of an airline serving the Miami-Tampa-Jacksonville areas of Florida. In order to search for an airport site in Tampa, Harold loaded his Stanley Steamer with some food and set out across the muddy road through the Everglades to Tampa. That wagon trail was not yet a paved road, so it took Harold several days to make it through the swamp to Tampa. Harold's inspection of the area to be traveled led him to the conclusion that, for an airline service connecting Miami and Tampa to be established, it would need a safe commercial airplane which would have the capability of landing at an airport but also of landing safely in the muddy terrain of the Everglades. So he spent two years working with the Curtiss Aircraft Company, designing an airplane that

had wheels for ground landing, and emergency pontoons, which would protect the airplane if it had to land in the swampy Everglades. When a successful land/water plane had been designed and tested, Harold decided to go forward with the airline company. He contracted to purchase four planes with his design, and entered into contracts for the acquisition of 18 additional planes. His brother-in-law, R. Earl Smith, prepared the paperwork, and on January 29, 1923, filed an application for a corporate charter for the Ta-Miami Air Line. On February 10, 1923, the Florida secretary of state issued the corporate charter for the Ta-Miami Air Line Company to provide transportation service by "aeroplane or hydroplane" between Miami and Tampa and other points within the state of Florida. That charter received headline news in the *Miami Metropolis* and the *Tampa Daily News*, February 10, 1923, and a major story in *The Miami Herald*, February 11, 1923.

The charter listed Earl Smith as president, but at the corporate meeting held one week later, Harold Threadgill, the principal stockholder, and owner of the assets, was elected president. The officers listed in the charter, Leon L. Noble, vice president, and Webster Spates, secretary and treasurer, continued to serve the company through its life. As explained in *The Miami Herald* article, the planes were designed to carry four passengers, plus some freight and luggage. This specialized plane was designed by Harold Threadgill using a fuselage then being designed and produced by the Curtiss Aircraft Company,

which preceded the Curtiss "Robin" initiated in 1928 by the Curtiss-Robertson Company. In addition to passenger and freight travel, the company planned to obtain a contract for air mail service with the Post Office Department. However, political changes in the method of obtaining contracts for postal service blocked the Ta-Miami Air Line from obtaining such a contract. The Ta-Miami Air Line service between Miami and the Tampa-St. Petersburg area commenced in the spring of 1923. Less than a year after service had commenced, a tragedy struck. Harold Threadgill's younger brother, Sam, was interested in flying; after graduating from Miami High School, he took flying lessons, became a pilot, and was employed by the Ta-Miami Air Line. On



Founder of the Ta-Miami Air Line in 1923, E. Harold Threadgill was a pioneer in the field of aviation. August 1965. HASF 1995-277-16643.

February 9, 1924, after spinning the propeller in order to start the plane that had been forced down at Mulberry, Sam fell into the path of the propeller and had both arms and a leg broken or severed. He was transported to a hospital in Lakeland where he died on Sunday, February 10, 1924. *The St. Petersburg Evening Independent* ran an article on February 11, 1924, explaining that Sam Threadgill was the brother of Harold Threadgill, president of Ta-Miami Air Line, a person "well known" in the area. Although this accident had a severe personal impact upon Harold Threadgill, the Ta-Miami Air Line continued to provide transportation service between Miami and Tampa.

Air mail service in the United States, after the end of World War I, was very primitive and undeveloped, and Congress demanded that better service be provided. On February 2, 1925, the president signed into law the Contract Mail Act, sponsored by Pennsylvania Congressman Clyde Kelly, and referred to as the Kelly Air Mail Act, requiring the postmaster to contract with private parties to provide air mail service throughout the U.S. The Post Office established procedures for interested parties to submit bids for the provision of air mail service. Ta-Miami Air Line, and other competitors, submitted proposals for providing that service to cities in Florida. One of the competitors was Florida Airways Corporation, which had been formed on November 2, 1925, by a group that included Captain Edward Rickenbaker, Percy Rockefeller, Anne Morgan, and many others. The Florida air mail service contract was awarded to Florida Airways on February 11, 1926, and it began to provide service between Miami and Atlanta, with stops in Fort Myers, Tampa and Jacksonville. That was an economic blow to the Ta-Miami Air Line, but it continued to provide passenger and freight service.

Then, a major disaster hit the Miami area on September 18, 1926, when one of the strongest hurricanes in history struck the Miami area. The destruction caused by that hurricane also caused visitors to look for other places to travel to during the winter of 1926-7, and led to a financial crash in Miami, with businesses and banks closing, and the end of the real estate boom which had brought Southern Florida such national attention. That 1926 "crash" led to the closing of Florida Airways on December 31, 1926. Ta-Miami Air Line continued to struggle for a few months, but finally Harold Threadgill concluded that he had to shut down the airline company. Another factor which would lead to a decline in demand for airline travel between the Miami and Tampa areas was

the paving of the Tamiami Trail which was then under way. When completed, that highway would allow automobiles, buses and trucks to transport passengers and freight between Tampa and Miami with only a few hours of travel time. By 1927, the Ta-Miami Air Line Company was in serious financial trouble. Its investment in more than a dozen airplanes was a burden it could not continue to carry. So Harold Threadgill had to explore his options.

At about that time, Glenn Curtiss and Clement Keys, who controlled the Curtiss companies, were examining the creation of a company which would be called the Curtiss Flying Service, a company which would establish and operate new airports, and provide flight training across the United States. Glenn Curtiss and Harold Threadgill were friends, and Curtiss asked Harold if he would be interested in becoming an officer of the new company. Harold saw that as an opportunity, so he shut down the Ta-Miami Air Line and disposed of its assets. It is possible that he transferred the Ta-Miami planes to the Curtiss Flying Service, Inc. which was formed in early 1928, in exchange for some stock in the company. Harold Threadgill accepted the job as vice president for the south eastern region; went to Raleigh, N.C., where he located land that was purchased by the Curtiss Flying Service, and he supervised the construction of the original Raleigh Airport. Although Glenn Curtiss died before the Curtiss Flying Service became a large operating company, the merger of the Curtiss and Wright companies into a combined entity allowed the continuation of the project that Harold Threadgill had commenced. The Threadgill family moved to Raleigh, N.C., in June 1929, where a large airport had been developed by the Curtiss Flying Service. The Curtiss Flying Service continued to operate until the summer of 1931, when the impact of the


national economic crash of 1929 finally brought about the termination of the company and its loss of ownership of the original Raleigh airport (which no longer exists). The Threadgill family returned to Miami, and Harold Threadgill went into the real estate development business, although he served as a judge at the Miami and Cleveland Air Races for many years.—*SFH*

Eugene E. Threadgill, son of E. Harold Threadgill, is a native Miamian. Mr. Threadgill practiced law in South Florida, primarily representing small utility companies. In 1956, he moved to McLean, Virginia. In 1998, Mr. Threadgill received the Patrick Henry Award for Outstanding Public Service by Virginia Governor James Gilmore.

**Excerpt from
"Miami-Tampa Air Line Traffic
to Start Soon,"
The Miami Herald (02/11/23)**

According to Mr. Threadgill this air line will be the first link of others which will be established in this state, and by next winter the company intends to have planes flying between Tampa on the west coast to Jacksonville, meeting there with proposed airmail routes linking this state with Washington and the large eastern cities....Four planes will be used to begin the service...more will be added as the traffic demands...These flying machines are constructed so they can make safe landing on the soft ground in the Everglades, should a forced landing be necessary. They can be changed from land to seaplane within ten minutes, the designer said.

Each of the machines will seat four-passengers and will be equipped with complete radio sets. They will be capable of a speed of 90 miles an hour, giving a two-hour flight across the state.



A. A. F. Regional and Convalescent Hospital
(Formerly Miami Beach Hospital)
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA

Above—Postcard of the A.A.F. Regional and Convalescent Hospital. HASF 1997-561-12. Right—Volunteers made bandages to help with the war effort. Courtesy of Arva Parks & Company.

"Now this is not the end... it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning"
—Winston Churchill

World War II and Beyond:

A *Biltmore* Hotel Transformed

Convalescent Hospital
(Biltmore Hotel)
34, FLORIDA



*Excerpt from The Biltmore Hotel:
An Enduring Legacy (chapter 4)*

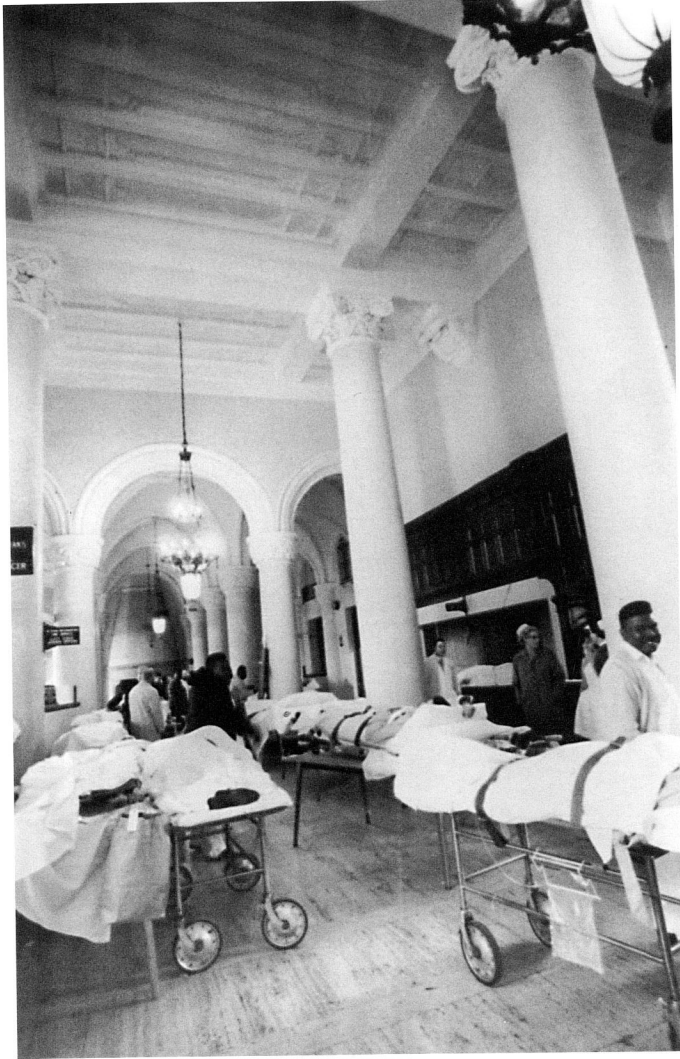
*by Samuel D. LaRoue, Jr. and
Ellen J. Uguccioni*

Dawn—Sunday, December 7, 1941. A peaceful day began in Miami as Saturday night revelers slept in and tourists sun

bathed amidst the morning rays. By early afternoon, the tranquility was shattered. The Japanese Air Force surprise attack on Pearl Harbor would change the face of the world forever.

Citizens responded immediately to the Japanese aggression. Long lines of eager recruits formed at recruiting offices and a newly-created Dade Defense Council patrolled the waterfront. Miami would soon gear up for the thousands of troops that arrived for basic training and service schools. On Miami Beach, tourists checked out as hotels became barracks, golf courses became parade grounds and the beaches became one vast physical training field.

With a concentration of hotels in a relatively small area and its year-round climate, Miami Beach was the answer to the immediate mobilization of the new recruits. More than 340 hotels in Miami and Miami Beach housed as many as 78,000 soldiers. Other buildings served as mess halls and hospitals, creating an extensive network of support. Other Miami Beach hotels were converted to station hospitals. By the end of the war, nearly one-quarter of the officers and one-fifth of enlisted men who served in the war had trained on South Florida's shores.



Patients in the former hotel lobby await transfer to various wards.
Courtesy of *The Miami Herald*.

The sight of servicemen and -women became commonplace. The community responded with open arms. Many of those men and women made Miami their permanent post-war home.

THE END OF AN ERA

The outbreak of the war ushered in a new era and brought profound changes to every city and town in America. Coral

Gables, however, experienced additional trauma when on March 26, 1942, its founder, George Merrick, died of a heart attack at age 56. At the time of his death, he was the postmaster of Miami, having been appointed to this position 1941. More than a decade had passed since the demise of the land boom and the loss of his Coral Gables investment. Although he made valiant efforts to stage a financial comeback, it seemed every new endeavor failed. When he and his wife Eunice opened a fishing lodge in the Florida Keys, it was tragically destroyed by the 1935 hurricane. He subsequently returned to Miami starting over in real estate, but this time, selling other people's property. But despite numerous setbacks, Merrick never lost his continuing optimism for Coral Gables and Greater Miami.

Merrick's funeral was held at Plymouth Congregational Church on March 28, 1942. *The Miami Daily News* reported that the funeral cortege to Woodlawn Park Cemetery was possibly the largest ever seen in Miami. While the funeral was in progress, all stores in Coral Gables closed and all mail service was suspended so that the public and letter carriers could attend the funeral services. Mayor Joe Whitley of Coral Gables issued this formal statement:

Whereas, George Merrick in whose mind and heart Coral Gables was conceived and through whose genius it was brought into being, has departed from among us and we, who are left to carry on and protect the ideals he established, should pay fitting tribute to his memory.

At the very least, Merrick was spared the pain of witnessing another piece of his dream city vanish. As destiny would have it, the Miami-Biltmore Hotel was called upon to play a substantial role in World War II, but in a much different way than Merrick could have ever envisioned.

The war effort required expedient action and initiatives that in any other situation would be unthinkable. Under George MacDonald's leadership, when the decade of the 1940s began, the Miami-Biltmore Hotel operated as usual. But, as the Army Air Force converted more and more Beach hotels to housing, officials looked at other options for additional service requirements. Area hotels that served as hospitals were difficult and inefficient to administer. The sprawling Miami-Biltmore seemed the ideal place to consolidate all of the smaller units into one facility. Rumors of a government take over of the Miami-Biltmore continued for months, but it was not until the summer of 1942 that the government acted. Beginning in July, the Air Force posted military police at the hotel and the golf course. The dye was cast. The hotel's last guest was U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who actually remained for some time after its official closing.

A NEW PURPOSE

The sudden change from hotel to hospital violated the City of Coral Gables' zoning regulations. That detail did not prevent the government from filing a lawsuit of eminent domain. The case (Docket number 764-Civil-M) entitled "United States of

America vs. 165.81 acres of Land and General Properties Inc.” was filed on November 2, 1942. Four days later, George MacDonald, on behalf of General Properties, Inc., accepted the government’s offer of \$895,000 for the hotel, country club, north golf course and 165.81 acres of land. It took 70 pages to complete the inventory of furnishings, fixtures and other real property that went with the deal. On December 10, 1942, the City of Coral Gables filed a disclaimer of any interest in the property.

When the government took over the Miami-Biltmore Country Club and Golf Course, president Sam McCormick sought out Brigadier General Ralph Wooten, commandant of the Air Forces Technical Training Command headquartered on Miami Beach. He negotiated a deal in which the Army would lease the golf course to the club members for \$10,000 a year. In exchange, the Army would maintain it. Unfortunately for the golfers and club members, the arrangement lasted only about six months.

In early 1943, the transformation of the hotel began in earnest. Supplies necessary to convert the hotel into a 1,200-bed hospital arrived daily. Staff worked around the clock to meet a March 1, 1943 deadline.

The hotel’s exquisite, one-of-a-kind furniture and fixtures that cost over \$1 million in 1925 met an ignominious end. Without ceremony, the trappings of the great hotel were laid curbside for collection. Fortunately, some of the furniture and fixtures found their way into the homes of tenacious neighborhood salvagers. Sadly, much was lost forever.

A SERIOUS MISSION

The former Miami-Biltmore Hotel was officially activated on March 7, 1943 as the “Army Air Forces Regional Station Hospital at Coral Gables.” Under the command of Colonel Don C. Ogle, the “new” hospital was ready to receive patients. Wounded soldiers returning to the United States by air would land at Miami International Airport on 36th Street and then be transported either by car or ambulance to the hospital. The Casa Loma



Top—Wounded soldiers arriving at Miami International Airport were transferred to AAF Regional Station Hospital in Coral Gables. Courtesy of the City of Coral Gables. Above—In 1943, a recovering airman enjoys the view from the terrace overlooking the golf course. A volunteer offers refreshments. Courtesy of *The Miami News*.

Hotel just west of the Miami-Biltmore became living quarters for the nurses.

Six months later, in typical generic military fashion, officials changed the name of the hospital to "Army Air Force Regional Station Hospital No. 1." While still equipped to handle any medical contingency, the convalescent function of the hospital took on a preeminent role. The Army's goal was to return convalescing soldiers to active duty as quickly as possible. The less fortunate, or fortunate, depending on one's point of view, were assigned to "rehabilitation" programs to help them adjust to their newly acquired handicaps.

FAMOUS FACES

Hospital administrators knew that entertainment helped recuperation and general patient morale. In an unpublished memoir, WWII veteran Edward Millstone, a medical supply technician, recalled that Special Services personnel arranged for patients to visit the horse races, dog races, jai alai and the Parrot Jungle; see alligator wrestling at the Indian villages; go on boat cruises on Biscayne Bay and take bus tours of Miami. In one instance, patients attended a circus at the Orange Bowl as guests of Ringling Brothers. In another special event, they traveled to the Paramount Theater in downtown Miami to see *This Is The Army*, which starred Lieutenant Ronald Reagan. Songwriter Irving Berlin, who wintered on Miami Beach and wrote the title tune, donated the cost of admission.

The Special Services and the USO also brought regular entertainment to the hospital. Among the celebrities who appeared were: Bob Hope, Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney, Bing Crosby, Eddie Cantor, Jimmy Cagney, Edgar Bergen and Charley McCarthy, Al Jolson, Jack Benny, George Burns, Betty Grable, Rita Hayworth, Lucille Ball and W.C. Fields. The hotel's swimming pool and grandstands

were once again a focal point for celebrities such as the former Olympic and World Diving Champion Pete Desjardins, who performed for the patients.

In March 1944, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt stopped by the hospital. She dined with patients in the mess hall, toured the hospital and visited the sick and wounded. Patients in the Rehab

Department presented her with handcrafted ornaments.

GETTING BIGGER

In October 1944, the War Department announced plans to build a \$200,000 addition in the parking area west of the country club. This two story "U"-shaped building provided space for 175 additional beds, rehabilitation arts and crafts studios, offices, maintenance shops and an expanded medical supply warehouse. The construction contract also called for renovations to the country club building. Workers converted the kitchen into a GI cafeteria and the ballroom, which had been a patient ward, became the mess hall for patients housed in the new annex. The new annex would complete the Army's additions, which also included a pair of two-story neuropsychiatric wings attached to the southeast corner of the main building.

As construction dust filled the air, residents wondered if the Miami-Biltmore would become a permanent hospital. Speculation increased in January 1945, when the AAF Regional Station Hospital No. 1 took over the services

previously administered by a convalescent hospital on Miami Beach. This additional focus considerably broadened the scope of the hospital's mission, making it responsible for the medical, surgical and psychiatric care of military personnel and their dependants. By April, the veterans' needs were so great that the Veterans Administration made 100 beds available at three converted hotel station hospitals: the Pancoast, the Nautilus and the Miami-Biltmore.



Top—Recreational activities such as this scene by the piano in one of the hospital's "rec" rooms boosted patient morale. Courtesy of Arva Parks & Company. Above—Hospital patients enjoyed a little "R and R" in 1943. The golf course was retained during the war for patient use. Courtesy of *The Miami Herald*.

Amidst the changes and under a curtain of wartime secrecy, General Henry H. “Hap” Arnold, the commander of the Army Air Force, arrived at the hospital in the aftermath of a serious heart attack. Arnold, the only officer to serve as general of both the Army and the Air Forces, stayed for three months. During his recuperation, he frequently visited other patients, improving their morale and encouraging their recovery.

MAKING A DECISION

With the guns finally silenced, Miamians breathed a sigh of relief, eagerly awaiting the return of peacetime conditions. Troops left the Miami and Miami Beach hotels as hoteliers began planning for the next tourist season. The nation needed a vacation and South Florida was determined to become its favorite destination.

In Coral Gables, everyone wondered what would happen to the Biltmore. When the VA acquired Miami Beach’s Nautilus Hotel for a hospital in late 1945, many believed the Biltmore’s days as a government hospital would soon be over. Encouraged, the University of Miami, still operating as a “cardboard college” from the old Anastasia Hotel, asked for the Miami-Biltmore when it was released from military service. Despite this proposal, in May 1946, the Army re-designated the Miami-Biltmore as an Army general hospital and gave it the name “Pratt General Hospital” in honor of pioneer Army Air Corps flight surgeon General Fabian L. Pratt.

In December, the new Pratt General Hospital made headlines when General Dwight D. Eisenhower became one of its most famous patients. Suffering from bursitis in his shoulder, Eisenhower and his wife Mamie resided in the 13th floor tower suite for a month of treatment, rest and relaxation. Lola Walker, a tower suite maid, later remembered that during his stay the future president ended segregation in the hospital dining areas.

Because the Veterans Administration appeared to show no interest in acquiring the Miami-Biltmore, Coral Gables Mayor

Thomas Mayes and City Attorney E. L. Semple went to Washington to explore the possibility of the city’s acquisition of the property. According to City Commissioner Frank Holley, the city contemplated leasing the property to “the largest hotel chain in the country,” rumored to be the Hilton. Veterans groups and the Chamber of Commerce voiced strong

opposition to the plan, citing the need for expanded veterans’ facilities not to mention the economic benefit of the hospital’s \$4 million payroll.

The War Department finally ended all the speculation when it declared the property surplus and projected a June 30, 1947 closing date. This announcement immediately spawned a flurry of proposals. The State of Florida wanted it for the new South Florida Tuberculosis Sanitarium or a state medical school. A group of 40 local physicians proposed a non-profit corporation to keep the Miami-Biltmore as a hospital for both civilians and veterans. In a surprise move, the Veterans Administration, after repeated statements to the contrary, announced it would indeed take over the Pratt facility on July 1, 1947. Evidently, this change of mind came after engineering reports noted that Miami Beach’s Nautilus Hotel, a VA hospital since January 1946, was structurally unsound. It is interesting to note that the Nautilus Hotel eventually became the site of Miami Beach’s Mount Sinai Hospital in 1949 and was in use until it was replaced by a new building in 1968.

Almost immediately, Dr. H. F. Machlan, the Nautilus Veterans’ Hospital manager, transferred all his patients to the former Miami-Biltmore Hotel. Because of budget limitations, the hospital’s capacity was topped at 350 patients, a striking drop when compared to its 1,050-bed wartime operation. Soon after the start of the Veterans Administration’s (VA) operation of the Biltmore facility, the government decided to lease the golf course to a non-profit organization, such as a city or a club. They hired John



Top—The 1944 addition to the west side of the Country club building provided room for 175 extra patient beds as well as offices, shops and rehabilitation therapy facilities. HASE Above—The 1947 decommissioning ceremony of Pratt General Hospital. Courtesy of *The Miami Herald*.



Top—A busy day at the hospital canteen where patients and employees could buy soft drinks, ice cream and sundries such as magazines and cigarettes. Courtesy of Samuel D. LaRoue, Jr. Above—A band performed popular music for veterans during a 1952 Christmas party. Courtesy of *The Miami Herald*.

O'Rourke, who had previously worked on the golf course, to rebuild the greens and groom the traps and fairways. Coral Gables Mayor Keith Phillips immediately submitted a bid for the course. While he agreed to the stipulation that no beer or wine could be sold on the golf course, he insisted that the pro shop and locker rooms be included in the lease. The VA, concerned about the co-mingling of patients and golfers, wanted the lessee to build a new clubhouse on Bird Road. After months of negotiation, Mayor Phillips' efforts were rewarded. In October, General Omar Bradley, head of the Veteran's Administration, announced that the Biltmore golf course, pro shop and locker rooms would be leased to the city for \$1 per year. The course reopened on December 18, 1947 under the direction of newly-appointed pro Wilbur "Umps" Clark. Green fees were set at \$2.50, with an annual membership of \$100 for city residents and \$150 for non-residents.

AT CAPACITY

Soon after the VA hospital opened, it reached its 350-bed limit. Pressure mounted from various civic organizations and veteran groups to make additional beds available. People complained about the more than 400-patient waiting list and the fact that the hospital had three unused floors. In response, the VA blamed chronic budget shortages and funding cutbacks.

Funding cuts did not stop residents of Coral Gables from responding to patients' needs. They showed their support by sponsoring special events. One particular annual event co-sponsored by *The Miami Daily News* and local radio station WIOD raised money to allow patients free long distance calls home during the Christmas holiday season.

Other groups also wanted to work with the hospital. The University of Miami had a keen interest in establishing a medical school in the area. Actions by the Florida legislature in 1945 and 1947 to create a state medical school spurred the university forward. In May 1947, the

university and the Veterans Administration signed a letter of agreement to create a medical research unit to be housed in the former ballroom of the country club building. The agreement also initiated a course of study in the five basic sciences, the nucleus for a pre-clinical facility. In 1951, the Florida legislature approved a bill to subsidize the “first” accredited medical school. In March 1952, following numerous legal hurdles, the University of Miami Trustees voted to create the state’s first school of medicine, thereby qualifying for the state subsidy. Anticipating that approval, the university signed a lease with the Veterans Administration to convert the former hotel staff dormitory, located east of the main building, into the medical school.

The medical school remained at the Miami-Biltmore from its opening in September 1952 until 1969, when it was relocated to a new and enlarged facility on the grounds of Jackson Memorial Hospital. The original VA Hospital-UM Medical Research Unit remained active until May 1954. That same year, the hospital announced that it had served more than 43,000 patients during its first seven years.

LET US ENTERTAIN YOU

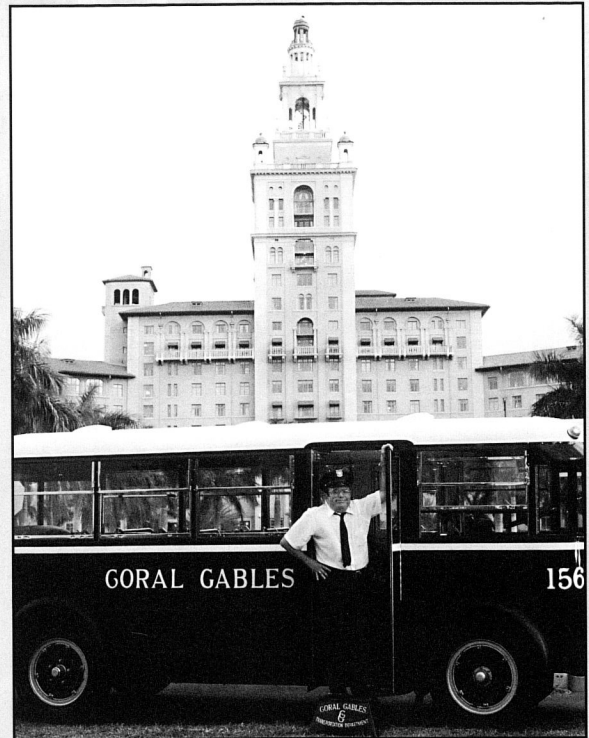
The war may have been over, but the wartime entertainment tradition continued. In March 1955, an “Easter All Star Show” came to the Biltmore. Sophie Tucker, billed as “The Last of the Red Hot Mommas,” presented a “million dollar” show. Appearing with her were Jane Powell, Nat “King” Cole, Helen Traubel, Lillian Roth, Joe E. Lewis and Larry Storch. After the performance, the stars distributed four truckloads of gifts donated by Mr. and Mrs. Luis Quinto of Miami Beach, who had been doing so for more than 10 years.

A variety of volunteer organizations also elevated patient morale. One group in particular, The Jewish War Veterans Post and Auxiliary, continued its visits for all the years the Miami-Biltmore served as a VA hospital. It furnished a sitting room where patients could visit with family in an informal setting and also brought the men games and other recreational activities.

THE TIMES ARE CHANGING

In 1957, after nearly 10 years of leasing the Miami-Biltmore golf course, the City of Coral Gables decided upon an ambitious five-year renovation using plans developed by golfing consultant Mark Mahannah. Groundskeeper John O’Rourke, who brought the course up to playing condition in 1947 and new pro William Tinder supervised the reconstruction.

The following year, reports surfaced that the Veterans Administration was reconsidering its options concerning the Biltmore facility. The aging building required an inordinate amount of money for upkeep and maintenance. In addition, the building, which was never designed for hospital use, became increasingly difficult to adapt to hospital requirements. The elevators were not large enough to accommodate patients on litters. Narrow doorways and halls prevented



Samuel D. LaRoue, Jr.

A Tribute

by Ellen Ugucioni

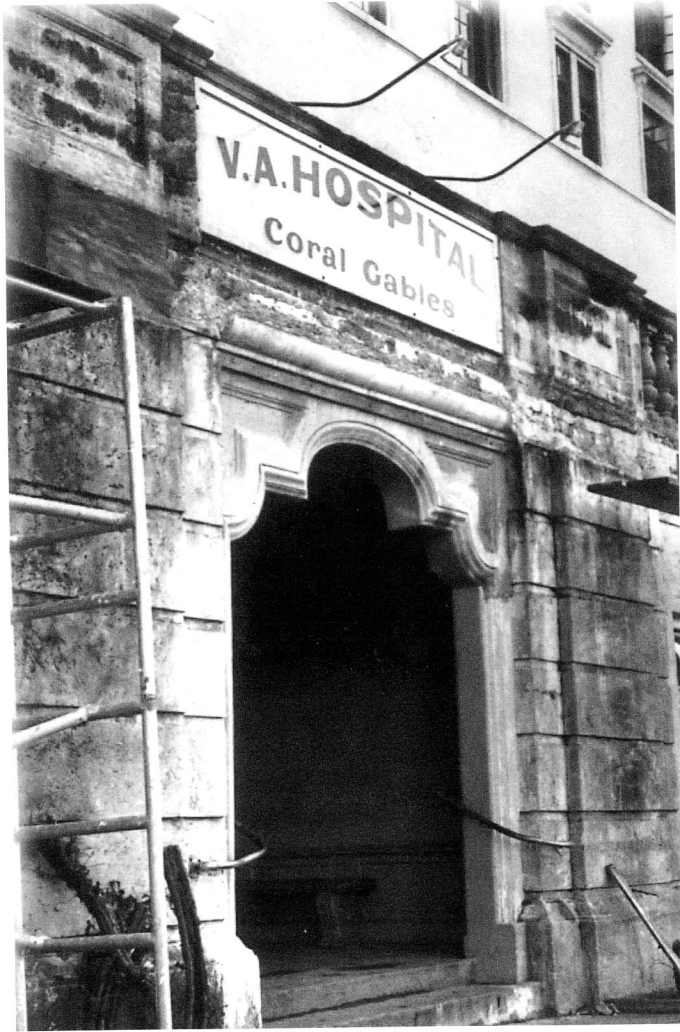
To even begin to summarize the life of Sam LaRoue, Jr. is a daunting task, perhaps because Sam had so many interests and affected so many lives, all the while remaining a humble, extraordinarily giving and kind man. Sam was my best friend.

I first met Sam when I was just beginning my job as the historic landmark officer for the city of Coral Gables. He had come to the office seeking additional source material for a book he wanted to do on the history of Coral Gables illustrated with postcards. Sam and I immediately became friends, as his great enthusiasm served as a catalyst for my own growing appreciation of local history.

Sam’s home is a microcosm of the man. When I first visited (some 16 years ago), I was overwhelmed by the variety and vastness of his collection. A Wurlitzer jukebox, an antique player piano, a vintage carnival game, license plates from every state in the union, old commercial signs, a model of the Michelin man and that was just the

patient's beds from going from one ward to another. Each time a patient was transferred, a litter or wheelchair had to be employed.

The conversion from hotel to hospital had brought vast, insensitive changes to the building both inside and out. Most



By 1958, the Veterans Administration's Hospital was showing signs of disrepair, and the VA studied other options for patient care. Courtesy of *The Miami Herald*.

of the public was oblivious to the inside changes, but when the VA started to paint the outside battleship gray, local citizens mounted a strong protest. As a compromise, the VA painted it white, giving the building a very stark look. (Controversy over color would arise again when the hotel was rehabilitated in 1985.)

Fearing that the VA would build a new hospital on the Biltmore golf course, the Coral Gables Commission resumed its efforts to acquire it. In 1958, it tried to make the government surrender the golf course to settle more than \$500,000 in back city taxes. While nothing came of this claim, the commission did not relinquish its goal of owning the course.

By July 1963, questions concerning the Biltmore's future as a VA hospital were answered. The VA announced plans for a new 10-story 1,000-patient hospital building that would be constructed on the west side of N.W. 12th Avenue opposite Jackson Memorial Hospital. Ground breaking for the new hospital took place during August 1964. Within a year, construction was well underway. This turn of events once again caused the Coral Gables Commission, led by Mayor Joe Murphy, to renew its efforts to obtain the golf course.

In a surprise move, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) declared the golf course surplus in October 1965. Following protocol, the GSA set the price at one half of the highest assessed value of the property or about \$350,000. With their long-term goal realized, then Mayor C. L. Dressell said, "It will be a good thing for the City of Coral Gables." He proposed that the city build a modern clubhouse near the 15th tee with an entrance from Bird Road. During February 1966, the final appraisal of the land was completed. The price had grown to \$450,000, which the commission quickly agreed to pay.

Although the city acquired the golf course, the VA's plan for the buildings was unclear. In December, a VA spokesman denied that the facility would close. Instead, he stated that the mission would be changed to an extended care facility for convalescents and patients with long-term illnesses. John S. Gleason, the Administrator of the Veterans Administration, offered a different perspective on plans for the Biltmore. In 1964, he told a U.S. Senate appropriations subcommittee that the Coral Gables hospital would remain in operation after the new hospital was built or until such time as another VA hospital could be constructed in Central Florida. Ultimately, due to budgetary constraints and changing priorities, the VA abandoned plans for the continued use of the Miami-Biltmore.

The new veterans hospital had been scheduled to open on July 1, 1967 but equipment problems delayed the event. Finally on March 1, 1968, the long-awaited day arrived. Miami's Metropolitan Transit Authority buses, ambulances and Air Force litter buses from Homestead Air Force Base transported the remaining 238 patients to the gleaming new hospital.

Veterans Administration personnel turned off the power, locked the doors and walked away. For the first time in its 42-year history, Merrick and Bowman's dream hotel became silent, dark and empty. Its future was infinitely uncertain.

The late Samuel D. LaRoue, Jr., was an impassioned local historian and collector. He will long be remembered for his enormous contributions as a steward and scholar of history. Ellen J. Ugucioni is the retired Director of the Coral Gables Historic Preservation Department. Her friendship and collaborative efforts with Sam LaRoue are among her fondest accomplishments.

"World War II and Beyond: A Hotel Transformed" is an excerpt from The Biltmore Hotel: An Enduring Legacy, chapter 4, pp. 83-103. (Miami: Arva Parks & Company and Centennial Press, 2002).

*Samuel D.
LaRoue, Jr. Fund*

Of the Historical Museum Endowment

A Trustee of the Board of the museum, where he served as Chairman of the Collections Committee, Samuel D. LaRoue is missed by all his friends at the Historical Museum, but has left an enduring legacy of his own.

In 1998, Sam met with the museum's gift planning specialist and determined that he would make a planned gift in the form of a bequest. When he died, Sam left the museum a significant gift of real property, personal property and artifactual material, including his beautifully restored 1932 Twin Coach bus, originally owned by the City of Coral Gables. The Samuel D. LaRoue, Jr. Fund, established in Sam's memory, will be used to foster and continue many projects that were dear to his heart—all meant in some way to further and preserve the history of South Florida.

The Samuel D. LaRoue, Jr. Fund is one of 13 designated funds within the museum's endowment. These funds are designed to honor or memorialize individuals or families, and are earmarked for programs and activities in keeping with the museum's mission.

To make a donation to Sam LaRoue's fund or to inquire about establishing a fund of your own please contact Marcia Kanner, Endowment Officer at the museum.

beginning. Sam's first love was the history of South Florida, and his collection of memorabilia from Miami and Coral Gables is truly incredible. He continued to expand his collection throughout his life, finding great joy in "rescuing" objects and materials that others might find to have little value. Sam knew their value and his greatest joy was in sharing his collection with others.

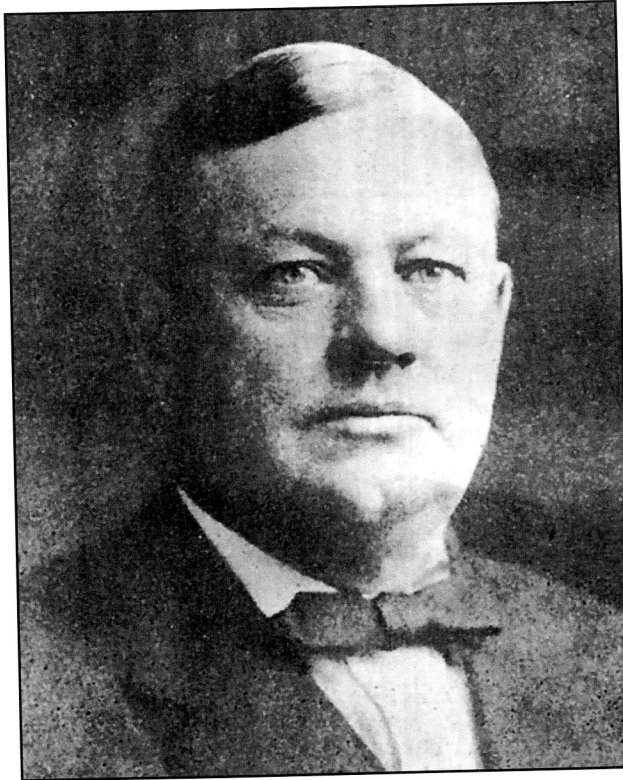
As the collection grew, Sam found that his home simply wasn't big enough. So, being the consummate collector he was, Sam built an addition to his home just to house the collection, that now included an antique Bantam Roadster and his prize possession, a 1938 Coral Gables' Transit Bus. He had somehow come across the rusting body of the bus in Jacksonville and purchased it immediately. For some 10 years, Sam and his many buddies worked to restore the bus, and when parts could not be found (which more often than not was the case), Sam had the parts machined. His "labor of love" was priceless, and one can only imagine his joy the first time the bus headed out for the open road. I was one of the people Sam trusted to drive his bus, and although we lacked windshield wipers, a speedometer that worked and even headlights, we always made it home safely.

Samuel D. La Roue, Jr., in his all-too-short lifetime, devoted huge amounts of his time in volunteering for causes that he cared about. Besides his work as a founder of the Miami Memorabilia Club, an officer with the Dade Heritage Trust, and his service for two terms as the President of the local car club, Sam was a trustee of the Historical Association of South Florida, serving the maximum term limit.

I was fortunate to have co-authored two books with Sam, *Coral Gables In Postcards: Scenes from Florida's Yesterday* (1988, Dade Heritage Trust) and *The Biltmore Hotel: The Legacy Endures* (2002, Centennial Press). One of the last events Sam attended was a book premier at the Biltmore Hotel hosted by the Seaway-Biltmore Corporation. It was for both of us, the culmination of a five year bittersweet journey that was one of the highlights of our lives.

Sam is no longer with us. In death, Sam has continued his great concern for the appreciation of history by making a bequest of his estate and his priceless collection to the Historical Association of South Florida. For Sam, sharing his passion with others was his most important legacy.

I did not mention what people might have first noticed about Sam. Since the age of eight, stricken with polio, Sam was paralyzed. Nothing stopped him from getting to where he wanted to be, from the things he wanted to accomplish. He was, for us, an inspiring and truly noble human being.



John M. Dean committed himself to creating Fort Myer's "first 'up-scale' neighborhood," Dean Park. Courtesy of the Southwest Florida Historical Society (Karl H. Grismer, *The Story of Fort Myers*. 1982).

The Secret Urban Garden of John Morgan Dean

Dean Park, Fort Myers

by Kathryn Wilbur

John Morgan Dean—Capitalist and Gentleman Farmer

Imported New England girls, dressed in neat black dresses and starched white aprons, are about to serve the first dinner of the season at the Fort Myers Hotel. It is January 18, 1900, and the hotel has been in business for just three years. The well-groomed staff readies itself to attend to the needs of 30 guests which include Frank L. Budlong and John M. Dean from Cranston, R.I.

Seated by the Deans and Budlongs in the spacious dining hall are Mr. and Mrs. Hugh MacDonald from Kentucky and John T. Murphy from Montana. Up and down the Caloosahatchee River, the Dean, MacDonald and Murphy groves are richly admired. The winter season for these gentlemen and their wives will consist of a busy social calendar, hunting and fishing expeditions and inspections of local properties and groves.

Tonight Dean is silent as he dips into the oysters on the half shell—the first course of the 12-course meal. His second wife, Louise, suffers from Bright's disease and the couple has come to Fort Myers not only for hunting and fishing but in the hopes that the Southern climate will restore her health. Dean has a prominent furniture business in downtown Providence, R.I., but he and his wife live in Cranston where the Dean groves are famous for their apple and peach production. *The Providence Journal* advertises cures for Bright's disease followed by personal testimonies but the Deans are wary and choose a change of climate instead.

Town promoters like storeowner M. Flossie Hill, whose mother and sister run the highly reputable Hill House, and E. L. Evans and Harvey Heitman, who co-own a hardware and sporting goods store, also dine tonight at the Fort Myers Hotel. It is well known that Evans, an avid fisherman, has lured Thomas Edison back to Fort Myers with conversation about tarpon fishing over the elegant Heitman-Evans fishing tackle counter.

Encouraged, town boosters look forward to more catches. They know that the time has come to turn the casual sportsman

to real estate investor. Somewhere between fried filet of sole and creamed lobster “en bordure,” the new arrivals hear reasons for becoming permanent residents...or at least winter residents with a permanent local address. Dean listens with interest. This is the last year that he and his wife will spend at the Fort Myers Hotel. In February, they will buy the 42-acre Barrington Farm just outside of town on Riverside Drive (now McGregor Boulevard) where they will build a comfortable riverfront winter home. Meanwhile, Frank Budlong is lost in thought about tomorrow's hunting trip.



Guests in front of Fort Myers Hotel. Courtesy of Southwest Florida Historical Society.

To Hunt or not to Hunt

Frank Budlong has moored his yacht in the hotel boathouse next to the Miakka owned by Charles Dean—a friend but no relation to John M. Dean. Both Budlong and Charles Dean are serious yachtsmen and have invited other guests for a hunting trip the next day. While sponge cake and green apple pie are quietly being passed to dinner guests, general conversation has turned to local construction. But Budlong and Charles Dean are more interested in planning a joke for the end of the hunting season than dessert.

In March, John M. Dean will shoot away his last day of hunting aiming at decoys, not real birds. Budlong and his accomplice will make “game” of their friend—which is all happily reported in the papers. But Dean, already hooked by the real estate bait of town boosters, takes the joke in stride.

And what will become of Frank L. Budlong? In future years, he will bring his new yacht, the *Tyche*, further up river to spend winters at the Fort Thompson Park Hotel, where hunting is undisturbed by the sound of hammers and nails, dredges, trains and those motoring machines.

Fort Myers Subdivides

While the campaign for local investment has taken place within the compound of the Fort Myers Hotel, conversation about the transformation of Fort Myers will take place at private dinner tables and in beautifully landscaped gardens. The



The gardens and main entrance to the Fort Myers Hotel, renamed the Royal Palm Hotel. HASF 1992-160-7.

future design of a “core” downtown area with outlying residential neighborhoods will depend on the interaction of local residents and these recently arrived investors. By 1904 not only steamships, but cars and trains offer access to town. Increased housing needs are the inevitable outcome, problem and opportunity. For some, the new “sport,” real estate, is a profitable game. For others, the risks are too high. Only those with capital dare to play.

As early as 1902, the *Fort Myers Press* notes an interest among development companies to subdivide Fort Myers. With names that reflect landscaped elegance—Alabama Grove Terrace, Palmlee Park, Valencia Terrace, Rio Vista—subdivisions are sprouting up all over the city. Developed by two realtors from Minnesota, the Love Joy Addition, whose name alone promises residential “bliss,” creates a sensation by being sold out in one day. Two brothers from St. Petersburg, the Snell Brothers, purchase land near Manuel’s Branch later to be marketed as Edison Heights.

Hugh MacDonald is among the first to consider creating a residential neighborhood on the eastern outskirts of town along First Street. In December 1908, what was once considered an excellent grove is subdivided into residential lots. To the relief of local motorists, MacDonald gets permission from the city to cut a street, Woodford Avenue, between First and Second Streets. The lots in Woodford Park go fast.

Meanwhile, John and Louise Dean tend to businesses, homes and groves in both Florida and Rhode Island. They are enjoying Tupelo Hill, their newly constructed mansion in Cranston. During the winter season in Fort Myers, John and his younger brother Robert, accompanied by their wives, will be regular guests at the Murphy and MacDonald homes on First Street and the Terry and Garvey homes on Riverside Drive. They accept the invitation of Mrs. Terry to use her yacht, the *Whim*, for transportation to and fro.

While Hugh MacDonald and Dean share similar social calendars, Dean is not as ready as his friend to develop his own 38-acre tract of land located on both sides of First Street between Evans Avenue and Billy’s Creek. Unlike the MacDonald grove, Dean’s property is low-lying, marshy and subject to flooding. Dean is especially disappointed by the city council’s refusal to build a sea-wall on First Street despite many requests by prominent residents. The muddy, hyacinth-choked riverbanks are mosquito infested in the rainy season and contribute to the city’s sanitation problems. In 1907, Dean reluctantly pays \$3,000 to improve his own property with a sea-wall.

Though disenchanted with First Street, Dean does explore possibilities of developing residential neighborhoods in other parts of town. In 1911, the Mutual Realty Company, which he now co-owns with Harvey Heitman, joins the real estate “band.” They use the local press along with twin auctioneers and live musicians



First Street (at entrance to Dean Park) postcard. Courtesy of Kathryn Wilbur.

to accompany the selling of lots in East Fort Myers. Hugh MacDonald has chosen the name Woodford Park for his subdivision on First Street while Mutual's new subdivision will be called the Woodside Addition.

Personal Tragedy and World War

The year 1912 is one of darkness where clouds of world war and personal tragedy hit Dean hard. His younger brother, partner and friend, Robert, has just died at the age of 43. On opening day of the Fort Myers Hotel, now renamed the Royal Palm Hotel, Manager Frank Abbott writes in bold black ink in the hotel register: "First in War; First in Peace; and First in the Hearts of His Countrymen." The *Fort Myers Press* will soon be filled with news of war with real estate transactions and social news taking a backseat to letters from local boys at boot camp and the latest on European battlefields. With most building supplies being diverted to the war effort, new construction is limited.

To the north, the *Providence Journal* announces a Democratic win over the newly-organized city of Cranston. Dean, one of Cranston's largest taxpayers and town councilman for nearly a decade, withdraws from Cranston politics forever.

Yet, in April 1913, local papers optimistically report Dean's progress laying sidewalks and curbs on his First Street property between Evans Avenue and Billy's Creek. Tragically, one week later his wife, Louise, succumbs to Bright's disease. It is a time

of choices for this Rhode Island widower who is now in his mid-50s—and who, despite enormous capital gains, must face tremendous personal losses.

Fortunately for Fort Myers, friendships that date back to his stays at the Fort Myers Hotel in 1900, and faith in new associations and projects, pull Dean through this dark period. By now, Dean has made significant investments in local groves, real estate ventures and a packing plant. He plays a major role in the movement for better roads and he has donated property and material for the construction of a school, the Dean School, on the outskirts of town near Whiskey Creek.

Dean has also made a commitment to create Fort Myers' first "up-scale" neighborhood for those very same town boosters who once made sport of his hunting. With their wish for a "greater" Fort Myers being realized, the spacious downtown homes of businessmen and storeowners, including E. L. Evans and M. Flossie Hill are literally being squeezed out by the construction of fireproof brick buildings. Dean's new residential neighborhood, within walking distance of downtown, will be the answer to their housing needs and prayers.

Dean Park at Last Emerges

Pictures of John Morgan Dean, taken in 1915 by his assistant, Arthur Leach, show a lone figure inspecting the curbs and sidewalks of a newly dredged Dean Park. Once known as Bayhead



The second home the Stucky family owned in Dean Park on Providence. Courtesy of Miss Ellen Stucky.

Swamp, the land is so wet it has been, up until now, unsuitable for either groves or building. The Gwynne, MacDonald, and Murphy families, from the spacious verandahs of their First Street mansions, quietly rejoice as sidewalks appear on Dean's property. Dean also begins lining his section of First Street with royal palms, continuing a landscaping pattern begun at the Royal Palm Hotel.

In mapping out streets for Dean Park, Dean combines a businessman's understanding of urban growth with a farmer's appreciation for tropical beauty. As a widower, he is also keenly aware of the value of a sense of neighborhood. The wide streets of Dean Park, especially Providence and Rhode Island Avenues, have a telescoping effect which accommodate both pedestrians and motorists alike. The median at Cranford Avenue and the island between Providence and Rhode Island Avenues are soon landscaped with tropical shrubs. Royal poinciana provide the east and west landscaping borders for Dean Park on Evans and Palm Avenues. Rather than pattern his streets on a rigid grid, sidewalks in Dean Park curve gently. The true magic of Dean Park is this accommodation to modern "mobility" and the custom of Southern communities to socialize on shaded sidewalks and front porches.

Most of all, Dean Park celebrates the front yard. In Cranston, where the suburbanite must walk to public transportation accesses, unlike the city dweller who opens his front door to hop on public transportation, the idea of a front lawn has emerged. Homes near

Tupelo Hill, later to be named Dean Estates, are being built a uniform 15 feet from the curb. In Dean Park, there will be a 35-foot setback restriction from the road. Secondary structures must be built behind the main houses and delivery and service trucks will use rear alleys or lanes. The result of this single element in planning will have a lasting impact on the neighborhood.

Dean's sensitive design, as well as his business and social ties in Fort Myers, meet with a good response. While Mutual Realty has been a joint venture, the Dean Development Company succeeds on Dean's reputation alone. This time there is no need for band music or exaggerated promises in the press. The widower will soon attract the best of local society and lure friends from the north to turn his investment into a reality.

By the early 1920s, Morton M. Milford, editor of the *Fort Myers Press*, and Charles Staley, city manager, are neighbors on Rhode Island Avenue. Mrs. Milford entertains the "Entre Nous" ladies bridge club whose geographical borders reach as far as the Langford home on First and Fowler. Department store owner M. Flossie Hill builds a home for her mother on Palm Avenue. Descriptions of the lavish parties at the Hill home in Dean Park mention cakes flown in from Pittsburgh. Mother and daughter temper this press by hosting the Elizabeth Benevolent Society, a local ladies' charitable club.

Vernon Widerquist and E. L. Evans, both former city council members, build homes within view of each other near the



A home on Palm Avenue. Courtesy of Harmon Photo Collection, Ft. Myers.

Cranford triangle. E. L. Evans and his wife, nee Carrie Belle Hendry, are downsizing from their riverfront mansion downtown. The home they leave behind will be adopted as City Hall and their lavish gardens will become Evan's Park.

Business associates Virgil Robb and Harry Stucky, who own a thriving furniture store downtown, both purchase lots with frontage on Cranford Avenue, although not within waving distance. The Stucky's, who are about to have a baby girl, will build a bungalow at the corner of Banana and Cranford Streets complete with infant room. The more mature Robb chooses a large corner lot on Rhode Island where he and his wife will construct an English country cottage. The front glassed-in porches will be perfect for Robb's passion—orchid growing.

Many early residents of Dean Park are personal friends of Thomas Edison. Mrs. Evans, a gifted musician, is invited to Seminole Lodge to play the piano for Mina and her husband. A. T. G. Parkinson, who with his British wife, lives at the corner of Cranford and Providence Avenues, also enjoys the friendship of Thomas Edison. A portrait of the pair, photographed in Parkinson's later years, shows Edison standing close to his friend, respectfully resting his hand on the back of the gentleman from Dean Park's chair. Lorraine Tichenor, whose father has built an oriental style bungalow on Billy's Creek, is also a welcome guest at Seminole Lodge. Almost identical decorative rock gardens at the Edison Estate and at this Palm Avenue property suggest a shared gardener or landscape designer.

To Dean Park come doctors, citrus farmers, teachers and ministers, merchants, housewives and realtors. There are couples with children and childless couples. There are retirees and high school students and famous relatives. They join churches, benevolent societies and committees. They argue vehemently about the building of roads and prohibition, then invite each other to listen to the latest radio program in the living room of their respective bungalows. Dean Park is more than community—it is family.

Cottages and Bungalows: Dean Park in the '20s

While the term bungalow is used to describe almost every home built in Fort Myers in the first part of the century, Moorish, Dutch Colonial and English Revival designs soon stand out in style in Dean Park.

In 1921, the Evans' choose a playful Moorish design for their home on Providence Avenue. Medallions representing a castle, fish and whale overlook a basin attached to the front of the house. The face of Neptune watches over all, reflecting E. L.'s passion for the tarpon fishing and the sea.

In 1923, Henry Colquitt designs a bungalow on the corner of Rhode Island and Palm Avenues. Colquitt's use of brick is softened by the pink grapevine mortar and stone pattern which envelopes the lower portion of the house. Later this home will be bought by Lewis Pearl, landscape architect for Mrs. Rea,



John M. Dean's riverfront estate in Fort Myers. Courtesy of Southwest Florida Historical Society.

who is the widow of one of the largest stockholders in the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Lucky Strike Cigarette Company. The similarities in design between this corner lot bungalow and the much larger Rea Estate on First Street could not have escaped Pearl.

Well-known local contractor O. J. Dorman builds a two-story cottage for the McCallums on the corner of Providence and Rhode Island Avenues in 1924. In designing their home, the McCallums show an appreciation for the visual potential of a corner lot in Dean Park. While there are many windows on the sides of the home, there are few on the imposing stucco facade facing the street. This large uninterrupted space dominates the human eye from the sidewalk. It takes a view from down the street to appreciate the highly dramatic roof lines and the sense of English country manor which can only emerge from a distance.

Houses on Banana Street (now Michigan Avenue), respond to the need for smaller, less pretentious homes. Two merchants, Charles L. Greer, who runs the Big Cash Store on Anderson Avenue, and Reuben Slappey, who manages Schlossberg's dry goods store downtown, build twin bungalows on their adjoining lots. While modest in scale compared to the cottages on Rhode

Island and Providence Avenues, these two Sears "kit" homes, and many others on Banana, define the American dream home of the 1920s.

John Morgan Dean Enjoys his Golden Years

By 1922, it is apparent that Dean has won over tragedy. At age 66, Dean is smitten by local girl Annie Powell, who has just opened a small dress shop downtown. Annie gives up merchandise and accepts to be his bride. They build a new riverfront estate and design gardens and rose-bordered walkways. Dean then contributes a hotel, the Morgan Hotel, to downtown Fort Myers, which is managed by Annie's nephew, Charles Powell. The couple will continue to spend summers in Cranston at Tupelo Hill.

In old age, John Morgan Dean, well-respected capitalist and gentleman farmer, Northern by birth, Southern by choice, is most proud of two local accomplishments. He has provided a comfortable home away from home for his northern friends at the Morgan Hotel, and he has created Dean Park. He also enjoys the respect of Mrs. Edison, who asks him to speak on real estate development at Fort Myers' first Pioneer Picnic. Most of all, he loves and is loved by his friend and companion, Annie Powell.



Ladies in front of their home on Providence Street. Courtesy of Kathryn Wilbur.

Growing blind, Dean sells his business interests to the North. He still enjoys overseeing planting of palms on his local estate, but now asks his assistant and friend, Arthur Leach, to be his eyes. He has his chauffeur drive newly-arrived guests of the Morgan Hotel about the boulevards of his beloved Dean Park as he sits in the back seat describing, from memory, what he no longer can see.

Porches and Sidewalks... Tradition and Transition

Sidewalks and porches in Dean Park were and are still today spaces to visit, to plan parties, to simply relax and share the love of a well-rooted community. Twin royal palms often serve as gates to a sidewalk leading to the front porch. Jacarandas, live oaks, crepe myrtle and weeping bottle-brush provide a dramatic background to the short walk inside. The front yards and porches are transition spaces between the wide boulevards and public spaces created by Dean and the very private domain of the home.

While architectural designs remain tied to the past, today's Dean Park gardens are renewed and display the personal whim and imagination of the homeowner. Back yards become the outdoor/indoor spaces complete with natural

hallways and walks, ponds, bird baths and curtains of thick foliage. A brick, urban pool-side cafe setting can be found in one back yard while next door is a tropical jungle of giant bamboo.

But pause, one last time, to reflect on the past. On Evans and Palm Avenues are the landscaping monarchs of Dean Park...the royal poinciana. Elsewhere, the smell of backyard orange blossoms and the grapefruit trees over laden with fruit year-round, are a reminder of the gentleman farmer who first came to Fort Myers to hunt and plant groves. His dream of a residential neighborhood, within walking distance of downtown, remains dear to all who live and visit here today...this very secret urban garden...Dean's park.—*SFH*

Kathryn Wilbur, a native of New York, has taught foreign language at Canterbury School, in Fort Myers, for nearly 20 years. Her research of Dean Park and Fort Myers' local history coincided with her purchase of a 1925 home on Rhode Island Avenue which she continues to restore.

Raising Earthworms for Fun & Profit

by Mark Mathosian

Business opportunity frauds tend to resurface given enough time. Here's one that cost Floridians a bundle before it was over.

Do you know anything about raising earthworms? Well, you are not alone if you answered no. Most people don't. That's why this idea had the basic ingredients for a successful business opportunity fraud back in the late 1970s when the scheme surfaced. Even though the sale of "earthworm farms" turned out to be a devastating fraud perpetrated on the citizens of Florida, I must say, as an investigator on one of the cases, we had some fun with this one. Who would have ever thought that raising and selling earthworms could be construed as the sale of an unregistered security? But by the time we finished our financial investigations, we were alleging fraud in the sale of unregistered securities. Here's how this scam worked.

The business opportunity advertisements started appearing as quarter page ads in newspapers around the state in early 1978. Most were similar. They showed a penciled drawing of an earthworm coming out of a can with a caption under it stating something like this: "Make money raising earthworms. Small capital investment required. Guaranteed profits. Call today!"

If you answered the ad and called the number listed you received a sales pitch. As an earthworm "farmer" you could earn up to \$5,000 per year from the sale of earthworms in return for an investment of \$2,000 to \$3,000. You would have been told, like the victims I interviewed, that there was a huge market for earthworms and that they required little or no work. Once you paid your money you would receive an earthworm bed (a four-foot by six-foot wooden box filled with dirt and covered by a removable mesh screen), several thousand "breeder" earthworms and a pamphlet about raising worms. In some cases, you also had your choice of the types of earthworms to breed; however, most investors chose the more familiar red worms or European night crawlers.

Most people assume that the only people who buy earthworms are fishermen. Not according to the earthworm brokers. They said the market was much larger. In fact, there were several lucrative markets for earthworms. They included shampoo manufacturers who use them as a source of protein in shampoo, pet food manufacturers who use them as nutrients in their dog food, the city of New York that uses them to eat sludge and waste and the Japanese who import earthworms by the tons to supplement their diet.

With all these markets vying for your earthworms how could you lose? Profits were guaranteed. And, to guarantee your investment even further, you didn't even have to market the worms yourself. Just raise the worms and sell them back to your worm broker. He promised to distribute the earthworms to all of those markets for you. It sounded too good to be true because it was.

As a result of these advertisements and sales pitches, hundreds of small investors purchased earthworm beds and earthworms. Most investors took them home, set them up on their screened porches or backyard and waited for Mother Nature to take over. They proudly carried the title of earthworm farmer. For the lucky ones the worms bred and actually produced baby worms. Others weren't so lucky. Worms died off for all sorts of reasons. Some didn't reproduce, or in some instances, crawled out of their boxed home when a thunderstorm threatened. It seems that raising earthworms wasn't quite as easy as it sounded.

If you were fortunate, your broker actually repurchased worms from you. If you were not, the broker closed shop and you were on your own to market your product. That's when the complaints started pouring in. It seems that after selling hundreds of these earthworm farms, brokers did in fact close up shop and leave town. Even if they didn't leave town, they were refusing to buy

back earthworms. The earthworm entrepreneurs were left holding the bag. When they couldn't figure out how to get in touch with representatives of all those lucrative markets they were told existed, they started complaining to the Comptroller's Office. That's when we got involved.

After analyzing a few complaints, our legal department determined that these business opportunities were actually security investments. As a security they would be subject to registration with the Comptroller's Office and the brokers would have to be licensed. Here was the logic behind this decision.

Under Chapter 517 a security may take many forms including stocks, bonds, promissory notes and investment contracts. When trying to determine if a business opportunity is a security investment the department applies an industry standard to the details of the offering. If it meets the "Howey test," which is based on a Supreme Court ruling, then it is likely a security. One of the elements of the test addresses the question of who is substantially responsible for generating profits. If you are relying to a large extent on the efforts of a promoter or third party to generate your profits, then you may be involved in a security offering. For example, let's say you own stock in General Motors. Although you own an interest in the company, you are not responsible for running the company. You rely upon the officers and directors to make business decisions for you. You are a passive investor. Your profits are derived primarily from the efforts of others.

With the earthworm farms, the department alleged that these business opportunities were securities because the broker was the person with all the contacts to sell the earthworms in the secondary market. You needed the broker to sell your worms to make a profit. Without the broker, you would not be successful. Therefore, the sale of earthworm farms became the sale of unregistered securities, subject to all the registration requirements, rules and regulations of the state securities laws. Once it was established that the department had jurisdiction over the earthworm investments, the next step was to determine if there was fraud in the sale of these securities. Apparently there was.

As I mentioned earlier, investors were told there were numerous markets for these earthworms. After interviewing about 25 victims, I saw a pattern of deceit developing from the sales pitches made to the investors. The first thing I did was to call the director of sanitation for New York City. Does the city of New York use earthworms to eat sludge and garbage? The answer came back, after a few hardy laughs on

the other end, that they do not. Would someone from that office be willing to testify in court to that fact? The answer was yes. Fraud element number one was confirmed.

Then, I telephoned the head chemist for the shampoo company who made the product victims were told contained earthworms. Does your shampoo contain earthworms? Again, the answer was a definite no. Fraud element number two was confirmed.

I contacted every alleged "market" for earthworms and found them all to be fake, except one—fishermen. Fishermen really do use worms to catch fish; however, that market was already saturated.

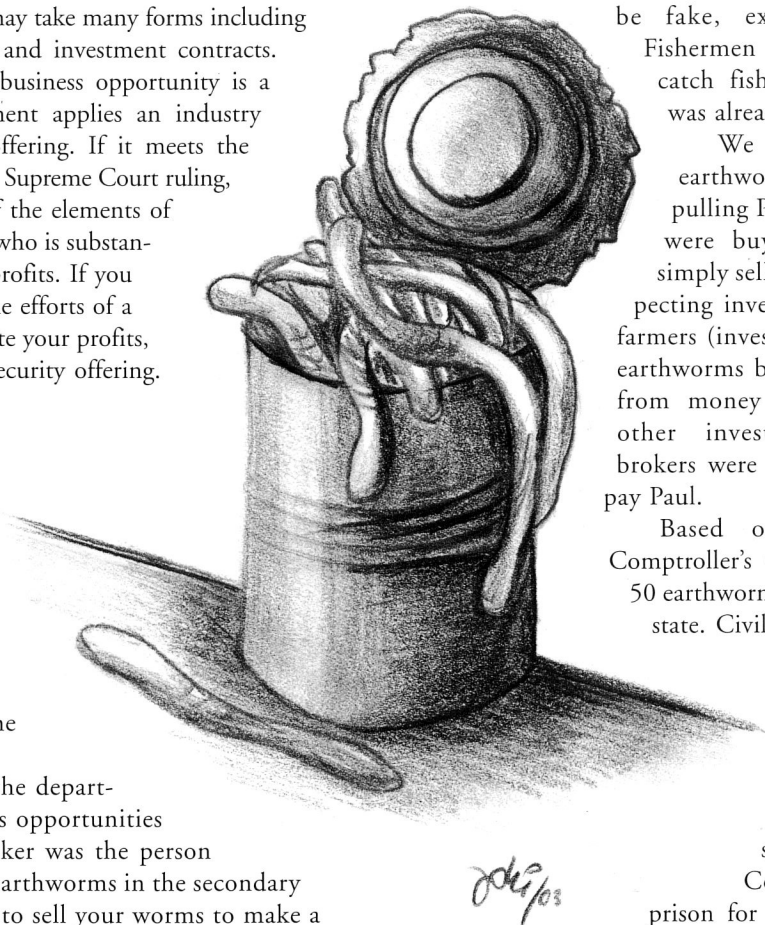
We determined that the earthworm brokers were actually pulling Ponzi scams. Brokers who were buying back worms were simply selling them to other unsuspecting investors. The payment that farmers (investors) received for selling earthworms back to the brokers came from money brokers received from other investors. The earthworm brokers were simply robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Based on our findings, the Comptroller's Office shut down about 50 earthworm farm brokers around the state. Civil complaints were filed in many counties, and criminal charges were filed against principals in several judicial circuits. In fact, the

broker I investigated was sentenced in Broward County to 10 years in

prison for fraud. The sentence was tough as white-collar crimes go because he was a repeat offender. My

investigation revealed he ripped off 53 South Florida citizens for a total of about \$48,500. Unfortunately, most of those investors never got their money back. What they did receive was an education on how not to raise earthworms for profit and how to avoid becoming victims in a business opportunity swindle!—SFH



Mark Mathosian is the Director of the Southwest Florida Region of the State Comptroller's Office. The Comptroller's Office regulates the banking, finance and securities industries in Florida.

Tribute to Dan Laxson

It is with sadness that we note the passing of Dan Laxson, Sr., long time member and supporter of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. His many donations to the archives helped to build our collection of archaeological research and reference materials. A generous contribution on the death of his only son Dan, Jr., in 1990 created a lasting memorial, with the request that the gift be used to acquire materials pertaining to archaeology and the presence of the United States Navy in Florida.

Following is a tribute to Mr. Laxson written by Robert S. Carr, retired county archaeologist and executive director of the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy, Inc. Mr. Carr's passion for archaeology as a career was developed when he was a 14-year-old kid in archaeology classes taught by Mr. Laxson at the Miami Museum of Science in the 1960s.

Dan Laxson, South Florida's first avocational archaeologist, passed away on September 2, 2002. Born on February 21, 1910, Dan moved to Hialeah in 1947, working as a radio mechanic for Eastern Airlines. He was an amateur radio operator, his curiosity about archaeology and his new South Florida home led him to begin a series of archaeological excavations across South Florida beginning in 1953.

As an avocational archaeologist, he was the first individual to begin examining prehistoric sites, many threatened by the post-war building boom that swept Dade County. In 1956, he directed excavations on the north bank of the Miami River prior to the construction of Dupont Plaza. His excavations continued through 1970, resulting in the examination of over 15 sites across Broward and Dade counties, and the publication of at least 18 articles in *The Florida Anthropologist*. These excavations were highlighted by excavations of the Maddens Hammock site in 1957. Located just west of the Palmetto Expressway in present day Miami Lakes, this significant Tequesta and Seminole site still survives surrounded by development, its fate awaiting negotiations for public acquisition. The Gratigny site in Hialeah yielded the remains of a Seminole warrior complete with the remains of

his flint-lock rifle and other grave goods. His quick actions salvaged these remains just before the site's destruction for the building of a church at that location. Laxson donated all

the recovered artifacts to both the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville and the Peabody Museum at Yale.

His archaeological contributions were important, particularly his penchant to minimize impacts on many of these sites by confining his excavations to no more than several holes, leaving most of the site intact. However, perhaps his greatest achievement was the quiet no-nonsense leadership he exuded, influencing scores of other avocational archaeologists, founding local archaeological societies and acting as a mentor to many students by teaching archaeological classes at the Museum of Science in the early 1960s, where he directed educational digs at Greynolds Park on the Oleta River. His advice

and counsel was highly regarded by students, and he communicated often with several professional archaeologists such as Ripley Bullen and Dr. Bill Sears.

Bob Carr
September, 2002

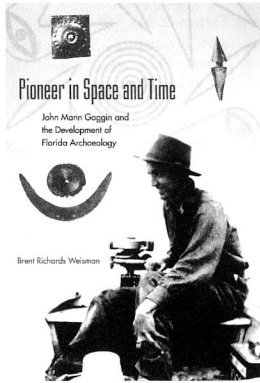


Dan Laxson and group at the Collier County digs. Ca. April 1964. HASE

Book Review

PIONEER IN SPACE AND TIME: JOHN MANN GOGGIN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FLORIDA ARCHAEOLOGY

by Brent Richards Weisman. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002. 176 pages—hardcover. \$49.95



reviewed by Charles W. Arnade

“Life in Miami was idyllic for John and his gang [fellow students at the Gesu School] in the late 1920s and early 1930s”(p. 5). John Goggin was a legendary professor of archaeology and anthropology at the University of Florida. He was the founder of the study of those disciplines in Florida, a great academic pioneer. He was also a true early Miamian. This well

done scholarly book is the story of Dr. Goggin by a present enterprising professor of anthropology.

I knew Goggin when I was a young instructor at UF in the early 1950s. To me he was most eccentric and indeed author Weisman writes, “This young man was unusual, eccentric, a ‘genius’ said Sister Constance of Gesu School in excusing him from missing Mass. How can he be here, she reasoned in his favor, if he is miles away in the woods?” He was probably “roaming the Flagami, Simpson, and Brickell Hammocks” for everything including “food remains of prehistoric meals...animal bones and broken pieces of dark earthenware pottery (p. 1). The senior class in 1933 said student John Goggin wanted “to become a prominent figure in the archaeological world”(p. 13), and he was indeed.

His father was John Goggin, a Miami dentist, and his mother, Margaret Mann Goggin, trained at the Chicago Art Institute and was active in Miami art and literary circles. The family were devoted Catholics. After graduation John had a failing year at the University of Florida, but moved to the University of New Mexico, where he became an enthusiastic student of archaeology and anthropology, doing field work in Mexico and New Mexico. He returned often to Miami where he did archaeology in Dade and Collier Counties as well as in the Keys and the Bahamas (Andros Island). He received his B.A. in 1938. He failed to complete graduate studies at the University of New Mexico, coming back to Miami in 1942 “with no degree in hand”(p. 59). He continued his archaeological investigations in Southern Florida, networking with such legendary persons as Deaconess Bedell, who opened the door for him with the Seminoles, and Marjory

Stoneman Douglas. He had one defective eye and was rejected for the draft. In early 1944 he was accepted by Yale University for graduate studies, and Yale’s Caribbean Anthropological Program supported Goggin’s work in Upper Matecumbe Key even before his enrollment. In 1948 he received his Ph.D. degree, having written a 302-page dissertation, “Culture and Geography in Florida Prehistory,” which Weisman says attempts “a synthesis of Florida archaeology in its entirety” (p. 88).

Goggin’s many years of field work since early youth in Miami and South Florida had served him well. He joined the sociology department at UF and in the fall of 1948 the UF student newspaper announced that anthropology has “now come to the University of Florida campus” (p. 100) taught by “Dr. John M. Goggin” [sic]. Some years later an independent department of anthropology came into being.

Weisman’s book has seven chapters, tracing Goggin from boyhood to his early death from cancer in 1963 and the development of Florida archaeology from the 1930s, with references to some earlier years, to “Goggin’s Legacy” (chapter 7). The book is welcome, academically sound with a fine bibliography (but no notes) and well chosen illustrations. It is well organized and easy to read without the jargon so often used by academicians. Weisman correctly makes Goggin the real pioneer and institutional founder of Florida archaeology. But he was also the founder of Florida anthropology (which to some of us includes archaeology).

The author’s characterization of John Goggin is correct. He was a complex man, often narrow-minded and unpleasant, at other times delightful. He had all the attributes of a genius, was very focused in his expertise and not too willing to be challenged. The University Press of Florida is to be congratulated for publishing this work about a Florida academic pioneer. He was a true son of Miami, something he never forgot.

Charles W. Arnade is a distinguished professor of international studies and history. Mr. Arnade has been with the Florida State University System since 1953 and transferred to University of Southern Florida in 1960. He has published books, articles, essays, encyclopedia entries and about 800 book reviews.

Interested in submitting an article or book review for *South Florida History*?

Contact Sara Muñoz at
publications@historical-museum.org for a copy of the *Style Guide for Writers*.

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We wish to thank the following people who committed to support the museum by joining the ranks of our members from April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003. The Historical Museum truly appreciates the invaluable contribution that our members make to this institution & to the community.

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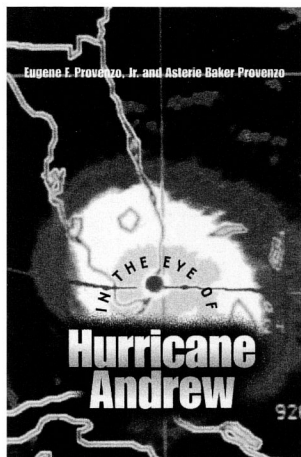
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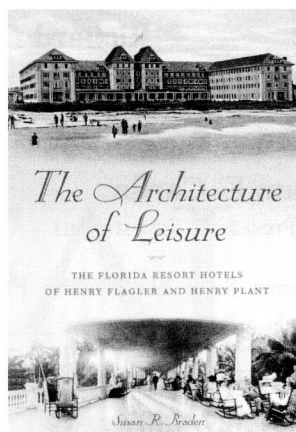
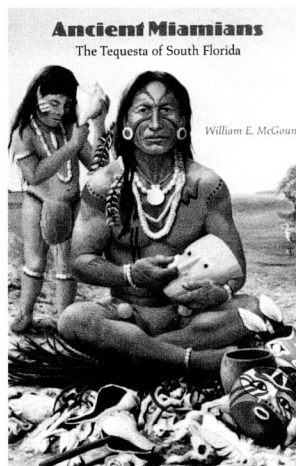
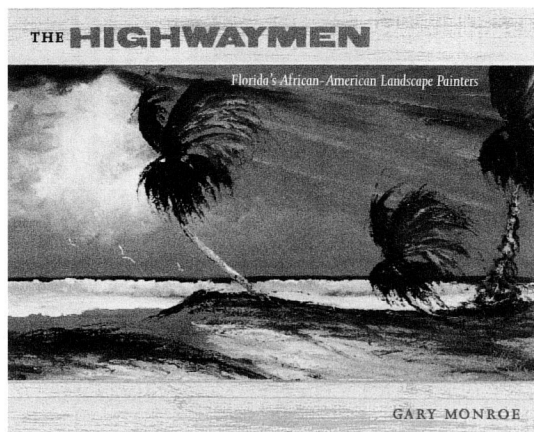
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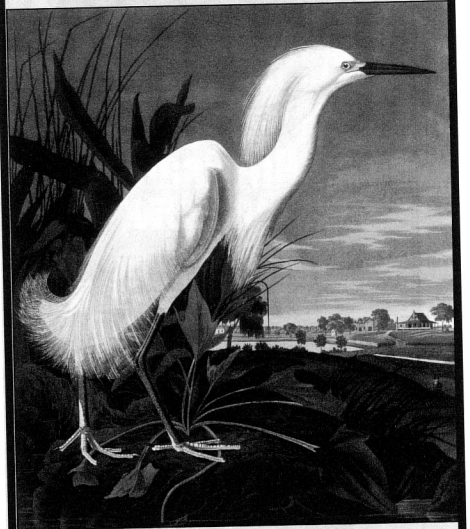


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