

CHAPTER TWO

IT IS a far cry from the magnificent Bayfront park which makes up the front porch of Miami today, to the casual lettering of an unsung draftsman who was drawing the original plat of Miami in 1896 and unthinkingly penned in the word "park" at a convenient blank space on the line of the bay front.

The bay front was not in fact a public park in the beginning. When James E. Ingraham came here to lay out Miami for Henry M. Flagler, after planning the cities of Tampa and Sanford, he cannily reserved from 10 to 60 feet above high tide all along the bay from the north city limits at about Thirteenth street around to the Miami river, and land on both banks of the river. The Standard Oil fortune that Flagler invested here was not made by leaving water front openings for competitors to land and store their products.

Charles D. Leffler began shipping groceries from New York for his Miami store at the turn of the century. He found that he could save money by taking advantage of the water rates of the Mallory line into Key West, and bring his goods to Miami on the vessels of Capt. Dick Albury and others. The little schooners would come in to the front of one of the streets at the bay front and unload, and Mr. Leffler's truck would pick up there and carry the merchandise to his store.

Soon, he recalls, the movement became an epidemic, and envious checkers for the Florida East Coast railroad sat all day along the bay front under the hot sun and watched boats unload merchandise that might better, in their opinion, have come down in freight cars. One day the Florida East Coast sent in a crew equipped with second-hand cross ties and barbed wire, and ran a three-strand fence from what is now Belcher property to the Royal Palm club at the foot of S. E. Second street, thereby putting a sudden stop to the schooner business along that part of the bay.



FRANK B. SHUTTS

About 27 little Lefflers, Worleys, Romfhs and others lived within a block or two in bay-front homes north of the present Columbus Hotel, and the new barbed wire fence resulted in scratched hides and torn britches as the children went to and from their wading on the edge of the bay. Tempers of George A.

Worley, sr., and of Mr. Leffler finally dictated the purchase of wire clippers and one morning long stretches of the fence were cut, and the children romped through. But another railroad crew appeared with more crossties and more barbed wire. Soon after, the fence was cut again. So it went, back and forth, during 1901 and 1902, until the fence was the center of a town row.

The matter came to a head in a lawsuit against George Worley, in which the State Supreme court finally decided that the part of the bay front marked "park" on the original map belonged to the city of Miami, and the part left blank belonged to Flagler. From the center of old Seventh street to the center of Third street, north of the present Fifth street, was city property, and the remainder belonged to the Florida East Coast, and the Model Land Company, except for the site of Elser Pier at the foot of Flagler street.

The city wanted very badly to get the bay front closer to the foot of Flagler street than the "park" which the Supreme court handed it, because the federal government promised to spend \$100,000 to start a harbor if the city would build the docks. The Florida East Coast railroad had entered into a contract with the United States to construct a turning basin and channel across the bay to the government cut, but after its completion of the railroad to Key West, its interest in channels ebbed, and it refused to carry on the contract. The federal government found it could not get satisfaction out of the courts.

Miami's only prospect for a harbor, therefore, lay in its own efforts coupled with what the war department was willing to do. Through Frank B. Shutts, who had founded The Miami Herald in 1910 and was also starting a law practice, the Flagler interests in 1913 gave Miami a three-year option to buy all the bay front from Flagler street to the P. & O. docks, including the channel and a spur track, for \$415,000 in 5 per cent bonds.

By then, however, S. Bobo Dean was in command of the old Metropolis, and he began a fire-eating crusade against the F. E. C. that soon had much of the town's population believing that this "greedy corporate monster" was about to devour them, body and soul. As a result, Mayor John W. Watson vetoed the bond issue ordinance and the Flagler spokesmen retired into their shells in St. Augustine.

The city then began suit against the railroad and the Model Land Company to take the bay front by right of eminent domain, but A. J. Rose finally had to report failure. In 1917 the city offered the Florida East Coast \$1,500,000 for the land from S. E. Second north to the P. & O. terminals, and got nothing but a curt refusal, by letter. After 15 years of bickering and litigation, the city and the Flagler estate reached an impasse where the trustees finally refused even to answer letters from the city or to treat with its spokesmen.

The deadlock was broken in 1920 when Mr. Shutts, at the city

council's request, went to the Flagler trustees in New York and finally wheedled the trustees of the Flagler estate into selling the bayfront property for \$1,000,000 in 6 per cent Miami bonds. The actual acceptance was made in Miami with Mr. Shutts, W. A. Blount, widely known Flagler attorney, S. P. Robineau as city attorney and Chester B. Masslich of New York, Miami's bond attorney, conducting the negotiations.

The site of Elser Pier at the foot of Flagler street, belonging to a company headed by Locke T. Highleyman, was offered to the city at this time for \$175,000 but the city fathers were a little slow in accepting. When they found in 1924 that they had to have Elser Pier, they paid \$375,000 for it at forced sale.

Had the matter of the bayfront been permitted to drag two or three years more, until the boom got well started, there is no question that the Model Land Company and the Florida East Coast would not have parted with the site of the present park for anything like \$1,000,000. In fact, it is doubtful if there would have been a park along Miami's bayfront today if the purchase had not been made just before the dawn of the boom.

The germ of the park idea, planted by an anonymous draftsman, lived through 40 years, of which half of it was passed in bitter squabbling between the city of Miami and the Flagler interests. Credit and conditions on the eve of the boom enabled the city of Miami to create one of the world's finest parks in place of the scraggly shoreline where the children of the Lefflers and the Romfhs and the Worleys splashed so many years ago.

And the fill which covered that shore line and created Bayfront park buried more than tangible evidence of nature's whims. It buried, probably forever, the animosity against the Flagler interests which all the preceding years of Miami's existence had nursed and fattened.

Paced by the opening of the \$62,000,000 Miami Shores development, north of Miami, preparation for the boom gathered speed after the first of September, 1924.

All through the early part of that year, buying and selling of property by Miamians and the slightly swollen winter crowd had pushed up values in the more settled parts. Capitalists with money and ideas then began bidding for acreage which might be subdivided and improved after patterns laid down in Coral Gables, Miami Beach and lesser Miami subdivisions.

So it was that Miami Shores came into being. It was the child of the Shoreland Company, which meant Mrs. E. S. Harris, Hugh M. Anderson, Roy C. Wright and the late J. B. Jeffries, recently chairman of the Everglades Drainage District. The present Miami Shores Village occupies a tract bought from L. T. Cooper out of his large holdings in the northern end of Miami. Altogether 2,500 acres were pieced together for this development, which later

was even to reach into Biscayne bay and attach the island on which the exclusive Indian Creek Golf club now rests in isolated peace.

Alex Riach returned in September from Italy, where he had studied architecture and landscaping for Miami Shores. A \$2,000,000 hotel was announced for a site on the bay just south of Arch creek. This somehow never took form. But it was forgotten anyway in the rush of buyers for the 12,000 building sites carved out of the Shoreland holdings.

Elegant offices were opened with fitting ceremonies in the Shoreland Building, near the First National Bank, offices that have since been subdued to meet less spectacular requirements. Ten Cadillac touring cars and four de luxe busses were bought to assist the sales staff.



HUGH M. ANDERSON

The first opening early in December, with Mr. Jeffries as sales manager and Hamilton Michelsen directing the field operations, brought \$2,509,000 in purchases. Thereafter the new Miami Shores offices had to close for several days to allow the clerical force to dig out from under the effects of the first sale. Of course, that was big doings for Miami. We lived to see the day, however, when more than \$30,000,000 worth of Miami Shores property was sold in a single day's campaign.

Despite the frenzy of that period, Miami Shores somehow escaped the issuance of bonds.

After the water was squeezed out of values and the Phipps estate had salvaged what was left, Miami Shores emerged as a debt-free and highly improved municipality. Some say the boys of the original Shoreland Company spent too much money on their "front" downtown to have anything left for the lean years.

The Miami Realty Board decided in September to erect a 15-story \$650,000 building across from what then was the Central school property, subsequently acquired for the present federal building. The name since has been changed to Postal building. George W. Langford of the McAllister Hotel paid \$200,000 (\$4,000 a front foot) for the strip of land between the hotel and the Elks club and began the 10-story McAllister addition to cost \$1,500,000.

Fifty-seven ballots were cast by Miamians in a School District No. 2 election approving \$200,000 in bonds, \$40,000 of which went to George E. Merrick in repayment for the Coral Gables Elementary building. A. D. H. Fossey Real Estate Company added eight

salesmen, one stenographer. The Fisher building, \$127,000, was nearing completion at Miami Beach.

Public resentment flared up against closing Ocean drive from the Firestone estate to Baker's Haulover. Sheriff Louis A. Allen posted armed guards on this long stretch of ocean-side road after a part of it had been torn up by scarifiers. The courts finally were asked to decide whether the Miami Beach Bayshore Company and the Tatums could move the roadway back from the high sandy ridge along the beach to a less expensive location near the bay. The Tatums contended they had built it originally. Witnesses declared it was constructed out of a public bond issue. By degrees the public became reconciled to losing its access to the ocean and the first thing anyone knew the ocean front was private property again and that part of Ocean drive was only a memory.

In Miami, the public impatiently received the news that the new redwood water mains from Hialeah to Miami would not be completed until the first of 1925. These wooden conduits were advertised to last a lifetime and promised Miami and Miami Beach the first palatable water out of spigots. The redwood mains were replaced this year with cast iron pipe, after numerous leaks had developed.

Civic clubs and private citizens complained bitterly about the condition of Miami's streets, torn up by an ambitious paving program, the laying of water mains and extension of the lines of the Miami Gas Company, newly acquired by the American Power and Light Company. The city commission was accused of going to sleep on the job. The city decided to double-track Flagler to Twelfth avenue while the paving was in progress.

Miss Alice Brickell, first postmistress of Miami, was killed by a live wire at her Brickell Point estate. M. F. H. Koch planned a \$1,600,000 hotel at N. Bayshore drive and Third street, but the lot still is bare. Walker-Skagseth's store was sold for \$40,000. Miami Beach approved, 41 to 1, a \$177,000 bond issue for water mains and other improvements. The beach residents, like Miamians, got their drinking water out of bottles until the mains were extended across the causeway.

A. B. Hurst bought the northeast corner of Everglades avenue and the E. Dixie for \$75,000, to put there a pharmacy, grocery store and Odd Fellows hall. Joseph H. Adams arrived to take possession of his new Belle Isle home. Dr. and Mrs. M. H. Tallman started construction on their \$25,000 home in Grove Park. Jerry Galatis (Seven Seas restaurant), bought a \$20,000 house on South Miami avenue.

To make room for widening of S. W. First avenue, the farmers' market was moved to the bank of the Miami river where the S. W. Second avenue bridge was to go. Frank Smathers sold 200 acres at the corner of Flagler street and Ludlum road for \$200,000, having paid \$170,000 for it a month before. The Florida East Coast railroad completed to Hialeah a spur that was intended to continue up the Miami canal to Lake Okeechobee. R. M. (Bob) Davidson,

first city manager of Coral Gables, directed the work. The first passenger train pulled into the Hialeah station in November, but the line was not built farther north. Later, it was continued around to rejoin the main line south of Miami and make a shuttle route, eventually dissipating the irritation of citizens held up at the Flagler street crossing by prolonged switching of freight trains.

City Manager Frank H. Wharton predicted that traffic lights would be a success, as General Electric representatives arrived to conduct a signal survey. Hamilton Michelsen began carload shipments of avocados from Miami to California. The Macon Telegraph editorially referred slightly to Miami as a frontier town, harboring criminals and rascals. The Miami Beach aquarium finally was closed by James A. Allison, Carl Fisher's former Prest-O-Lite partner, when Miami refused his offer of the equipment.

The addition to the old post office, the present home of the Miami Chamber of Commerce, was being rushed as Postmaster J. D. Gardner expressed the hope it would relieve congestion in mailing facilities by January.

The nation then was waiting to see what the November elections would bring forth. Clarence Darrow had saved Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb from the chair for the "thrill" murder of 14-year-old Bobbie Franks. Gen. John J. Pershing retired as general of the American armies. Red Grange was the sensation of the football world. John Phillip Hill of Baltimore discovered that 2.75 per cent cider was illegal. The first victim was claimed by the new Florida electric chair. William Lee Popham, the oyster king, was indicted for using the mails to defraud, growing out of his oyster farms at Apalachicola, using a method of breeding later adopted by the United States government.

On a bright, sunny day in September, two murders shook Miamians out of their lethargy. Mrs. Hattie Freckleton shot and killed her husband, Joseph, on First street across from the post office. She subsequently went free when Moman Pruiett, sensational criminal lawyer from Oklahoma, pictured her as "the woman scorned" and an all-male jury agreed. The same day W. Y. C. Hume, president of the Tropical Realty Company, shot and killed Recio Celona in the South Miami avenue restaurant of his father. Hume claimed the younger Celona intruded in his home. He later was acquitted of murder.

Julian Brain was convicted, sentenced to 20 years in prison, for the murder of Raymond Lee in a brawl. The Ashley-Mobley gang of Everglades bank robbers had shot their way out of several tight spots, robbed the Pompano bank, thumbed their noses at the law from the dank fastnesses of swamps that sheltered them. It was indeed a lusty period for Florida, the last frontier.