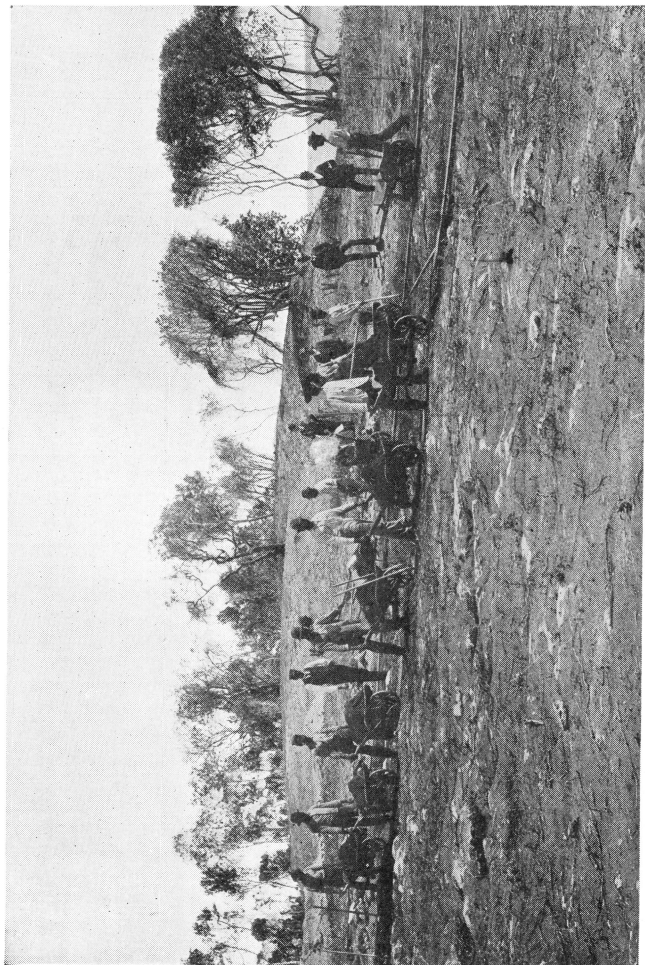


CHAPTER III

The Birth of a City—Henry M. Flagler and His Royal Palm Hotel—The Opening Up of the East Coast and the Conquest of Florida—The Longest Yellow Streak in the World.

Miami abounds in distinctions. There are more than a score of distinct distinctions to which the city may lay claim. It started with a distinction. It was born a full-fledged city, never having served the usual apprenticeship as village or town. The city was incorporated July 26, 1896. The place, legend says, was at one time the site of an extensive Indian village. When the new city was launched there were many who wanted to give it the name of Flagler, in honor of Henry M. Flagler, but it was finally decided to



STARTING MIAMI. BREAKING GROUND FOR ROYAL PALM HOTEL, MARCH 15, 1896



ROYAL PALM HOTEL

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take the name Miami, which is a Seminole Indian word, meaning sweet water, and was applied by the Indians to the river which flows through the city. Ordinary folks pronounce the word as spelled, but some of the ultra-fastidious prefer to call it Me-am-y.

None of the founders of the city appear to have shared Mrs. Tuttle's vision of Miami becoming a great city. Mr. Flagler had the city laid out for a city of about eight thousand inhabitants, with narrow streets and narrower side-walks. He set his Royal Palm Hotel at the mouth of the Miami river in a tropical jungle, and the town sprang up around it. Whatever dreams Mr. Flagler may have had regarding the development of the East Coast, he did not apparently entertain any dreams regarding Miami becoming a large city, but thought of it only as a unit in a chain of southern resorts which he intended to link together with the iron rails of the railroad he was building through the barren heart of the East Coast of Florida.

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Mr. Flagler was concerned with the development of the East Coast. He turned the gay throngs of winter tourists toward Florida that he might draw the attention of the world to what he believed to be a productive and attractive region of unmeasured potentiality. Without his railroad the East Coast of Florida might today be a wilderness as desolate as the islands of the sea, for it may well be doubted if any other American capitalist or railroad builder would have dared the great enterprises which claimed his genius and into which he poured his great wealth. He saw in the East Coast of Florida a country without material development of any kind. It was the most discredited part of the whole state. Except for a short line from Jacksonville to St. Augustine, and two short, disjointed pieces of road, the great stretch of country from Jacksonville to Key West, five hundred twenty-two miles in length, was without railroad facilities and without industrial or agricultural advancement. Mr. Flagler turned his attention

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to the building of a railroad to open up the country, and to the construction of magnificent hotels in order to furnish an incentive to the traveling public to visit the state.

He was considered an old man when he began his extensive development work in Florida, and it is well known that many of his friends and close business associates did not share his optimism regarding the outcome of his great ventures. When he announced that he was going to build the finest hotel in the world in old St. Augustine his business associates were amazed, and some of his oldest and best friends sought to discourage him from undertaking what they sincerely believed to be a mad dream. There was no railroad to the town. A narrow-gauge road from Jacksonville ran within two miles of the place. He bought this old railroad, converted it into a broad gauge and brought it into St. Augustine. He wanted to build his hotel in the oldest town in America on the site of old San Marco, the grim

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Spanish citadel, but he was unable to secure that site and was obliged to choose the present site of the Ponce de Leon. This hotel when it was completed was widely heralded as the finest hotel in the world. It is said to have cost two million dollars.

But if Mr. Flagler was "mad," there appears to have been method in his madness. He seems to have worked, from the beginning, with a definite plan in view, as well as a sublime faith in the soundness of his own judgment. Almost as soon as the Ponce de Leon was completed, he built the Alcazar, directly opposite, and then purchased the Cordova, an annex to the Alcazar, which had been built by another man. Immediately his St. Augustine hotels were completed, he turned his gaze farther southward. Many miles below St. Augustine, at Ormond, two men had a little hotel, where a few winter visitors made their home. There was no railroad to the place, but the country was beautiful. Mr. Flagler bought the hotel. Then he extended his railroad, and Ormond

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Beach and Daytona soon blossomed as popular resorts.

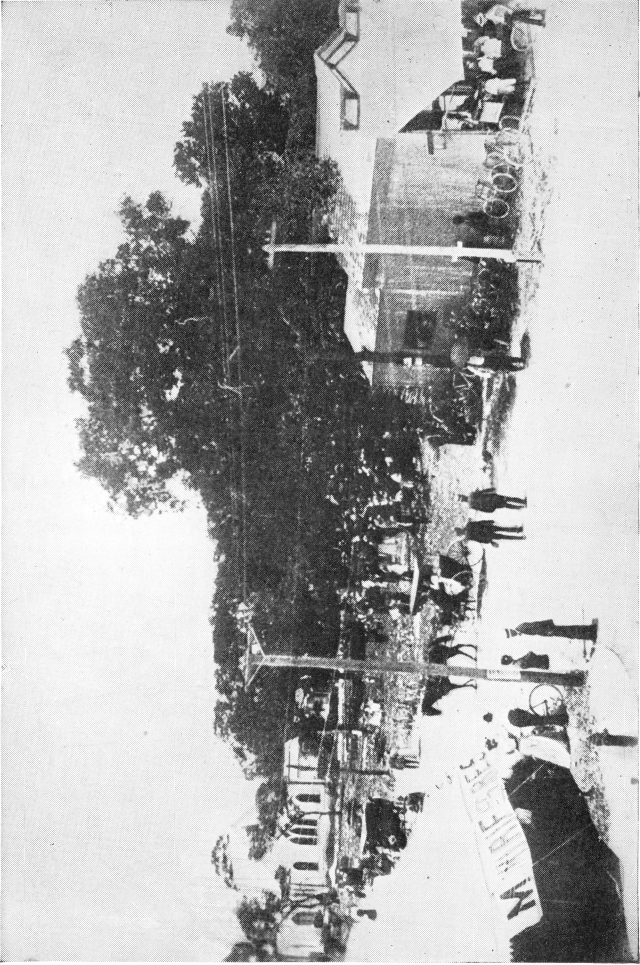
A few years later Mr. Flagler, still following what appears to have been a pre-conceived plan, went still farther down the coast. He is said to have bought Palm Beach almost as soon as he saw it. He immediately launched the building of the Royal Poinciana Hotel, which he announced would be the largest hotel in the world. He then started men at work extending his railroad from Ormond to Palm Beach. By the time the railroad was built the hotel was ready. His desire for hotels still unsatisfied, he built the Breakers, the original of which was burned, but was promptly rebuilt.

The extension of his railroad from Palm Beach to Miami was inevitable in futherance of Mr. Flagler's dream of a railroad from Jacksonville to Key West, over the Florida Keys. The great freeze of 1895, however, may have hastened his plans. His lieutenant had reported to him that there was a body

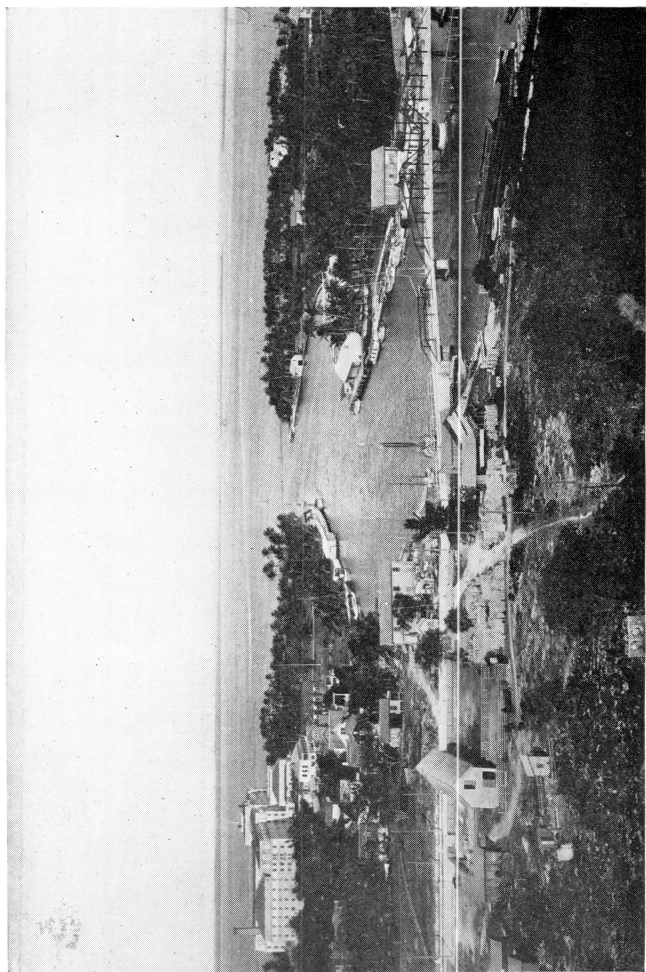
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of land more than forty miles long, lying between the Everglades and the Atlantic Ocean, absolutely untouched by the frost which would ultimately become the home of the citrus fruit industry because of its immunity from devastating freezes. The written proposal of Mrs. Tuttle, offering to share her large real estate holdings with him if he would extend his railroad to Miami, was also carried to Mr. Flagler. Mr. Flagler made up a little party and started for Miami at once. Before the end of his first day in Miami he had accepted the proposition for the extension of his railroad, given the order for its construction, had selected the site for the Royal Palm Hotel and ordered his contractors to build it, and made the plans for the town site. He also selected the sites for a passenger station and freight yards.

Some years later Mr. Flagler began the extension of his railroad southward from Miami to Key West, marching across the waves of the sea. This "ocean railroad" is probably the most unique rail-



FLAGLER STREET AND SECOND AVENUE NORTH, 1900. SITE OF FIRST NATIONAL BANK



BRICKELL'S POINT, 1905

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road ever constructed, and as an engineering feat it has received world-wide notice. The road is built across the small islands that make up the Florida Keys and crosses three separate deep-water channels. There is seventeen miles of permanent bridge work, including eleven miles of concrete arch viaduct and six miles of steel bridging and concrete piers. An area of one hundred and thirty-four acres of land was built up in the shallow water directly north of Key West for terminal purposes.

No other man ever put as much of his own money into the creation of any one great railroad and country development work as Mr. Flagler put into his East Coast railroad and the vast hotels and business operations connected therewith. It is estimated that fifty million would not measure his investments in Florida.

The Florida East Coast Railroad is today perhaps the most powerful and influential corporation in the state of Florida, and its influence on the policies

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and legislation of the state is the subject of much adverse criticism. It enjoys a monopoly and is said to dominate the state. Once upon a time a Florida East Coast train is said to have arrived in Miami on schedule. This, however, happened some years ago, before Miami had reached its present high station and before traffic had reached its present volume. It probably occurred during some July or August. The rolling stock and station houses of this railroad are painted a bright yellow, or orange, which probably makes the road the longest yellow streak in the world.

But if it be true that Mr. Flagler dominated the state of Florida, it is equally true that he created the kingdom he dominated. The state of Florida as it is today is very largely Mr. Flagler's making. He not only brought the world to see her beauty and her resources, but he transformed her wilderness into towns and farms where only the hunter and the pioneer had ventured. No state in the Union ever had a man who did, single-handed, as much for a

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people, for a country, as Henry M. Flagler has done for the state of Florida, and the state, doubtless, will never know again such a builder and benefactor. The people of Florida revere the memory of Mr. Flagler—and in the next breath damn the railroad that is the child of his genius.