

South Florida History

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA VOLUME 34, NO 1, 2006 \$3.00



Historical Museum of Southern Florida



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HISTORICAL MUSEUM
OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

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101 West Flagler St Downtown Miami 305.375.1492 historical-museum.org

South Florida History Volume 34, No 1, 2006

4 Editor's Notes

Paul S. George, Ph.D.

5 Spotlight on...Education

Students at Liberty City Elementary School have the opportunity to engage in an inter-generational exploration of the people and places that make up Liberty City, and the investigation of its origins and evolution since the 1930s, through the museum's S.O.U.R.C.E. program.

Mara Zapata, Ph.D.

6 Around the Galleries

Happenings at the Historical Museum & member museums

8 Exhibits— *Caribbean Collage*

Piece together and interpret the dramatic stories of struggles for power in the Caribbean through rare manuscripts, books, maps, prints and photographs.

by Robert A. Shaddy

12 Judge Henry Fulton Atkinson

Judge "Ad," as he was commonly referred to, was an esteemed and revered judge of Dade County's 11th Judicial Circuit Court in the early 1900s who had a profound impact on the legal community, both inside and outside the courtroom.

Judge Scott Silverman & Paul S. George, Ph.D.

16 Miami's Bayfront Park: A History

Discover the continuing transformation Bayfront Park has undergone since it first opened more than 80 years ago, mirroring the changes and needs of the vibrant community surrounding it.

Paul S. George, Ph.D.

28 Miami Beach's Art Deco Architecture & the New Deal

Thanks to the positive economic effects of the New Deal, Miami Beach saw an influx of tourists and entrepreneurs in the 1930s who demanded a more modern approach to architecture, giving birth to the Art Deco style.

Jeff Donnelly

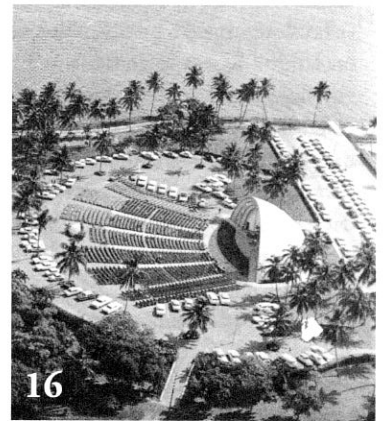
26 Book Review

Warren Zeiller's *A Prehistory of South Florida* is a good introduction to South Florida archaeology for the general public, offering information on many of Miami-Dade county's most important archaeological sites.

Robert S. Carr



8



16



28

Cover—Band concert in Bayfront Park, Miami. Postcard. HASF 1979-9-84.



Readers of this number of *South Florida History* will, we hope, enjoy the articles and book review that underline the uniqueness of Miami and southeast Florida. In his essay, "Art Deco and the New Deal," **Jeff Donnelly** offers sharp insights into the influence of the New Deal in shaping today's Art Deco district, especially those forces behind the surge of tourists and the concomitant boom in construction on South Beach in the late 1930s. Donnelly holds a Ph.D. in American Civilization from New York University, and he taught history and social science for many years at Miami Country Day School. He conducts historic tours of the Art Deco district and trains aspiring tour guides.

Circuit Court **Judge Scott Silverman**, who is a member of the board of trustees of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, provides readers of "Judge Henry Fulton Atkinson—One of the 11th Judicial Circuit's Greatest Judges," with an incisive view of an early judicial stalwart. Judge Silverman is an enthusiastic avocational historian who has researched many elements of Miami and Dade County's judicial record, earning him recognition as the county's unofficial "court chronicler." I accepted the judge's summons to help with the article since I was familiar with the record of Judge Atkinson, as well as his wife Edith M. Atkinson, one of the first Juvenile Court jurists, having written my doctoral dissertation on criminal justice in early Miami.

For longtime Miamians, the city's Bayfront Park was a special place. The 39-acre park sits on landfill where in earlier times the warm waters of Biscayne Bay lapped at the fledgling city's ragged shoreline. From its inception in the mid-1920s till the late 1960s, the park was truly the city's front porch, offering a wide array of events and activities, as well as a beautiful greensward with stunning vistas for visitors who wished to relax and enjoy this slice of paradise. The final decades of the 20th century were hard on the park as Miami's downtown declined as a popular venue. Bayfront Park is back for a host of reasons outlined in the article, "Miami's Bayfront Park: A History." Its importance will grow significantly with the explosion in the number of new residential developments in downtown Miami as new residents will seek it out as a refuge from their condominiums and cars.

Robert S. Carr, the area's preeminent archaeologist, observes in his review of Warren Zeiller's *A Prehistory of South Florida* that this work provides information for the first time to the general public on many Miami-Dade County archaeological sites. Carr speaks from firsthand experience here since he has been the lead archaeologist for most of the county's major excavations in the past quarter century.

As we were preparing to send this issue of *South Florida History* to press, we learned of the passing of **Helen Muir**. An accomplished journalist, writer, historian and civic activist, Helen Muir was also a staunch friend of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. Helen's remarkable life spanned 95 years, the last 70 of which were spent in Miami. She brought a *joie de vivre* to virtually every experience she encountered. Helen's enormous roster of friends included Robert Frost, Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the writer Philip Wylie.

As a writer and scholar, Helen produced the first comprehensive history of Greater Miami, a superb work entitled *Miami U.S.A.*, which appeared in 1953. Two years earlier, her study of Miami's Parrot Jungle, "Glorious Things that Fly," appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Although it was but one of innumerable works from her facile pen, the article stands out in my mind as a stunning testament to scholarship and writing. Perhaps Helen's most enduring legacy was the critical role she played in the development of the county's sterling public library system. Few people could match the experiences and achievements of Helen Muir. She will be missed.

South Florida History

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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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Education

The Rich History of Liberty City: People, Places, Stories

by Mara Zapata, Ph.D.

The Historical Museum of Southern Florida's education department is committed to creating partnerships with schools, providing meaningful learning experiences for both students and teachers. While history is not a content area assessed as part of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), its integration within other areas such as language arts can be a creative way of turning students and teachers "on" to history while impacting student achievement. One such partnership is a program we have recently embarked upon entitled Searching Omitted Understandings Regarding Community Evolvement (S.O.U.R.C.E.). With funding from the History Channel and a commitment to support its implementation from the Miami-Dade County School District—I Choose division of School Choice and Parental Options, we are providing an overarching theme for the Liberty City Elementary School curriculum of history and preservation.

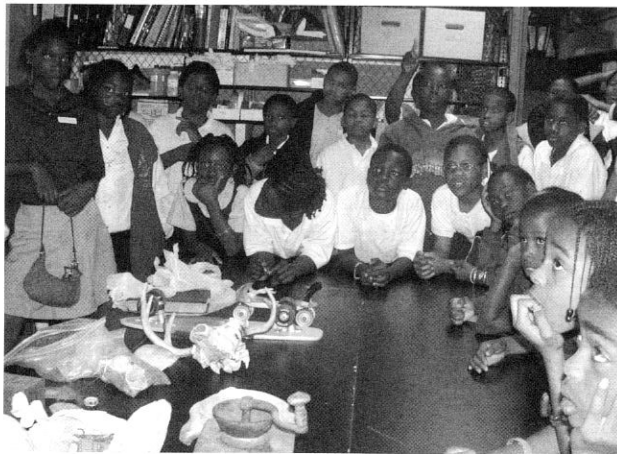
Preservation begins with an understanding of the history of an area. While this community may not shine with apparent beauty, it holds unparalleled and compelling stories of people who have struggled to maintain and promote the richness of a culture. Their struggles are central to a community that served as a battleground in the desegregation and civil rights movements of the '50s and '60s, and symbols of this struggle are still visible in Liberty City. However, its residents, especially children, may not know the significance of what surrounds them. One example is a portion of a wall still standing in Liberty City, which long ago served to separate the white areas from black areas in

that neighborhood. It is a familiar wall but what is not familiar is why it is there. The reason for the wall's existence tells a story and raises questions of the issues residents of the community still face

today. In essence, Liberty City is a picture of the post-world war racial struggles in America.

S.O.U.R.C.E. provides students the opportunity to engage in the inter-generational exploration of the people and places that make up Liberty City, and the investigation of its origins and evolution since the 1930s. Students will use historical photographs and other primary resources from the museum's archives, along with guided oral history projects to identify the ways in which their community has changed. They will also learn about the important social and political issues that framed the community's beginnings, and that continue to shape life today. As students visit the museum on a monthly basis, work with museum educators in their classrooms, listen to stories of local people in their community and take their own photographs, they will be encouraged to ask their own questions and write their own conclusions about life in their community, about the preconceptions that exist about its past and about why certain social and political issues have persisted through time.

While providing a deep understanding of how we at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida preserve local history, an objective of S.O.U.R.C.E. is to have students think critically about their own roles within and contributions to the community, and the important differences their actions can make to its future.—SFH



Top—Students learn about our past dating back 10,000 years in the museum's galleries. Above—Students go "behind the scenes" to look and touch historical artifacts.

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; Sunday noon to 5 pm. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Discounted parking available at 50 NW 2nd Ave. Adults \$5; Children 6-12 \$2; HMSF members and children (5 and under) FREE.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

Caribbean Collage: Archival Collections and the Construction of History

On display through June 4, 2006

Piece together and interpret the dramatic stories of struggles for power in the Caribbean through rare manuscripts, books, maps, prints and photographs. An exhibition in collaboration with the University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries, which hold one of the largest Caribbean collections in the world.

Balseros—A Desperate Journey: Cuban Photographs by Al Diaz

Lobby Exhibition

On display through June 4, 2006

Veteran *Miami Herald* photographer Al Diaz has covered breaking news stories throughout the Americas. In 1994, he was in Cuba when thousands of people attempted to leave the country on boats and rafts. *Balseros—A Desperate Journey* captures this dramatic moment that led to the U.S. government adopting its "wet-foot, dry-foot" immigration policy for Cuban refugees.

Miami Beach: America's Tropical Resort

Opening June 23, 2006

Discover the intriguing and, at times, glamorous story of Miami Beach, from its inception on a mangrove-covered sandbar in 1910 to its transformation into a world-famous resort city. Enter a replica of a Miami Modern hotel lobby. See panoramic photographs, hotel brochures, postcards, restaurant menus, souvenirs and bathing suits representing different eras. Watch vintage home movies of tourists vacationing on the beach and listen to personal stories of hotel workers and entertainers, who over the years have been a part of this renowned tourist destination.

Stereoviews of Florida & the Caribbean

Lobby Exhibition

Opening June 23, 2006

Explore this early form of photography in which two nearly identical images, with the assistance of a special viewer, can be seen as a three-dimensional image. Drawn from the museum's collection and private collections, this exhibition will present over 100 stereoviews from the late 19th and early 20th century that depict images of Florida and the Caribbean. This popular form of photography provided viewers, who often did not have the means to personally travel to this region, a visual context from which to develop ideas about Florida and the Caribbean.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Live On The Plaza FILM H-2 Worker

Thursday, May 25 7 pm FREE

A film by Stephanie Black

(Jamaica/US, 1990, 70 min.)

Set near Lake Okeechobee, this documentary focuses on the more than 10,000 men from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands who, until recently, performed the brutal task of cutting sugar cane by hand—a job so dangerous and low-paying that Americans refuse to do it. Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary, 1990 Sundance Film Festival.

Family Fun Days: Humid History

Saturday, May 20 1 to 3 pm FREE

Learn about the experiences of early South Floridians as they dealt with heat and humidity year round. Create your own hand fan so you can stay cool during those hot summer days.

Tropical Explorers Summer Camp

June 5 to August 4, 2006 9 am to 5 pm

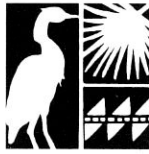
Give your child a summer camp experience they will never forget. These weeklong camp sessions at the Historical Museum are packed with exciting hands-on indoor and outdoor activities, ideal for children 6 to 12 years of age. The museum's highly skilled educators and counselors guide campers to discover the treasures of South Florida's history through gallery games, music, arts and crafts, field trips to historical sites and much more! For more information, call 305.375.1625.

HISTORIC TOURS WITH DR. PAUL GEORGE

Father's Day Miami River Boat Tour

Saturday, June 17 10 am to 1 pm

Bring Dad on this relaxing ride with the Historical Museum's Dr. Paul George along the same banks where ancient Tequesta Indians settled. See the famous Miami Circle archaeological site near the mouth of the Miami River. Witness the colorful tugboats, Haitian freighters, houseboats and drawbridges that bring life to the river's commerce. Discover the lesser-known Miami River communities, parks, restaurants, freshwater springs and the site of the rapids, and possibly see manatees along the way, while hearing about Miami's early history. Meet at Bayside Marketplace, 401 Biscayne Boulevard. HMSF members \$34, Non-members \$39. Advance reservations and payment required. For information and reservations, call 305.375.1621.



Collier County Museums, 3301 Tamiami Trail East, Naples—239.774.8476. Journey back over 10,000 years of Southwest Florida's unique past at our four museum locations. Visit the Collier County Museum at 3301 Tamiami Trail East, Naples, the Naples Depot Museum (opening soon) at 1051 5th Ave South, Downtown Naples, the Museum of the Everglades at 105 West Broadway, Everglades City and the Immokalee Pioneer Museum at Roberts Ranch at 1215 Roberts Ave, Immokalee. Admission is free for all museums, donations appreciated. For information and operating hours, please call: 239.774.8476.



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 Monday through Friday, 10 am–4 pm.



Clewiston Museum, 112 South Comercio Street, Clewiston—863.983.2870. The Clewiston Museum, founded in 1984, is a growing museum, collecting and displaying items, large and small, important and trivial, which reflect the past of Clewiston and its surrounding area. The Clewiston Museum is open 1–5 pm Tuesday through Saturday, with seasonal adjustments. No admission fee is charged; however, donations are encouraged.



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.

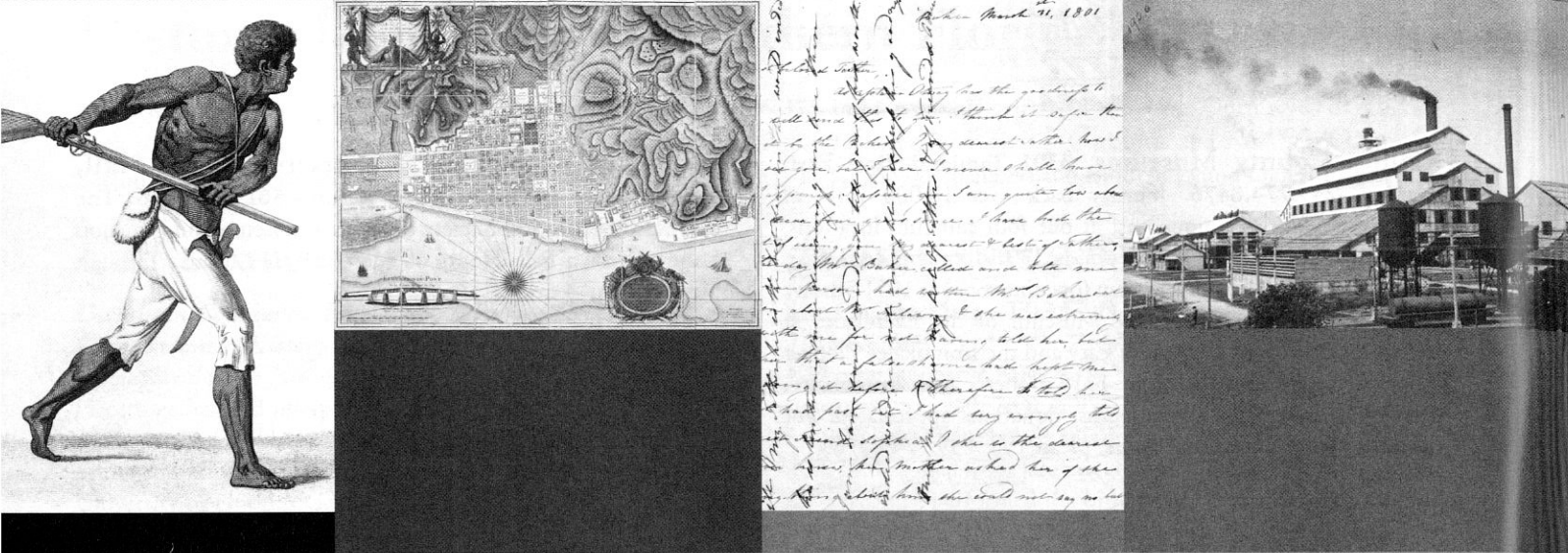
Yesterday's Visions for Sale at the Historical Museum

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

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

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





An exhibition in collaboration with The University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries

CARIBBEAN COLLAGE

Archival Collections AND THE Construction of History

ON DISPLAY THROUGH June 4, 2006

by Robert A. Shaddy

The intersection of Native American, European, African and Asian peoples in the Caribbean since 1492 has generated countless stories of conflict, degradation and achievement. Though the voices of the vast majority of the participants in the region's dramas are lost forever, some people created written records of their experiences and observations. Today, careful study of these records allows us to discover diverse accounts of the Caribbean past, ranging from passing comments on daily occurrences to reports on major events that changed the course of world history.

Collaboration between the University of Florida and the Historical Museum of Southern Florida has resulted in a major exhibition that opened at the Historical Museum on February 24, 2006, and will be on display until June 4. *Caribbean Collage: Archival Collections and the Construction of History* features unique documents, rare books, maps and other materials from the University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries, which possesses one of the largest Caribbean collections in the world. Highlighted in the exhibition are several archival collections and

printed materials held by the Department of Special and Area Studies Collections (including the Latin American Collection and Special Collections) and the Map and Imagery Library. Within the Libraries, support and assistance for the project was also provided by the Digital Library Center and the Preservation and Conservation Department.

Top, left to right—Maroon warrior in Jamaica, 1796. Map of Cap François, St. Domingue (Haiti), 1785. Letter from Ann Duckworth to her father, Rear Admiral John Thomas Duckworth, stationed in the Caribbean, 1801. Manati Sugar Mill, Cuba, 1919-1920.

Opposite page—Current state of the plantation of Madame de Rocheblave. Saint-Domingue, 1779. This document lists male and female Africans enslaved at the Rocheblave plantation by name, age and, in some cases, occupation. It is possible that some of these individuals participated in the Haitian Revolution, given that the insurrection started in the rich plantation area that included Rocheblave.

*Etat de l'Habitation de Madame De Rocheblave
sise au Quartier morin, au Premier Janvier 1779.*

<u>Nègres.</u>	âge	<u>Nègresses.</u>	âge.
Toto, Commandeur, Criol	43	Colette	32
Samouche, m. ^e Suerier	54	Rosalie	43
Antoine, Suerier	50	Jeanneton Criole	42
Laurent, Suerier et major	42	Louison	43
Romandin, Suerier	43	Renotte	43
Paul, Criol, Suerier	40	m. Chérène, Criole	31
André, Suerier	39	Fanchon	39
S. ^t Jean, Suerier, Infirme	38	Charlotte	39
Larose, maître Suerier	64	Marianne, Osoulangère	43
Etienne, Criol, m. ^e Cabrouetier	46	Osibiane	39
Jauvier, m. ^e Cabrouetier	45	m. Rose	54
J. Baquer, Cabrouetier	39	Claudine, Criole	22
Jauvier, Criol, Cabrouetier	39	Nanon Criole	22
Choisy, m. ^e moulinier	43	Félicité, Criole	39
J. Laurent m. ^e moulinier	34	Bulie	49
Toti-cour, moulinier	48	Geneviève Bo.	44
J. Pierre, Criol, moulinier	44	Cocinelle	43
Gerome, Criol, moulinier	43	m. Claire, Criole	23
Pierrette, Criol, moulinier	34	Marthonne, Infirme	28
Antoine, Criol, Chounetier infirm	49	Suzanne, infirme	46
Alexandre, Chounetier	49	m. Catherine, Criole	34
François	41	Magdeleine, Criole	44
Labonté	43	Marinette, Criole	44
Joseph	25	Margueritte, Criole	12
Jaques	42	Nanon Soulailler	42
Gilles	39	m. Louise, Criole ménagère	22
Henry, Criol, Cochon et Valet	37	Geneviève, Blanchisseur	30
Hippolite	39	Osabeth, hospitalière	53
Narisse	39	Henriette Cassarière	46
Louis, Criol, infirme, G. ^e d'animat.	39	Suzette, Infirme	46
Charles, Criol, Inf. Cuisinier	20	Christine	45
Mathieu, Criol, Inf. G. ^e d'Haye	47	Beanne	55
Supiter, Inf. Gardinier	49	Beannette, Criole	27
Sara, Criol, Inf. Cuisinier	38	Hélène, Infirme	47
Gabriel, Infirme	44	Bethy, Infirme	49
Sabrochelle, G. ^e du boulier	58	Agner, Infirme	37
Manuel, Inf. G. ^e d'viver	41	Serime, Gardinier	50
Franisque, Gardien d'viver	57	Cécile	50
Alerte, chauffeur d'Etuve	500	Osabeth	64
<u>Nègres mis en 1778.</u>		<u>nègresses mises en 1778.</u>	
J. Louis	15	Genevieve	20
G. ^e Petros	17	Desirée	20
Eoni	20		
Bernard	20		
Petro	54		
44. Nègres.		41. Nègres	
		44. Nègre.	
		85. Cetes:	



Above & bottom—Museum visitors view the *Caribbean Collage* exhibition.

The collections on display focus on the histories of the English-speaking Caribbean, Haiti and Cuba from the 18th to the 20th century. Massive social change occurred during this period: imperial powers fought over various islands, slavery ended throughout the region, new forms of plantation and small-scale agriculture developed and independent nation-states, with distinct creole cultures, emerged. The exhibition explores these large-scale transformations through documents of specific events in people's lives: letters, diaries, ledger entries, business records, scrapbook clippings, photographs, drawings and similar items. Books and maps provide additional perspectives.

Among the many archival collections to be featured in *Caribbean Collage* are handwritten letters and other documents pertaining to the potential sale of plantations in Saint-Domingue, shortly before the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution in 1791; correspondence and records of colonial governors in the British West Indies from 1779 to 1816; papers of the Spanish army in Cuba during the colony's first war for independence (1868-1878); records of the Taco Bay Commercial Company, an American-owned agricultural enterprise in Cuba during the early 20th century; scrapbooks of Frank R. Crumbie, a government official during the U.S. occupation of Haiti (1915-1934); and correspondence of Francisco Anibal Roldán, who began publishing a newspaper in the Dominican Republic in 1930.

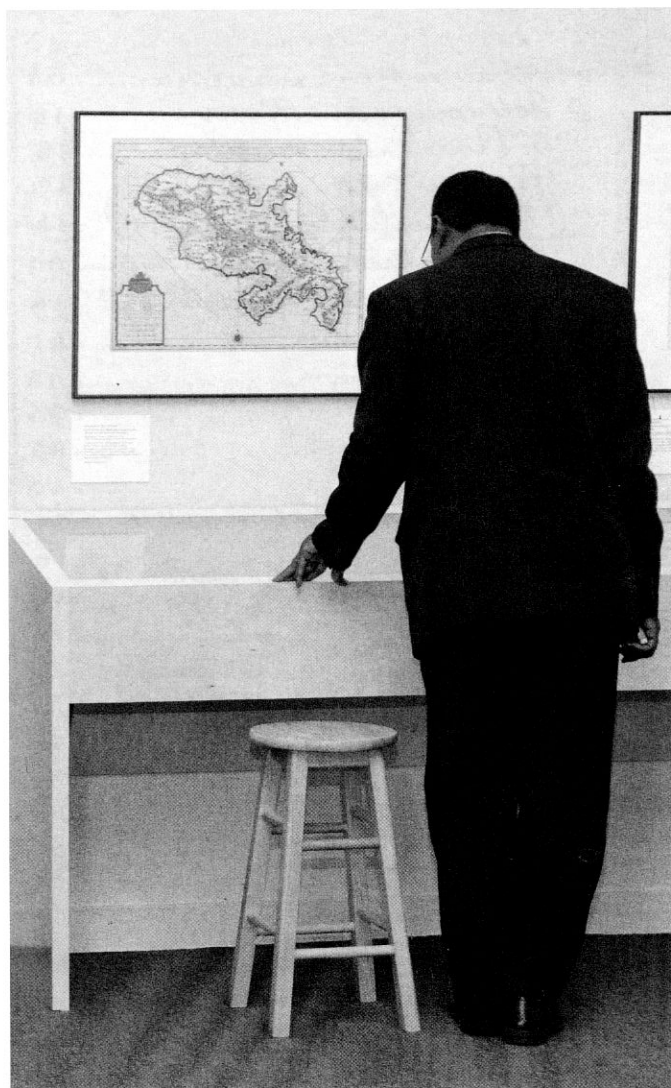
Caribbean Collage provides no single narrative or interpretation of the Caribbean past. The documents and images presented in the exhibition offer viewers the opportunity to piece together their own Caribbean histories. Through the examination of archival collections, it is possible to (re)construct many collages or assembled pictures of the Caribbean.

The exhibition, organized by Stephen Stuemphle (Chief Curator of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida) and other museum staff, is presented in five sections: an overview of Caribbean Collections at the University of Florida; British

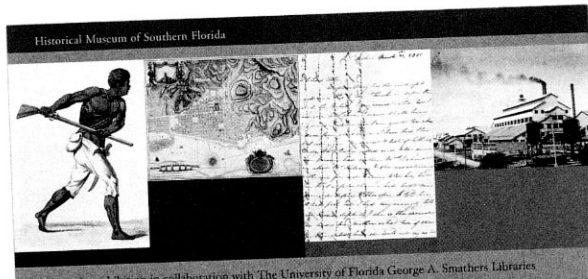
Imperialism in the Caribbean, 1756-1834; The Haitian Revolution, 1791-1804; The Cuban Wars of Independence, 1868-1898; and U.S. Imperialism in the Caribbean, 1898-1934. The museum has also produced an exhibition catalog and online version of the exhibition on its Web site (www.historical-museum.org).

On April 27, 2006, the Department of Special and Area Studies Collections of the University of Florida hosted a public program at the Historical Museum. Presentations by Carl Van Ness, Curator of Manuscripts and Archives and Keith Manuel, doctoral candidate in history, examined aspects of Cuban and Haitian history respectively. Dr. Carmen Diana Deere, Director of the UF Center for Latin American Studies, discussed the use of archival materials in historical research.—*SFH*

Robert A. Shaddy is the Chair of Special and Area Studies Collections of the University of Florida's Smathers Libraries.

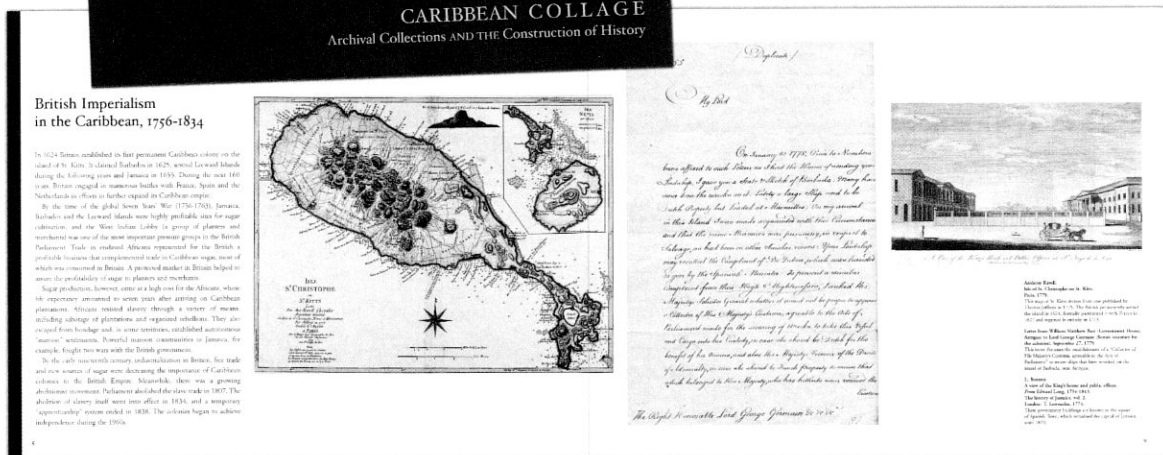


While at the Historical Museum, make sure you pick up a
CARIBBEAN COLLAGE Exhibition Guide



Stop by the museum store today and pick up your copy.

Special price \$1



Caribbean Collage was organized in collaboration with The University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries: Special Collections and the Latin American Collection of the Department of Special and Area Studies Collections, Map and Imagery Library, Digital Library Center and the Department of Preservation.

Caribbean Collage Exhibition Sponsors

This exhibition has been sponsored in part by *The South Florida Business Journal* (Media Sponsor), Carnival Cruise Lines and Orange Bowl foundation.

All images are courtesy of The University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries.

Miami Beach
 AMERICA'S TROPICAL RESORT

An all-inclusive exhibition...opening at the Historical Museum on June 23.

Discover the glamorous story of a mangrove-covered sandbar and its transformation into

"America's Year 'Round Playground!"



11th Judicial Circuit Judge Henry Fulton Atkinson. HASF 1988-84-43.

“Judge Henry Fulton Atkinson, ‘grand old man’ of the Dade county bar, was undoubtedly the most popular man ever to occupy a jurist’s bench in Dade county.”

–The Miami Daily News, December 13, 1939

Judge Henry Fulton Atkinson

One of the 11th Judicial Circuit's

Greatest Judges

by Judge Scott Silverman & Paul S. George, Ph.D.

Long before the 11th Judicial Circuit had its first chief judge, there was Judge Henry Fulton Atkinson. Judge Atkinson was the dean of the 11th Judicial Circuit. He served Dade's judiciary on two separate occasions. His first foray into the judiciary was as the judge of Dade's Criminal Court of Record from 1910 to 1916. Thereafter, he served as a circuit judge of the 11th Judicial Circuit from 1923 to 1939. Members of Dade's Bar and the community simply knew the gray-haired, pipe-smoking jurist as Judge "Ad."

Judge Atkinson was unquestionably one of South Florida's greatest judges. Local newspapers kindly lauded him as "one of Miami's staunch landmarks," "the venerable judge," "[one of Miami's] leading and most respected citizens," "one of the greatest chancellors of this day in the state" and "the personification of dignity." When he died on December 12, 1939, at the age of 78, the *Miami Herald* headline declared, "State Loses Great Figure." Such was the regard that so many held for this great jurist.

Born in Savannah, Georgia, in 1861, Judge Atkinson attended the University of Georgia at Athens. Due to impaired health, he moved to Florida in 1881 where he took up residence near Titusville, purchased an orange grove and grew oranges. In 1887, he began studying law while working as a deputy clerk of the circuit court. Two years later, Judge Atkinson became a member of the Florida Bar. He remained in Titusville practicing law and serving in various governmental capacities including that of deputy tax collector and acting justice of the peace. He even served for a period as the mayor of Titusville.

In January 1897, almost one year after Henry Flagler completed his railroad, Judge Atkinson came to Miami. He was no different from the many other folks from around the state who sought employment and the excitement of watching a new city come to life after the catastrophic freeze of 1894–1895 that destroyed orange groves, fortunes and employment opportunities.

The day after he arrived, Judge Atkinson opened his law office. Though he practiced primarily criminal law, he also handled civil matters. In those early years, Judge Atkinson represented most of the pioneer families. However, one of his most prominent civil clients was Julia D. Tuttle. He remained Mrs. Tuttle's legal counsel and confidant until her death on September 14, 1898.

Practicing law in Dade County in the 1890s was a daunting task. During that decade, Dade's county seat and its court were located in Juno, Florida. Juno, an unincorporated and now defunct city, was situated in what is today the northern part of Palm Beach County. In those days, court was in session just six times a year.

Attending court in Juno was an arduous affair. In order for Judge Atkinson to attend court proceedings on behalf of a client, he was compelled to take the train to West Palm Beach, and then proceed on water by launch. The sheriff, complaining parties and witnesses would often accompany him to Juno. Since Juno had no accommodations, at the conclusion of the court proceedings, the group would once again board the launch to West Palm Beach. As difficult as Judge Atkinson found those early days, he fondly and nostalgically looked back at them.

During his early years in Miami, Judge Atkinson served as the city's attorney and as a member of a committee that drew up the city of Miami charter. There were times in his judicial

career that litigants would argue various charter provisions before him. Judge Atkinson would smilingly say, "I drew that one up."

In private practice, Judge Atkinson was the senior partner in some of Miami's most important law firms. He was a founding partner in Atkinson, Gramling & Burdine; Atkinson & Burdine, which dissolved on March 1, 1921; and in Atkinson, Evans & Mershon (resigning from the firm before taking the circuit bench).

In 1909, Governor Albert Gilchrist appointed Judge Atkinson to Dade's Criminal Court of Record. Three years later, in 1912, Dade's voters elected him to a four-year term. In his book, *Miami and Dade County, Florida*, author E.V. Blackman wrote

that Judge Atkinson's service was distinguished by exhibiting "broad humanitarianism which [was] an important element in his personal character."

In 1916, at the age of 55, Judge Atkinson married 29-year-old Edith M. Meserve. Mrs. Atkinson went on to graduate with an LL.B. from the John B. Stetson University Law School in 1922.

On February 10, 1923, Governor Cary A. Hardee appointed Judge Atkinson to the circuit court to fill out the unexpired term of Circuit Court Judge H. Pierre Branning. Upon

receiving the appointment, Mrs. Atkinson chose to serve as her husband's secretary—but only for a short period. For in 1924, the people of Dade County elected Edith Atkinson judge of Dade's Juvenile Court.

Edith M. Atkinson is notable in her own right. She has the historic honor and distinction of being the first woman to argue a case before a Dade jury and obtain a winning verdict. She is also Florida's first woman judge to sit on the bench of the Juvenile Court. Mrs. Atkinson believed that errant youths should be sent to reform school only as a last resort so she campaigned tirelessly for a county farm for delinquent youths, which she believed would be more effective than reform school in their rehabilitation. She also campaigned for the passage of child welfare measures and secondary school courses in the care and training of children. These objectives were later achieved.



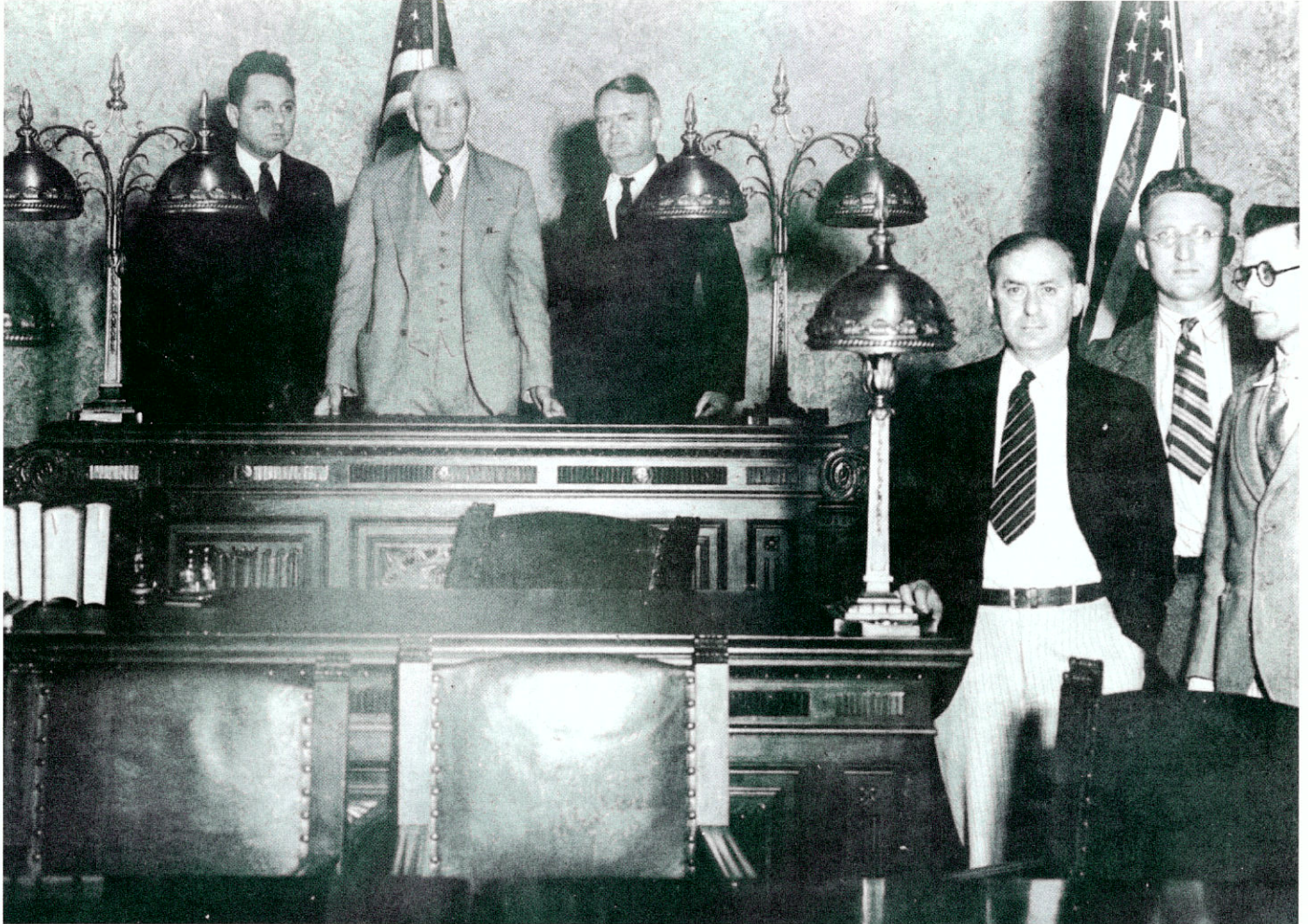
In 1924, Mrs. Edith Atkinson was elected judge of Dade's Juvenile Court. HASF 1988-84-25.

As married jurists, both she and her husband received national recognition due to their unusual situation.

On August 2, 1925, Judge Atkinson spoke on the issue of divorce to the *Miami News*. He aptly noted:

Society is undergoing many changes in its transformations from the ideas of our grandmothers to the flapperism of today. There is great confusion in the minds and consequently the behavior of both men and women. The pendulum always swings back and I believe that within a short period divorces will begin to lessen.

While Judge Atkinson was indeed optimistic about a decrease in future divorces, his other observations may be just as valid today.



Left to right—Dade-County Judge W. F. Blanton, Circuit Court Judge H. F. Atkinson, Civil Court of Record Judge David Heffernan, Criminal Court of Record William F. Brown, Circuit Court Judge Worth Trammel (?) and Circuit Court Judge William Freeland (?). March 6, 1931. HASF 1988-84-23.

Judge Atkinson was so enamored with Miami that he declined a seat on Florida's Supreme Court. He openly preferred his five-acre estate, located at 795 N.W. 13th Court, on the south bank of the Miami River. He moved there in 1911 and resided there until his death.

Judge Atkinson enjoyed his time with the attorneys who practiced before him. After all, he was a man who loved the law and who proudly boasted an 85 percent affirmation record on appeal. While court was in session, he always treated the lawyers who appeared before him with respect. He conducted his proceedings with dignity. After a hearing concluded, it was not at all uncommon for the very lawyers who argued before Judge "Ad" to retire to chambers and smoke their pipes with him.

Judge Atkinson presided over many well-known civil and criminal cases. Those cases include the trial of Captain William Lancaster, the British war flyer who was charged with murder, and the 1938 case of Franklin Pierce McCall whom he sentenced to death for the kidnapping of five-year-old James Bailey Cash Jr.

Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court Senior Judge Paul Barns Sr. said of Judge Atkinson, "The cases he tried were not nearly so

important as he was." Some 66 years later, Miami-Dade lawyer Paul Barns Jr., the son of Judge Barns, who also knew Judge Atkinson describes him as "a southern gentleman with a commanding presence—a sage who had everyone's respect."

Today, few attorneys, judges or members of the public have ever heard of Judge Henry Fulton Atkinson. A portrait of the judge now hangs between two large sconces in the rear of the courtroom presently occupied by Judge Stuart Simons on the fourth floor of Dade's Courthouse. Befitting his prominent stature within the legal community, Judge Atkinson's likeness, with a hint of a smile, towers over the judge's bench and the other judicial portraits.

Several feet below the rendering is a plaque dedicated to the judge's memory. Installed by the University of Miami Law School Alumni Association, it bears the profile of the judge lighting his corncob pipe with the words, "His was the kindly persistent search for truth under the law."—*SFH*

Circuit Court Judge Scott Silverman, the county's unofficial "court chronicler," is a member of the board of trustees of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida.

Miami's Bayfront Park



A HISTORY

by Paul S. George, Ph.D.



Bayfront Park, 1953, with its central promenade and the Boom-era McAllister and Columbus Hotels immediately across from it. HASE Miami News Collection 1989-011-24497.

Taken as a whole, Bayfront Park is a small paradise which offers its wares to young and old, rich and poor, alike.

—Richard Rundell, *The Miami Herald*, c. 1950.

Miami's beginnings as a city date

to the entry of Henry M. Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway into the area in April 1896. Three months after the railroad's arrival, Miami incorporated as a city with 700 to 800 persons. The nascent city's first park was on land owned by the railroad and located in front of Flagler's magnificent Royal Palm Hotel. Called Royal Palm Park, this greensward stretched from Biscayne Bay, whose waters stretched as far west as today's Biscayne Boulevard, to Southeast Second Avenue and from Second Street to East Flagler and Southeast First Streets. Royal Palm Park was the community's gathering place, the venue for a wide array of athletic contests, political gatherings, cultural happenings and religious meetings. Other parks followed, including Lummus Park, northwest of downtown on the Miami River, and Riverside Park, west of

the river in a new neighborhood called Riverside. Both opened at the outset of the 1910s. In the second decade of the 20th century, Miami grew faster per capita than any other city in the United States, its population soaring from 5,500 to approximately 30,000 by 1920. In that eventful era, civic leaders began discussing the creation of a large waterfront park on public land, accompanied by a marina and broad boulevard. They envisioned these elements stretching from today's Omni Area to East Flagler Street.

Up until then, the bayfront was in the hands of the Flagler interests, and was host to numerous vessels, fish houses and a growing numbers of yachts. Other important elements of the bayfront included Henry Flagler's Dade County Fair Building, which hosted a wide variety of gatherings, the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club, a house resting on pilings in the bay and host to Dade County's oldest organization and ornate Elser Pier, the city's preeminent amusement venue, with its dance hall, shooting gallery and peep shows, at the foot of East Flagler Street.

In 1922, the city of Miami moved closer to the creation of a waterfront park through its acquisition from the Florida East Coast Railway interests of a long strip of waterfront corresponding to today's Bayfront Park; the lone area excepted in this purchase was that hosting Elser Pier. The cost was \$1.2 million. The waterfront acquisition followed a long, acrimonious battle between the city and the railroad, with the Florida Supreme Court ultimately ruling in favor of the park proponents.

As the idea of a waterfront park drew closer to reality, the city requested citizen input into the kind of park they desired. Captain Tom Newman, a boat salvager, restaurateur and civic activist, proposed a "functional" park with plenty of recreational and entertainment opportunities for visitors. Specifically, Newman recommended a children's playground, picnic tables, tables for chess and checkers, tennis courts, a pit for horseshoe pitching, a library, a marina on its northeast edge and a



Elser Pier, Miami, Florida, Ca. 1920. HASF, Miami News Collection 1989-011-5361.

convention hall on the north side of the green space near Biscayne Boulevard. Warren Henry Manning, a noted landscape architect from Cambridge, Massachusetts, proposed instead a passive park with little in terms of a built environment other than a yacht basin on its northeast corner and a bandshell in the southern portion of the proposed facility. The city embraced Manning's plan. In 1924, the final piece of waterfront land came under public ownership with the purchase of land at the foot of East Flagler Street for \$340,000.

In the same year, construction of a bayfront park began. The proposed site would contain 62.5 acres. Ultimately, 39.3 acres was landscaped for a park. A retaining wall was built and the pumping of bay bottom, whose depth stretched from 2 to 15 feet in the area encompassing the proposed park just east of the shoreline, commenced. Pumping went on day and night for seven months until the area representing today's park had been created. The project's completion was marked by the construction of a creosote seawall. In April 1925, piers for a city yacht basin were rammed into the shallow bay bottom immediately north of the park.

In 1925, the new bayfront park opened. That was a propitious time in the city's history, because Miami and all of South Florida were immersed in a real estate boom. The new park was dotted with Coconut, Royal and Washingtonian Palm trees, along with Hibiscus hedges and Mango, Royal Poinciana and Tropical Almond trees. A wide promenade stretched from the foot of East Flagler Street and the new, expansive Biscayne Boulevard to the bay. The walkway flanked a median containing shrubs and trees. Midway through the promenade was a circular flower bed. Benches and lamps stood on the outer edges of the walkways. Other walkways crisscrossed the park. The new greensward also included a small bandstand standing a couple of hundred yards southeast of the promenade. The bandstand's tenure was short-lived since it was replaced in 1928 by a larger bandshell that

had resided in Royal Palm Park, which, along with its namesake hotel, was closing. One month later the transplanted bandshell was destroyed by a fire whose origins were unknown. A new bandshell was built immediately after the fire at a cost of \$15,000; it featured minarets and seating for 4,000 people, and was completed in time for a national convention of Shriners. For the parade, large papier-mâché Sphinxes lined the western edge of the park. By then, the park had made a significant “comeback” after suffering great damage from the fearsome hurricane of 1926, whose eye passed over downtown, bringing behind it winds in excess of 130 miles per hour.

New trees and plants replaced those that had been damaged and destroyed by the storm. Construction of a beautiful rock garden was completed in 1927; the garden would become one of the park’s most popular elements. Located near water’s edge, the rock garden featured a grotto overlooking a large pond stocked with goldfish and water lilies, which often hid bullfrogs. A rustic wood bridge carried pedestrians over the water. A special favorite of children, the rock garden was renovated and enlarged between the late 1930s and the early 1940s. The expanded rock garden now measured 75 feet in width by 175 feet in length. It also contained a fountain at the entrance and additional varieties of water lilies.

By the 1930s, Bayfront Park had become Miami’s “front porch,” a popular venue for musical presentations, political gatherings, holiday happenings, civic celebrations and religious services, as well as a restful place for Miamians and visitors of all ages. Standing across from South Florida’s first skyline, a row of hotels and one business building, beginning with the McAllister Hotel on East Flagler to the Miami News Tower six blocks away, the park was an attractive destination for many. An

interesting “appendage” to the park was the *Prins Valdemar*, a Danish barkentine, which had sunk in the turn basin in front of Miami’s harbor in 1926. After it was retrieved, the ship was towed to the northern edge of the park where it served as a floating aquarium and restaurant until the beginning of the 1950s.

An early brush with notoriety for the park came with the assassination attempt on the life of President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 15, 1933. Guiseppe Zangara, an Italian immigrant and self-styled anarchist came to Miami from New Jersey in 1932. Roosevelt had been vacationing in southeast Florida at the time, and gladly answered the summons of local leaders to address the hard-pressed citizens of Miami during the nadir of the Great Depression. Zangara learned of Roosevelt’s scheduled appearance in the park just one day earlier, and promptly purchased an \$8 pistol from a downtown hockshop with the intent of killing the political leader. On the day of Roosevelt’s appearance, Zangara arrived at the park early and secured a seat close to the bandshell.

Roosevelt arrived at the bandshell in the rear seat of a large convertible. He propped himself up on top of the seat and, in typically cheery fashion, addressed the gathering of an estimated 4,000 persons. The president-elect’s remarks included the promise to return to Miami in the near future, admitting that he loved the area’s weather and fishing opportunities. Within moments of concluding his remarks, shots rang out from a row near the front. Six persons were hit by bullets, including Anton Cermack, the mayor of Chicago. Roosevelt was spared, probably because one of the members of the audience pushed Zangara’s arm as he began to fire. But Mayor Cermack sustained a deadly gunshot wound and died nearly three weeks later.

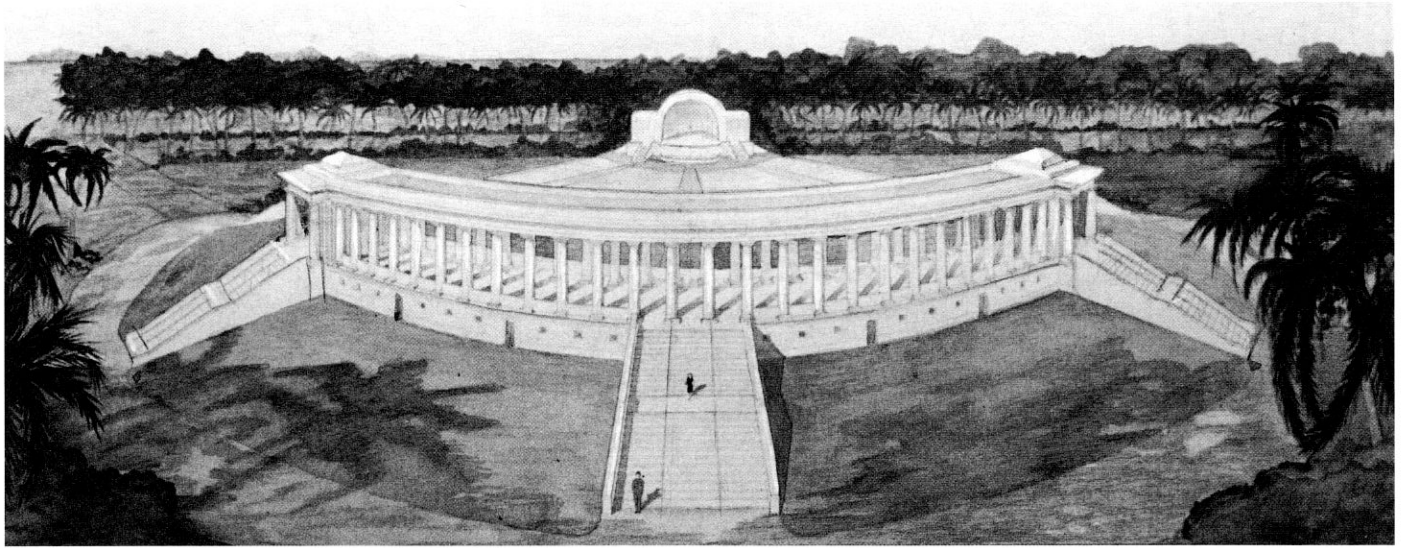
Zangara was quickly pounced on by the angry crowd before he was taken from the park to the Dade County Courthouse for interrogation and booking. He pled guilty to the first degree murder at a second trial following the death of Cermack, and died soon after in the electric chair at Raiford, the state prison near Starke, Florida.

With the onset of World War II, the United States Navy took over the waterfront, including all of the piers and the park, which it used as a recreational center. After stories began circulating of prostitution involving teenage girls and naval personnel in the park, the city cut down a hedge obscuring a portion of the area from Biscayne Boulevard. Of greater importance was the fact that Bayfront Park served as the eastern terminus for weekly parades that proceeded each Saturday from the Dade County Courthouse. The parades, which were composed of large



The *Prins Valdemar*, docked at Bayfront Park, served as a floating aquarium and restaurant, from the late 1920s until the beginning of the 1950s. HASF 1990-509-1.





Opposite page, top—PT boats lined along Bayfront Park during WWII. HASF, Miami News Collection 1989-011-18342. Opposite page, bottom—Bayfront Park Auditorium, 1953. HASF 1995-277-8736. Above—Bandshell proposed for Bayfront Park by architect Walter DeGarmo on Oct. 17, 1945. It never was built. HASF, Miami News Collection 1989-011-12998.

numbers of men and women in uniform, along with military equipment, were efforts to raise support for the sale of war bonds.

Near the terminus of the parade, the county, in 1943, erected a monument containing the names of those Dade Countians who, up to that time, lost their lives in World War II. The Dade County War Memorial, a cream colored structure featuring an eagle standing above it, contained these names covered by tinted blue glass. On the south side of the monument are these words of Franklin Roosevelt: "It is far better to die on our feet than to live forever on our knees." In 1990, the names of more than 500 Dade Countians who lost their lives in World War II were etched into a revamped memorial.

The Navy's presence in the park was detrimental to its physical well being. In the War's aftermath, the Navy paid the city more than \$28,000 for damages to steel fences, which suffered from vandalism, littered ponds, grass and plant neglect, bleached benches in great need of painting and holes in the ground that made it perilous to walk in parts of the park.

During the War, work began on the Bayfront Park Auditorium. The complex, consisting of several joined buildings, was built incrementally from about 1942 until 1950. Its initial use was as a naval recreational facility. The unfinished complex played host in April 1945 to a large memorial service for President Franklin Roosevelt. In 1950, the federal government turned the complex over to the city, which greatly expanded the auditorium, added air conditioning, a sound system and a kitchen to serve 2,500, while also installing offices. The auditorium became in subsequent years and decades a popular venue for a host of events. At the end of the other end of the park, the bandshell, now nearly 20 years of age, was, by the immediate postwar years, considered unsafe. In 1945, Walter DeGarmo, an accomplished architect who grew up in Coconut

Grove, designed a Greek-styled amphitheater with seating for 6,000 persons. The design also called for an imposing colonnade standing behind the seating area. The cost for the structure, which was not built, would have been an estimated \$250,000.

The bandshell had been an integral part of Bayfront Park since the late 1920s, when Caesar LaMonaca, a talented composer and band leader, who had performed earlier in the Hollywood (Florida) bandshell, was hired by the city of Miami to provide musical performances in the new downtown Miami park. Initially, LaMonaca and his orchestra performed thrice weekly; later, they reduced their performance to Wednesday and Friday nights, and, ultimately, to Friday. LaMonaca typically began his performances with "Miami, Playground of the U.S.A.," his own composition, and closed the evening with a tune from a Broadway musical comedy "to give the audience something to go out humming." In between he played the music of John Philip Sousa, Arthur Pryor and other popular musicians of that era.

In 1947, as the future of the bandshell was still being decided, the city condemned the present structure and closed it, but a vociferous public protest forced its reopening. LaMonaca continued to play until it was closed for good at the end of the 1940s to make way for the construction of a long-awaited replacement. Called the R.C. Gardner Bandshell for a colorful Miami City Commissioner and grocer, the new facility, which was designed by Harold McNeil, was built for \$80,000. The structure measured 120 feet in diameter, with its stage 60 feet across. The stage was large enough to accommodate 500 performers. An orchestra pit in front could hold upwards of 150 magicians. With seating for 4,000 persons, the bandshell was a smaller, less expensive version of the earlier-planned facility. The new bandshell opened on



Above—Aerial view of Bayfront Park, October 1934. HASF 1995-277-8733. Opposite page, top—Bandshell at Bayfront Park, Ca. 1930s. HASF, Miami News Collection 1989-011-12984. Bottom—Caesar LaMonaca and Orchestra, 1941. HASF, Miami News Collection 1989-011-12992.

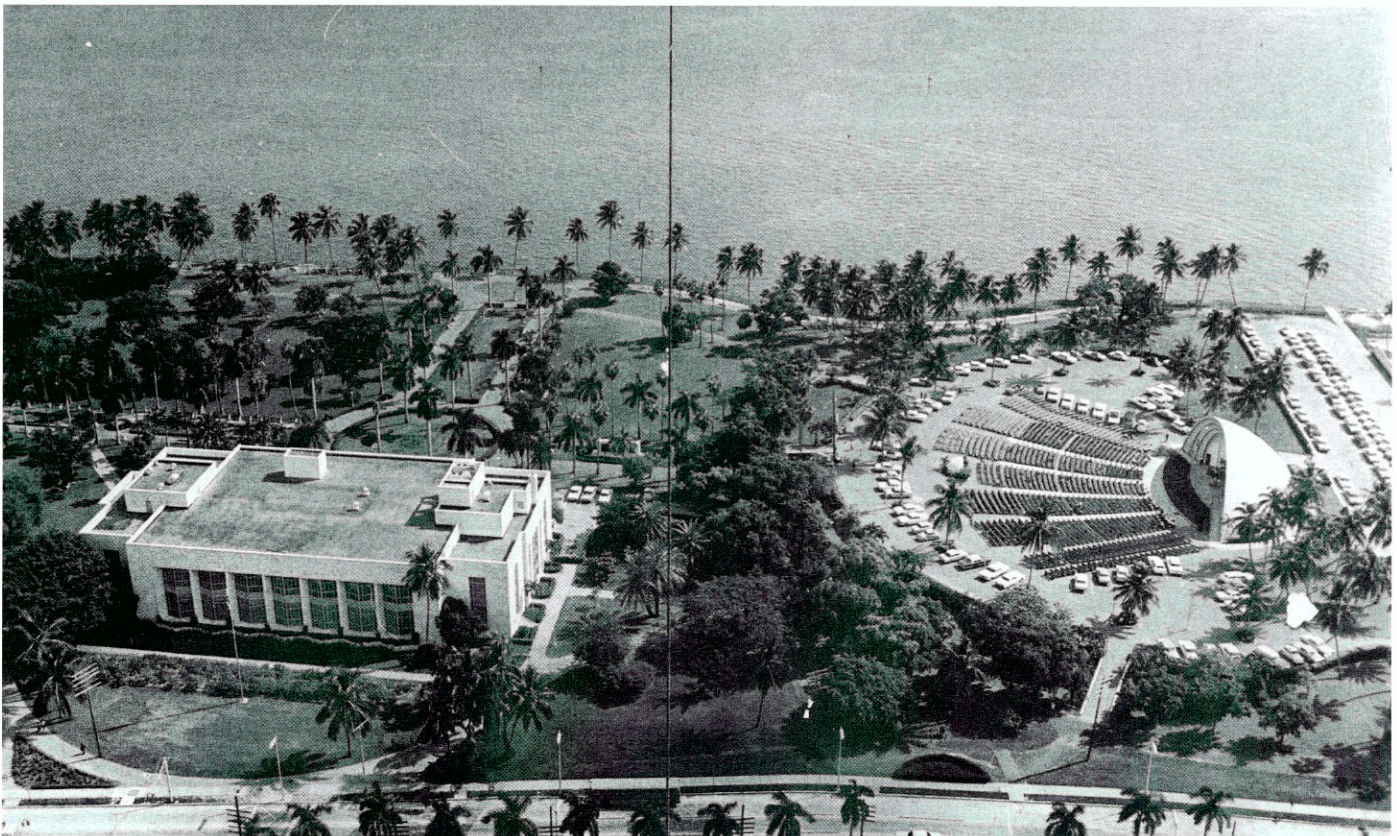
July 28, 1950, the city's 54th birthday with an estimated 12,500 persons, more than three times capacity, in attendance.

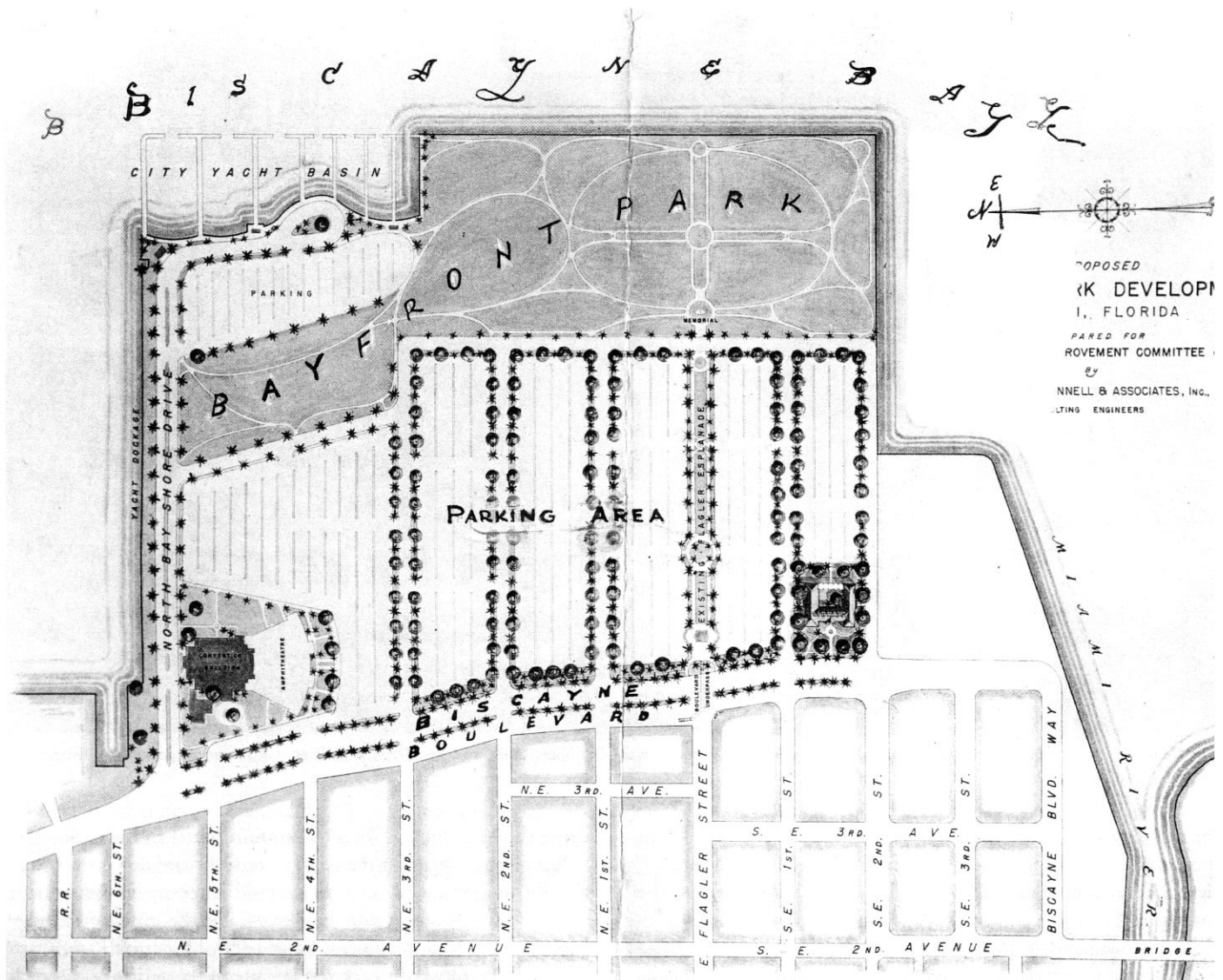
One proposal in the immediate postwar era could, had it been implemented, been disastrous for Bayfront Park. Downtown Miami was clogged with traffic in the immediate postwar years as a new era of prosperity, along with the determination of shoppers to spend their pent-up wartime savings, brought great pressure on the quarter's ability to handle the additional traffic and the concomitant parking challenges. In 1947, a group of businessmen proposed, and the Miami City Commission considered converting Bayfront Park into a parking lot, with a new, smaller waterfront park to rise east of it! Strong public opposition to the idea caused the commission to table it. Even with its defeat, discussion over adding a parking element, along with the presence of a new convention center within the park, continued through the end of the 1940s.

Although neither of those ideas reached fruition, the park did become host to a new \$1.2 million main library facility in 1951. Two stories in height, with two levels of mezzanines in between, the marble clad building was airy and bright. Its location in the park, however, was unfortunate since it blocked the view of the bay from East Flagler Street. The new building represented for the city's fledgling library system its first central home after several temporary venues in previous decades. The outcry against the location of the new building in the park prompted the state's garden clubs to pressure the legislature into passing a law by the mid-1950s that prohibited the construction of additional structures in Bayfront Park.

While construction was underway on the new city library, the park hosted, in October 1950, 75,000 delirious University of Miami football fans who came to the city's "front porch" to greet their heroes after they had returned from a stunning upset of the Purdue Boilermakers. The previous week the Boilermakers







Above—Proposed Parking, April 14, 1948. HASF Miami News Collection 1989-011-12882. Opposite page, top—Bayfront Park (bandshell), April 24, 1967. HASF Miami News Collection 1989-011-13001. Bottom—Bayfront Park became host to the Miami-Dade Main Public Library. Also in view, the bandshell, 1967. HASF 1995-277-8948.

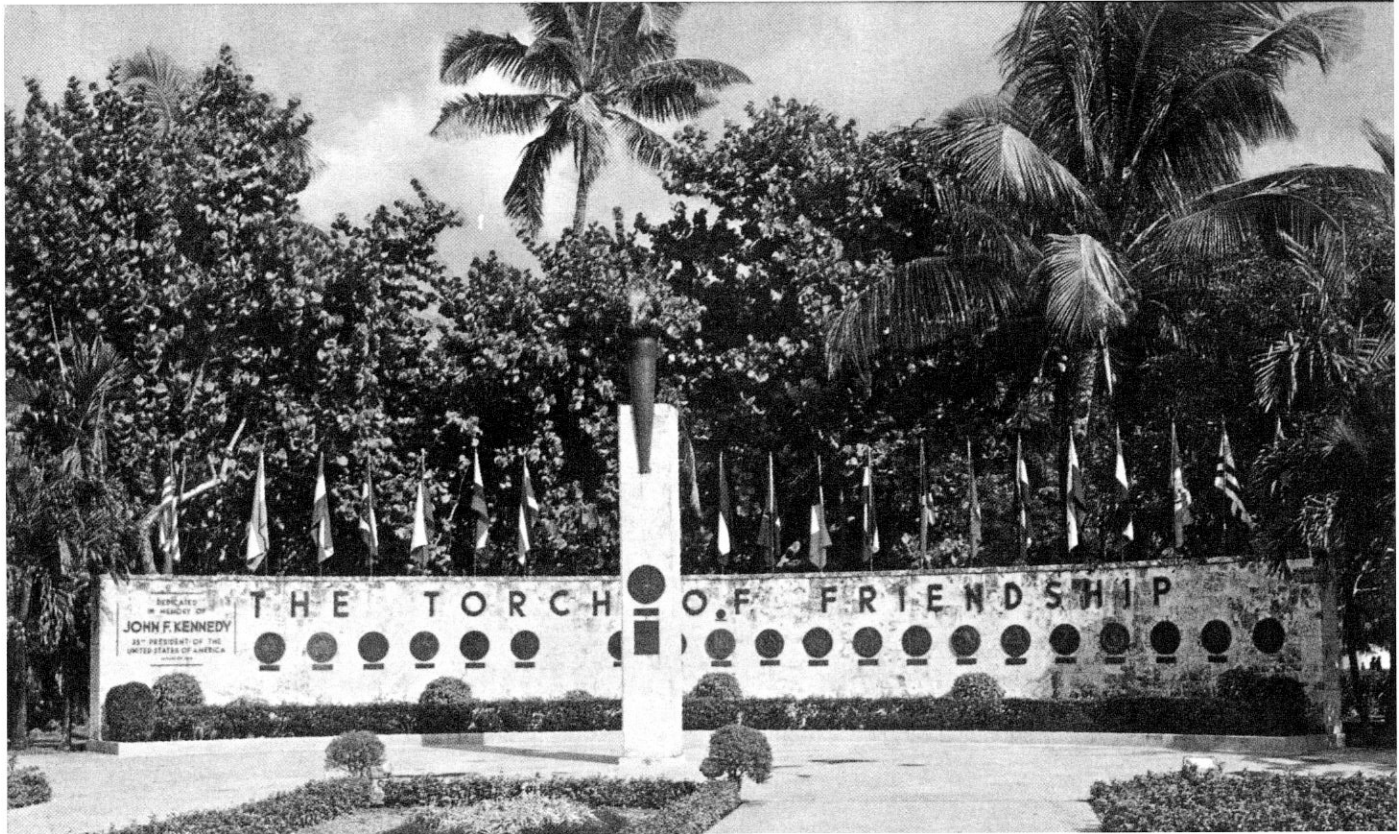
became the first team to defeat the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame in four years, and the Hurricanes were given little chance against Purdue.

On Columbus Day October 1953, a Miami citizens committee unveiled a stunning 27-foot-tall bronze statue of Christopher Columbus resting upon an 1,800-year-old black African marble base. Created by the citizens committee in collaboration with the Italian consulate in Miami, the statue was sculpted by Count Vittorio de Collateraldo of Rome. Funding came from Miami's citizens. A stirring ceremony surrounded the unveiling of the statue of the great mariner, which stood north of the entrance to the library.

Seven years later, in 1960, another important monument was dedicated: the Torch of Friendship in the northwest corner of the park, underlining Miami's status as a gateway to the Caribbean and Latin America. In 1964, the Torch was rededicated in

memory of President John F. Kennedy, who had lost his life a few months earlier to an assassin in Dallas, and who had appeared in Bayfront Park at a presidential campaign rally in the fall of 1960. (At the time of the rededication of the Torch, the downtown library hosted a traveling exhibit on the life and presidency of JFK with family members on-hand for the occasion.) The plaza encircling the Torch would serve as a gathering point for demonstrations and protests in subsequent years and decades.

By the 1960s, downtown had entered a period of steep decline as a retail and residential quarter following the rapid growth of suburbia and its attendant shopping centers and malls. The park's declining fortunes reflected this reality. Visitors to the fabled front porch of Miami dropped precipitously, and among those who did come was a growing number of homeless. The park, however, continued to host special events such as the appearance of Santa Claus every Thanksgiving Friday, which heralded the



In 1960, the Torch of Friendship, underlining Miami's status as a gateway to the Caribbean and Latin America, was dedicated in the northwest corner of Bayfront Park. HASF 1995-436-38.

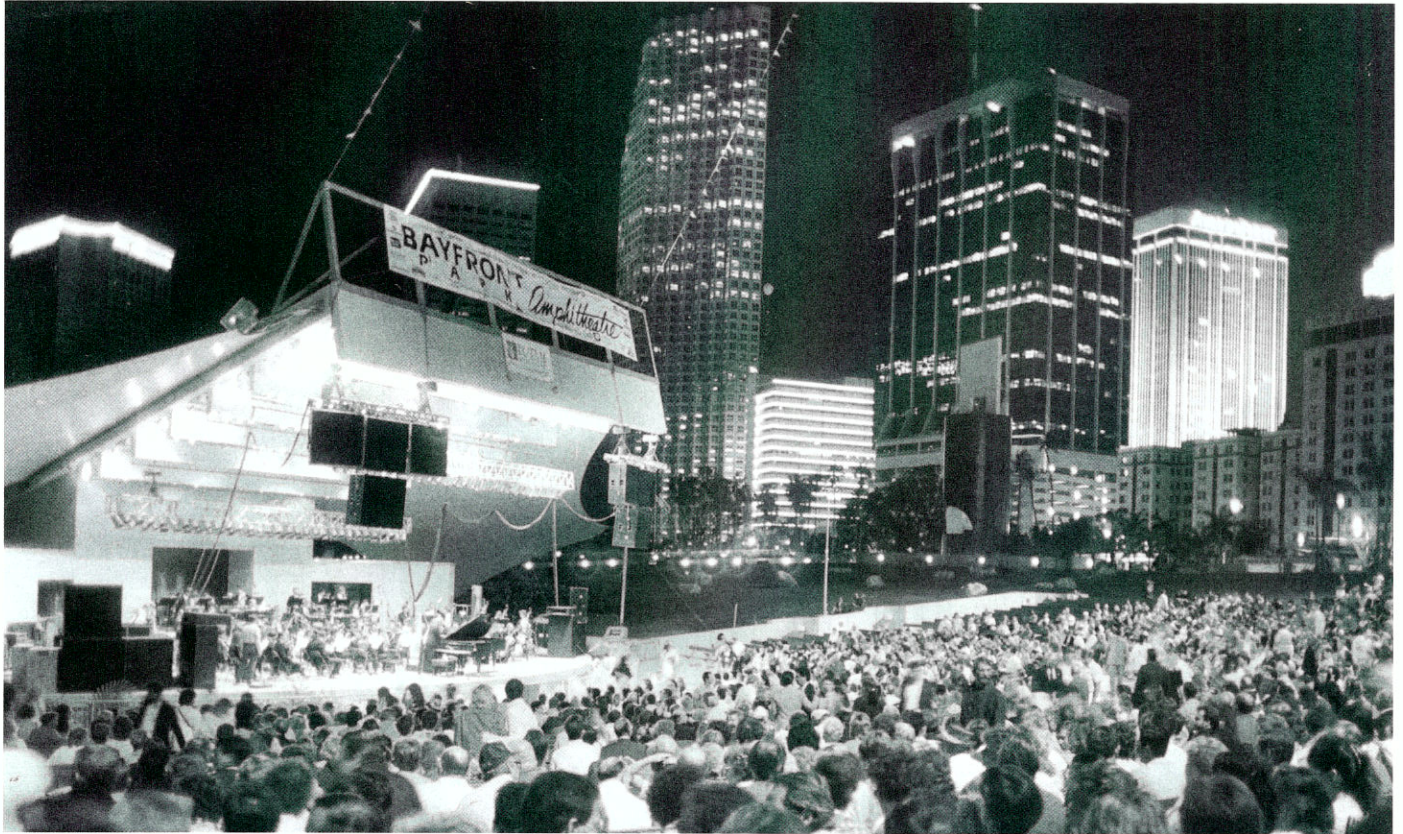
beginning of the Christmas season, and the presence of a giant birthday cake during the same season in honor of the birth of Jesus Christ. Political rallies continued to take place at the bandshell, and the annual Royal Poinciana Festival held each June was centered in the same venue. Caesar LaMonaca's band continued to perform twice weekly. The plaza just south of the park was dedicated in the early 1960s as Chopin Plaza by the local Polish-American Club, and became a gathering place for Poles demonstrating during times of unrest in Poland.

Plans were presented to resuscitate the park along with downtown. In 1964, city voters approved a bond issue providing for construction of a convention center in the park as a way to bring heightened activity to it. Miami Mayor Robert King High, a strong proponent of the idea, wanted the facility to serve as a cultural center, too. As the idea matured, it became part of the plan of Constantine Dioxiadis, a world famous planner, with ambitious designs to revamp downtown. The plan, as it pertained to the park, called for a 7,000-seat convention and cultural center just east of the library. A walkway running parallel to the park would reach along the bayfront all the way north to the Omni Area 1.5 miles away. The plan engendered a great deal of controversy as environmental forces were pitted against government officials who argued that it was critical for reviving downtown Miami. Ultimately, however, the voters of Miami, in 1970, rejected an \$18.7 million bond issue for landfill

along the bayfront and for a convention center in the park.

But great changes for the park, waterfront and downtown were already underway by then and would intensify in subsequent years. By the 1960s, a new Port of Miami was rising on Dodge Islands across from the northeastern edge of Bayfront Park. Plans were moving forward to convert the site of the earlier port, north of Bayfront Park, into another waterfront park, which became, by the mid 1970s, Bicentennial Park. The old yacht basin had been converted, in 1970, into the Miamimarina, a quiescent area of live aboard boaters, charter fishing boats and two restaurants. By the mid-1980s, the Miamimarina was poised for another makeover as the Rouse Corporation was preparing to replace it with the Bayside Marketplace, a \$93 million shopping complex overlooking the waters of Biscayne Bay. South of Bayfront Park, Theodore Gould, a colorful developer from suburban Washington, D.C., was building, by the early 1980s, the Miami Center, a tall office complex, and the Pavilion Hotel, an upscale hotel, next to it.

The park continued to evolve. In 1977, the city officially renamed the green space the Bayfront Park of the Americas, and undertook a \$1 million beautification project resulting in the planting of large numbers of new trees. In the following year, state of Florida environmental officials rejected a request by the city of Miami to expand the size of the park by filling in two acres of Biscayne Bay north of the Miamimarina.



The Bayfront Amphitheater was jammed as the New World Symphony played on April 15, 1988. HASF, Miami News Collection 1989-011-12881.

But great changes were ahead for the park. In 1980, the city approved \$10 million for the redesign of Bayfront Park according to the plan of Isamu Noguchi, a revered sculptor, who was regarded as one of America's great 20th century artists. Noguchi envisioned the revamped park as a "village green." Noguchi's plan called for new amphitheaters, a splendid fountain at the end of a promenade flowing off of East Flagler Street, a laser facility, the removal of busts of Hispanic leaders and the statue of Christopher Columbus to other areas inside and outside of the park and the demolition of the library to make way for the promenade. Its implementation began in 1981. Ultimately, the project plan cost more than \$40 million, much of the money secured by grants.

One of the first "victims" of the plan was the R.C. Gardner Bandshell, which had already fallen into disrepair, and was diminished. Caesar LaMonaca, the person most closely associated with it, had ended his lengthy tenure as the city's musical maestro in 1977, after falling from the podium during a performance and breaking his hip. He died in his early 90s several years later. By the end of the 1980s, the new park, now called the Mildred and Claude Bayfront Park, renamed for southeast Florida's revered Congressman and his devoted wife (but most people still refer to it as Bayfront Park), was completed containing all of the major elements provided for in the Noguchi Plan, and, additionally, in its southeast corner, a stirring monument to those *Challenger* astronauts who lost their lives in the tragic mishap in space in

January 1986. Today the venerable park operates under the auspices of the city of Miami's Bayfront Park Management Trust, and is the venue for a vast variety of events and occasions. In fact, *Pollstar Magazine*, a concert industry trade publication, ranked the Bayfront Park Amphitheater among the top facilities of its kind worldwide for event-related, mid-year (January–June) ticket sales in 2005.

Nearly 20 years after the Noguchi overhaul, the Trust has many innovative new ideas for the park, including dramatic new lighting, a café and major redesign projects. It is working closely with consultants and a landscape architectural firm toward these objectives. The park's future is bright because it will continue to serve not only as the city of Miami's "Front Porch," but as a widely-needed oasis for thousands of new residents of a multitude of giant condominium towers beginning to arise in downtown Miami. The park, as never before, will serve as a critical part of an emerging center city not even dreamed of a few years ago.—*SFH*

Dr. Paul S. George, a professor at Miami Dade College, is the editor of South Florida History, and the Historical Museum of Southern Florida's historian.

NATIONAL HOTEL
COLLINS AVE. MIAMI BEACH,
FLORIDA.



Miami Art Deco



Above—The National Hotel was designed in 1940 by Roy France. This hotel represents one of a new wave of taller hotels appearing at the outset of the 1940s. HASF 1986-225-3. Right—Casa Casuarina was designed by Henry LaPointe, the Casa Casuarina, so named for the one Casuarina tree standing on the property, was built in 1930 as a private home for Alden Freeman, heir to the Standard Oil fortune. He divided it into apartments to accommodate visiting friends. Later, Jacques Amsterdam bought the building and renamed it the Amsterdam Palace, while converting it into an apartment house. Still later, of course, it became the home of Gianni Versace, who was brutally murdered on its front steps. HASF 1979-213-1 Casa Casuarina scrapbook.

Beach's Architecture & the New Deal

by Jeff Donnelly

The New Deal, a political response to an economic emergency, had social, cultural and even architectural consequences that still reverberate. The long arm of the New Deal reached into the furthest corners of America and of the American mind. Miami Beach, in the far southeast corner of the United States, and the diverse people who made the Beach's distinctive look possible, were not immune. The New Deal and the culture it fostered shaped both America and Miami Beach.

Beyond the traditional historical themes of relief, recovery and reform, a New Deal aura spread throughout American cultural life in the later 1930s. Community recreational projects like Greynolds Park in Northeast Miami-Dade and Matheson Hammock in the southern portion of the county were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and well-loved murals like that of Charles Hardman depicting contact between Native Floridians, the Spanish and later Americans in the Miami Beach Post Office on Washington Avenue and Thirteenth Street were created through lesser-known New Deal programs like the Fine Arts Section of the Treasury Department. The cultural tourist of 2006 can find products of the New Deal's Cultural Front in almost any community.

Miami Beach's Art Deco District represents the preservation, restoration and continued adaptive reuse of the modern design that sprang from the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* held in 1925 Paris. While the 1925 exposition did not receive much encouragement from the United States government of the time, the New Deal played a large role in the spread of the Art Deco style throughout the United States a decade later. An alphabet soup of agencies—CCC, WPA, PWA—all carried the sensibility that we call Art Deco today to the farthest reaches of the United States.

When the Wall Street stock market crashed in 1929, Miami Beach was still primarily a place of private homes, many done in the Mediterranean Revival style also found in its sister suburb, Coral Gables. Carl Fisher built his large hotels along Biscayne Bay, and there were several small hotels on Ocean Drive, like the Shore Park at 820. As late as 1932, as Howard Kleinberg points out in his history of Miami Beach, most of Ocean Drive was still made up of single family homes and small apartment houses like Casa Casuarina at 1116, which gained notoriety decades later as

Above, left—Haddon Hall was designed in 1941 by L. Murray Dixon. Its billowing rounded contours and wraparound windows and eyebrows is all about movement, representing one of the primary characteristics of the Streamline Moderne style of architecture. HASF Miami News Collection 1989-011-6688. Above—Ida M. Fisher High School grew out of the first school on the Beach, Ida M. Fisher Elementary School, in 1927. Designed in the mission style by H. George Fink, a Coral Gables architect and the cousin of George Merrick, the founder of Coral Gables, the elementary school's construction was financed by Carl Fisher, early Miami Beach's preeminent developer, and named for his mother. HASF 225-28.





Designed by L. Murray Dixon in 1940, the Raleigh Hotel is among the most streamlined of the tall Art Deco hotels on South Beach. HASE, Miami News Collections 1989-011-7605.

the home of designer Gianni Versace and the site of his murder.

Then, despite the Depression that ravaged the rest of the land, Miami Beach, as Kleinberg goes on to explain, began to expand in the middle 1930s. By the middle of 1936, monthly construction activity, measured by permits issued, had reached \$1 million. In that year, a 1933 New Deal program, the Public Works Administration (PWA), paid for new schools done in the Mediterranean Revival style, including Ida M. Fisher high school, which survives today as part of the Feinberg-Fisher educational complex near Drexel and Española Way, and the North Beach Elementary School, still functioning at 41st Street and Prairie Avenue. But these structures, overseen by the survivors of Fisher's "Gasoline Society," were the last gasp of romantic revivalism in Miami Beach architecture. A new aesthetic was coming to town. A surging wave, rising from economic depression, modernity in design, ethnic succession and New Deal influence was about to land on the shores of Miami Beach and create the Art Deco District.

The bursting of the real estate bubble, the 1926 hurricane, the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression depressed land values south of Lincoln Road and offered opportunity in the early 1930s to newcomers who were ready to take it. Some had moved to South Beach in the 1920s, often from small Jewish communities in southern cities like Atlanta or Key West. Others came from the north. For example, as Howard Kleinberg tells the story, Abraham Galbut moved from Monticello in the New York Catskill mountains to Miami Beach, bought property and operated a 24-hour restaurant at Fifth and Washington. Others took similar paths, and the ownership and ethnicity of South Beach changed. By the end of the 1930s, nearly one-quarter of the 28,000 residents of the Beach were Jewish. Jewish builders and developers, like Leonard Wein, who built the Kent, Tudor and Palmer House hotels, were leaving their imprint on the Beach. Under the impact of the New Deal, the nation was changing as well, and new customers were on the way to the business properties of these new owners.

In 1935, the New Deal had brought forth the Wagner Act, strengthening the ability of industrial workers to organize, and the "paid vacation," which was formerly the prerogative of the few, gradually became the possibility of the many. By 1937, 40 percent of industrial workers were entitled

to the paid vacation benefit. These middle- and working-class tourists, no longer the automobile moguls of Carl Fisher's Miami Beach, came in large numbers to Miami Beach, transforming both the economy and streetscape of Miami Beach. Author Polly Redford in *Billion-Dollar Sandbar*, a popular history of Miami Beach, described these new tourists: "a class of people newly rich in a way the world had never seen before—a way that had not been possible until mass-market machinery made luxuries commonplace. This was, after all, the meaning of industrial democracy..." The rising tide of new tourists led to an enormous burst of construction, relatively small entrepreneurs building many relatively small buildings. From 1936 to 1941, the most fruitful period up to that time for hotel construction on the Beach, the number of hotels tripled, rising from 100 to more than 300, yet the total number of hotel rooms only doubled. By 1941, however, with rising prosperity and surging tourism, the size of the hotels had increased dramatically with the openings of the Haddon Hall, Carlyle, National, Raleigh and Shelbourne.



Designed in 1939 by L. Murray Dixon, the Tudor Hotel was built by Leonard Wien, an early Jewish builder on Miami Beach. HASF 1994-370-755.

This dispersion of entrepreneurship could have led to a diversity of design, but the wave of new tourists also brought a new taste: modernism. To meet these new tourists' demand for "the latest," the builders hired a group of architects who were ready for modernism, including Henry Hohaus, L. Murray Dixon, Albert Anis and Roy France. Carl Fisher's Miami Beach had been, to a very large extent, the product of his own vision and his intuitive assessment of the tastes of the automobile industry giants he attracted; the new Miami Beach born in the 1930s was the product of many people whose common vision had another source: a cultural yen for the modern. Ironically, "modern" in design was influenced by the sleek automobiles, along with the trains, airplanes and ships of the 1930s. Here on

Miami Beach, architecture imitated machines as buildings appeared with rounded contours, portholes, finial spires, horizontal ("racing stripes") and vertical lines. Some offered a mezzanine level resembling the deck of a ship. Examples of these and other characteristics of the streamline style, including eyebrows, glass brick and the liberal use of neon illumination, abound. Nowhere are these elements more manifest than in the Miami Beach Life Patrol station with its nautical design at Ocean Drive and Tenth Street (Barbara Capitman Way), the building housing Jerry's Famous Deli at the corner of Española Way and Collins Avenue, which resembles a tugboat, and the Park Central and Winter Haven hotels with their "ship decks" at the Mezzanine level.



The accidents of geography, history, technology, ethnicity and class created an urban fabric in Art Deco South Beach that was not only modern and tropical, but quintessentially urban and theatrical. While Miami Beach's Gasoline Society had been up-to-date in all things necessary for their work and play, they, like much of America, ignored the changes developing in European art, design and architecture. The modernism of Paris had its rival and complement in the modernism of the Bauhaus, and both had their influence on the designers who created the Tropical Art Deco of Miami Beach. The "mass market luxuries" that attracted the new tourists shaped their preferences from consumer goods to resort hotels. While the movie stars of the earlier silent films had chosen homes in the California Mission style, close in spirit to Miami Beach's Mediterranean Revival, the movies of the '30s featured sets infused with the spirit of Paris and the Bauhaus. The Art Deco architects and builders put the new tourists in buildings that reflected those Art Deco sets, as well as the conveyer machines of the 1930s with their aerodynamic appearance. Architect Allan Shulman, co-author of *The Making of Miami Beach: 1933-1945, The Architecture of Lawrence Murray Dixon*, points out: "Tourists were made

actors, whether sitting in front of buildings, moving through lobby and patio spaces or promenading in the street."

The dominant designs of South Beach in the middle and late 1930s were not a response to the vision of a great patron, but the response of many smaller entrepreneurs and several architects to the cultural aspirations of a new people, the New Dealers, as well as the new technologies that were shaping industrial style. The spirit of industrial democracy, embracing the new technology but striving to control its use for the public good, became realized in the playful resort architecture of South Beach. The privacy and retrospective romance of Mediterranean Revival gave way to the public spaces and embrace of modernity inherent in Tropical Art Deco. And into these Tropical Art Deco buildings came thousands of industrial workers, veterans of many labor struggles in the great industrial centers of the chilly northeast, now intending to relax in the warmth of the Florida sunshine.—*SFH*

Jeff Donnelly has taught history and social science for many years at Miami Country Day School. He conducts historic tours of the Art Deco district and trains aspiring tour guides.



Opposite page—One of the jewels of the Art Deco district, the Carlyle Hotel was designed by the noted architectural firm of Kiehnel and Elliot, and completed in 1941. Note the rounded contours and the central vertical massing. HASF, Miami News Collection 1989-011-7340. Above—Designed by Igor Polevizky and T. Trip Russell, the Shelbourne Hotel was completed in 1940. A western wing facing Collins Avenue was built in 1954. The Shelbourne was another of the tall Art Deco hotels appearing at the beginning of the 1940s. Carlyle Hotel, 1250 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach. Photo Mark Edelson, Oct 26, 1980. HASF 1986-225-4.



Barbara Capitman, the founder

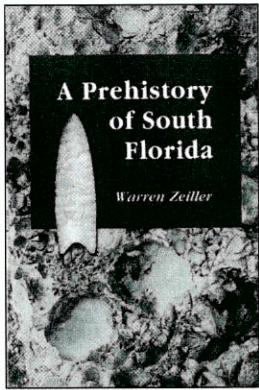
of the Miami Design Preservation League and the primary force behind the creation of Miami Beach's Art Deco District, was a child of the Cultural Front, the avant-garde of the New Deal. When Barbara Capitman came to South Beach in the early 1970s as a middle age wife and mother, the Art Deco District was yet to be named. In addition to arguing for the preservation and restoration of hotels dating to the 1930s, as a potential boon to tourism, Capitman wondered: could "these buildings be used to save the people who lived in them?" It was a New Dealer's question. The first part of her argument has been answered with an emphatic "yes," as the Art Deco District has become an international destination of renown with huge economic benefits to the city of Miami Beach and to Greater Miami. The second portion of the question, considered vital to the idea of preservation in service to the community, has also been achieved since Barbara Capitman helped found the Miami Beach Community Development Corporation, which has sponsored hundreds of affordable housing units in the Art Deco District.

Above—Barbara Capitman, founder of the Miami Design Preservation League. Photo by Bill Reinke, 1981. HASF 1995-277-11651.

Book Review

A PREHISTORY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

by Warren Zeiller: McFarland & Company, 2005. 234 pages—**hardcover**. \$39.95



by Robert S. Carr

Author and avocational archaeologist Warren Zeiller casts a wide net to provide a popular overview of South Florida Prehistory. He organizes the book by chronology beginning with the Paleo-Indian Period, ca. 8000–7000 BC, and continues through the Historic Period, when

indigenous South Florida Native American cultures are destroyed by disease and slave raids.

Zeiller sets the South Florida stage by giving the reader a background in geology in the preface. He also discusses archaeological methods and an overview as to how he organized and selected the information for his book.

The chapter on the Paleo-Indian Period provides the reader with a selection of important sites dating from that period, including the Cutler Fossil site, Little Salt Spring and Warm Mineral Spring. Zeiller also discusses the issues of earliest human migrations into North America and Florida.

The chapter on the Archaic Period presents information on many sites for the first time to the public. Sites in Miami-Dade County such as the Atlantis, Santa Maria and Cheetum had never been publicized and Zeiller presents information on some of the discoveries made at the sites.

The chapter on the Formative Period is divided by cultural areas, and although these are subjective creations of archaeologists, it provides a geographic sorting of sites across the

southern end of the peninsula. Zeiller does well at selecting some of the most important sites across the region, including Pineland, Mound Key, Fort Center, Maddens Hammock and the Miami Circle, but trips a bit when he selects the Margate-Blount site as an example of the East Okeechobee area, since it is actually an example of the Everglades area site, and uses none of the important Palm Beach County sites as examples such as Jupiter, DuBois or the Boynton Mounds. Also confusing is a photo figure of the Madden Hammock Site in Miami Lakes (in the Archaic Period chapter), where modern fill mounds are depicted instead of the actual site.

The section on “The Historic Period” provides plenty of meaty quotes to provide a general context for understanding of some of the adverse impacts of European contact.

The book’s attractive cover is confusing, because a clovis projectile point is the center stage artifact—which is unfortunate since, to date, no clovis points have been found in South Florida. A shell tool, though less compelling, would have been a better choice.

This popular book is a good introduction to South Florida archaeology; however, since the sources of information for many sites are unstated or unclear, the lack of citations or footnotes may make more serious readers wish they were present.—*SFH*

Robert S. Carr is the Executive Director of the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy.

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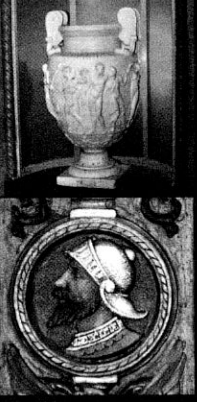
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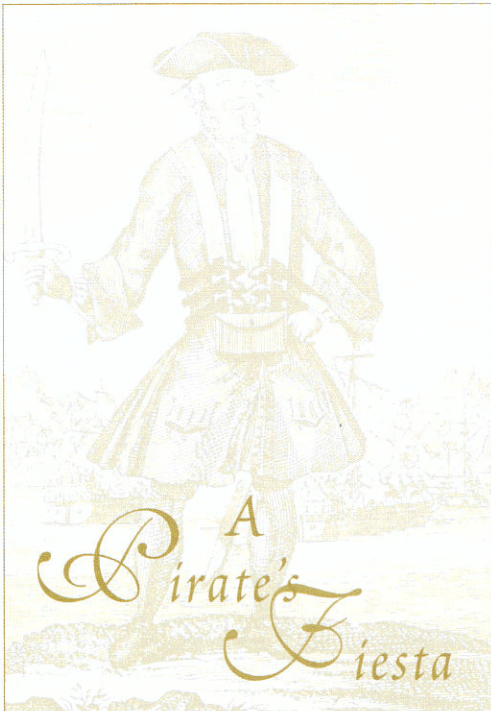
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Historical Museum of Southern Florida

Tropical Explorers Summer Camp

June 5 to August 4

A summer adventure they will never forget!

For nine weeks your camper is given the opportunity to be creative, explore new worlds,
develop new interests and make new friends.

Tropical Explorers Summer Camp features:

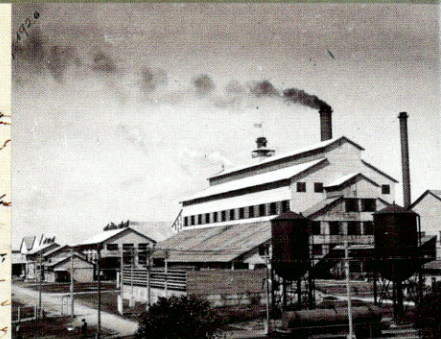
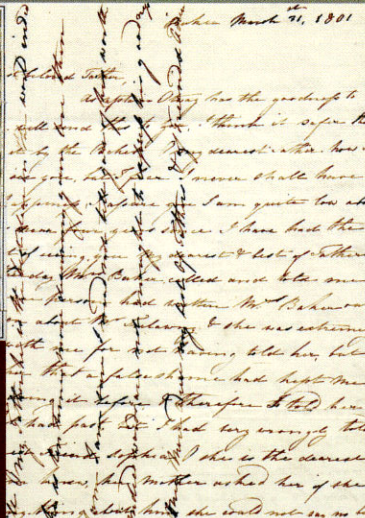
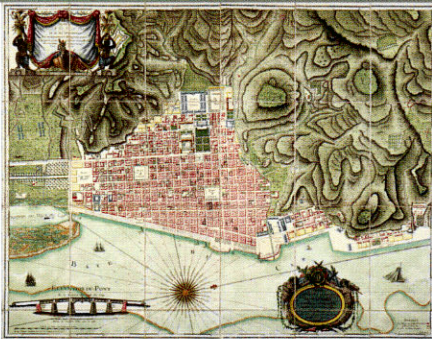
- Highly skilled professional educators and counselors.
- Different themes each week.
- Indoor and outdoor hands-on activities, including gallery games, music, arts & crafts,
drama, fieldtrips to historic sites and many more exciting summertime experiences.

HMSF Members \$110 per week Non-Members \$120 per week

For more information or to register, call 305.375.1625 or visit www.historical-museum.org.



Historical Museum of Southern Florida



An exhibition in collaboration with The University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries

CARIBBEAN COLLAGES

Archival Collections AND THE Construction of History

ON DISPLAY THROUGH June 4, 2006

Discover a wide range of stories related to Caribbean people through rare manuscripts, books, maps, prints and photographs.

Also on display *Balseros—A Desperate Journey* Cuban Photographs by Al Diaz

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