

CHAPTER SIX

BREAKING up of some famous old groves around Maimi into subdivisions was a minor tragedy of the boom. The groves were destroyed, and for the most part the lots remaining still are nonproductive.

This process of subdividing citrus and avocado groves took a decided spurt late in 1924, as the bidding for acreage overtopped the yield from producing trees. One of the largest to be cut up was that of T. A. Winfield, on the bay at Seventy-ninth street, which became Shore Crest. Twenty-eight years before, Mr. Winfield had started his trees at a place then considered far out in the country. He prospered and took an active part in Miami community life. His grove was noted for having the largest avocado tree in south Florida. Forty-one Shore Crest lots were sold on opening day for \$132,750, and that was long before the Seventy-ninth street causeway was born.

The George B. Cellon residence on N. W. Seventh avenue, south of Thirty-sixth street, a dignified square stone house set amid spacious grounds and protected by stone walls, today is about the only reminder of the extensive holdings in that neighborhood which made Mr. Cellon one of the largest growers of early years here. The house resisted all the advances of the boom, and still has a somewhat belligerent look, as though it suspected every spectator of being a designing speculator.

Part of the former Cellon grove became Suwannee Park late in 1924, put on the market by Ralph Bullock. The Frank P. Kennedy estate on West Flagler street was closed and subdivided by John B. De Voney under the name of Tierra Alta. Davenport & Rich began their first subdivision, Seville, on N. W. Seventeenth avenue. Mrs. Alice Baldwin sold 10 acres of her old homestead on N. W. Twenty-Sixth street and Seventh avenue to Charles Z. Allen for \$25,000. One street north was The Hub, where C. Dan Wallace was advertising lots at \$1,500, "in the center of all social and commercial activity."

D. L. Hartman, "strawberry king" of Dade county, was still at his plow among the fertile acres on the present north boundary of Miami where he had, according to his own statement, amassed a healthy profit in 1923 from eight acres of strawberries. Booms



E. E. (DOC) DAMMERS

then held no thrills for him. Joachim Fritz, Bavarian dairyman whose cows once ranged over an extensive acreage in the northwest section, was in the real estate business. His home was on the site of the present unfinished Fritz Hotel, in whose empty corridors and silent rooms laying hens and mushrooms are the only paying guests. Last reported running a hotel at Silver Springs, Joachim Fritz helped write boom history around and beyond the Allapattah section, where he located when he first arrived in south Florida, on foot, from Baltimore.

From his former dairy company we got such names as Melrose Gardens, not far from the hotel, which sold late in 1924 for \$45,000. E. D. Noe & Son began selling lots in near-by Melrose Heights, with the promise that a street car line would run out Thirty-sixth street "soon."

Curtiss-Bright opened their new Country Club Estates, the present debt-free city of Miami Springs. John A. Campbell started Paradise Park at N. W. Twenty-seventh avenue and the Miami river, euphemistically described as "near the center of town." Two 80-acre tracts north of the new race track in Hialeah were sold for \$120,000; Dr. C. E. Tumlin paid \$100,000 for 120 acres north of the track. Five acres on the railroad near Arch creek brought \$10,000. R. R. Bailey, former California developer, paid \$250,000 for 6,270 acres west of Davie, and in 1936 may still be found fighting to get agriculture out there free from the menace of water or drouth.

The community of Little River decided at that time not to incorporate, waiting to see if Miami would annex the territory. The meeting which reached this money-saving decision was presided over by S. P. Robineau, who had returned to Miami after the war and his invention of the antiseptic, Zonite, to practice law and invest in real estate.

The corner at Miami avenue and N. W. Twenty-seventh street was bought for \$40,000 by T. J. Fletcher and J. C. Johnson, who started an ice factory there. J. Ovid Brooks reported that the Masons had bought property at N. E. Second avenue and Twenty-first street for \$85,000 and planned to construct a temple at a cost of \$750,000. This seems to have been a promotion dream, as no construction of the kind took place. Webb Jay acquired three and a fraction acres on the bay in Lemon City, south of the Tee House Plantation for \$60,000.

Everyone, it seemed, wanted acreage to subdivide, but this was only a taste of what was to come a few months later, in the spring of 1925. The tide of subdividing ran west even faster than north, until the swamp lands of the Everglades stopped the builders of sidewalks and ornamental gates. The forlorn settlement of Sweetwater, 10 miles out on the Tamiami Trail, is proof that even muckland couldn't halt some enterprise, for sidewalks and Spanish houses sprang up there, too.

The first subdivision in Miami, as we know, was started by B.

B. Tatum, on the west bank of the Miami river and named Riverside. He built a bridge on the site of the present Flagler street span to get to his new development, "away out of town," as he described it. By the end of 1924, however, subdivisions were blossoming like mushrooms around the junctions of Red Road with Flagler street, S. W. Eighth street and Coral Way, six miles west of Riverside.

Miss Mabel Hammond, probably the outstanding woman developer of the boom, paid \$152,000 for 40 acres on the southeast corner of W. Flagler street and Red road, on which the Hammond Realty Company opened Flagler Terrace, and 10 acres across Flagler street on which Westgate was laid out. The corner was described as Miami's busiest transfer point of the future. Two years before, this property had been bought for \$28,000. It was part of the extensive holding of W. R. Comfort, whose Seminole Fruit and Land Company had acquired it nearly 40 years before for \$2.75 an acre.

With these two subdivisions and Winona Park, west of there on Flagler, the new addition to Winona Park across the canal, and Normandy Beach, Miss Hammond directed the development of 450 acres during the boom. As Mrs. Walter Sielin today, she recalls that she arranged to have the building restrictions on Flagler Terrace removed by 1935 to permit the construction of skyscrapers, as she didn't want to feel that she was impeding the growth of Miami.

Miss Hammond was handling a man's job before she could vote, managing the public utilities in two Indiana towns. She came to Miami on a visit to Mrs. Tom Norfleet in 1916, and remained to set up the first tax books in Broward county. During the war she was engaged in clerical work at Chapman Field, and later in Fort Benjamin Harrison.

Following the armistice, Miss Hammond worked for T. J. Pancoast in the development of the upper beach, and her father located a real estate office on Fifth street at Miami Beach when only the post office and the Miami Ocean View Company building fronted on that street. Her experience in real estate was turned to more ambitious use when she put Normandy Beach on the market for Henry Levy, and when she later induced Mortimer Gryzmish and Henry Levy to see the vision of a causeway at Seventy-ninth street and they bought the two Normandy Isles on which the present causeway lands. These islands in upper Miami Beach were bought first by A. P. Warner and Mead Brothers through Miss Hammond for \$55,000, and sold by her to the actual developers the following year, 1923, for \$250,000.

Getting back to Flagler street, we find Flagler Lawn springing up as a neighbor to the Hammond subdivisions, with lots priced at \$1,000 and up. Flagler Manor came into being near-by.

Farther south, at what for many years has been known as the Wildcat corner, Red Road and Tamiami Trail, J. H. Pearlman paid \$300,000 for 100 acres of the southwest quarter. "Doc" Dam-

mers increased the vogue out there with Central Miami. "Get a laugh out of this," he advertised. "In eight years the central part of Miami will be west of Coral Gables." One of the last frontiers was Coral Way Park, at the end of Coral Way and Red Road. F. B. Miller & Co. started lots there at \$700 each. Recently building has been resumed even in that area.

Coral Gables had a competitor for the yacht trade in Flagami, at the western entrance to Miami, where Flagler street curves around to meet the Tamiami Trail. The boat Colonel actually carried 200 passengers from the bay up the Miami river and through the Tamiami canal to Flagami, and the price of lots at once rose 50 per cent. The developers were agitating for a whiteway belt from Flagler to the Trail, and planned the hotel which today is the first major building to meet motorists coming from the west.

Brooklawn was sired by Lee & Brooks, Inc., on S. W. Twenty-second avenue. Tatum Brothers paid \$200,000 for Coral Nook, 25 acres between Twenty-eighth and Thirtieth streets on the Trail. Vedado, south of the Trail and still enjoying its own water system, was advertised by Warren Brothers as having a whiteway on every street—lots from \$2,500 to \$5,000. The present town of South Miami was started on 1,600 acres under the nursing of J. R. Clute and associates. Even Fred W. Pine was president of a real estate company and for the time being allowed Herman Swink to be county solicitor.

All of these subdivisions, and many more, remain today, some emaciated and rattle-boned, others prosperous, all inviting building as Miami takes up the march which those busy promoters foretold. Many, of course, never did hold any promise. Such as the development of Flamingo, in which a lot was given away by Walter R. Early for each five-year subscription to the promised publication "Happenings in Florida." Flamingo was vaguely located as between Kissimmee and Orlando. Many other such free offerings were made, the catch being that the sucker was expected to pay \$15 or so for an abstract of title. The lot and abstract together usually cost the promoter about \$5.

There was Wyldewood Park, between Miami and Dania, built around a "\$2,000,000 banyan tree." The price of the tree remains a mystery to this day, but the tree is still there, by the side of the new Federal highway. Royal Palm Estates was an early blooming monstrosity. It was south of old Royal Palm park, below Homestead, and its principal claim to distinction was the boast by its promoters that 10 railroad tracks soon would run from Jacksonville right into Royal Palm Estates.

Okeechobee was being boomed as the "Chicago of the South" by Charles L. Henck Company, whose salesmen were able to point to undoubted investments in the Everglades making this appellation not so bizarre. Brown Company of Portland, Me., was trying to get water control on 70,000 acres of muck in Palm Beach county

to grow peanuts for paper blanching. W. J. (Fingy) Conners was building a sugar mill near his newly opened toll road from Okeechobee to Twenty Mile Bend, along the eastern shore of the lake. Barron G. Collier had bought his vast empire in what is now Lee, Collier and Hendry counties, and was pushing the Tamiami Trail south from Fort Myers. Henry Ford, Senator Coleman duPont, the Van Sweringen brothers of Cleveland, Harvey S. Firestone, J. S. Cosden, the oil magnate, the Pennsylvania Sugar Company, all came to financial grief bucking the Everglades, but they were full of hope and flushed with money then. The city of Okeechobee at the key point for Everglades commerce was not without promise. The promises simply were too good.

The lack of an adequate courthouse and consequent delay in handling the clerical work of the boom contributed somewhat to the fever heat to which the boom ultimately rose. Even in the fall of 1924 the two-story stone building, which had served as the seat of county government for 20 years, was considered much too small.

The county bar association and the grand jury made formal statements demanding a new courthouse. J. W. Carey, chairman of the county commission, finally headed a group to make definite plans for a building, which Mitchell D. Price believed should not exceed seven or eight stories. Unhappily they started too late. Long before the present 27-story county-city obelisk reared its head to become the tallest structure in the South, the machinery of courts and clerks was badly clogged.

Business establishments sprang up that winter like toadstools after a rain. The \$1,500,000 El Comodoro Hotel opened with S. D. McCreary, recently Miami safety director, as manager, and T. R. Knight's Tamiami Bank on the main floor. The Bank of Allapattah had opened in the northwest section with County Judge Frank Blanton as president.

John Seybold, pioneer bakery owner, let a \$1,000,000 contract to add eight stories to the Central Arcade, known today as the Seybold Arcade. A four-story addition to the Bank of Bay Biscayne was nearing completion, but the present 13-story building was not planned at that time. The Vanderpool building on S. E. First avenue was finished. The Vail Arcade on E. Flagler street was being pushed to four stories at a cost of \$120,000 to house the Hirsch-Fauth-Harrison Furniture Company. Fulford-by-the-Sea was spending \$20,000, a mere bagatelle, to enlarge its Flagler street offices, and the Hollywood Land and Water Company put extensive additions to its Flagler street showrooms as the Young organization began its third year.

W. M. Burdine's Sons Company was finishing the six stories of what was then, as now, the finest department store in the South. Plans for a \$500,000 Y. W. C. A. downtown were approved by business men, but the building never took form. David Letaw sold his Flagler street drug store at a reported price of \$50,000 to Liggett's

and his son, Harry, who runs a drug store in Coral Gables today, was sent to an Atlanta medical school.

The Miami Tire Company built a \$250,000 plant on N. E. Second street.

A. A. Ungar had come to Miami from Atlanta in 1919, and was joined here the same year by M. S. Altmyer, a native of Georgia, who had lived for some time in Jacksonville. The Ungar-Buick Company grew from the activities of these men, and late in 1924 the present plant of Ungar-Buick was opened at a cost of \$100,000. In a bid for the downtown dining trade, F. D. Van Vechten started the Marine Roof Garden atop the Professional building with one of those boom breakfasts which were supposed to begin at 9 o'clock but rarely produced food before noon. Freeman & Sons built their \$50,000 garage in Buena Vista. "Pop" Groover of the Groover-Stewart Drug Company put a \$25,000 addition to his plant. Thomas J. Peters began the \$150,000 Halcyon Arcade west of the Halcyon Hotel, "to supply the great demand for shops and offices on Flagler street."

Harvey A. Seeds Post of the American Legion decided to build a \$100,000 home on Eighth street and the bay front, on the site of an old hospital the post had acquired. The post stayed there 10 years, moving recently to the new home in the Tee House Plantation tract, one-time pride of Billy Ogden and later owned by Ed Ballard, on the bay at Sixty-fifth street. The present tax collector, Harry Goldstein, had just succeeded Cliff Reeder as commander of the post, late in 1924.

The Hassell-Dupre apartments were constructed at this time where Flagler street jogs at Seventeenth avenue, costing \$175,000. Abe Aronovitz and Leon Lischkoff paid \$100,000 for a building at N. W. Fifth street and Second avenue. The East Coast Jobbing House, founded 40 years before in Key West, opened on N. W. Third street with Louis Wolfson as president and Mitchell Wolfson as general manager.

The Railey-Milam Hardware store celebrated its fourteenth year in Miami, partners being F. G. (Pat) Railey, Marcus A. Milam, Gaston Drake and R. M. Miller. Railey, Milam and Drake also were together in the Milam Dairy and the Drake Lumber Company.

The Midtown Realty Company took a 99-year lease on the Cheatham and Meeks block, across Miami avenue from Burdine's, at an annual rental of \$65,000. The property had been leased earlier in the year by the owners, J. H. Cheatham and Carl Meeks, to David Afremow and B. F. Schoenberg. After the boom, of course, the owners got it back.

The wonder of Miami then was the Kress basement, 10 feet below water level and the only one downtown. Fred T. Ley & Co. built it despite gloomy predictions that it would be half full of water most of the time.

There were many signs that business was exceptional. The overflow of Christmas packages was so great that Postmaster Gard-

ner erected two sheds on the high school grounds to take care of it. Miami was twenty-fourth in building among the cities of the United States. Some genius for figures estimated that the city in one year used 400 miles of awning, and that 7,000 cars of lumber worth \$4,000,000 had been consumed during 1924.

James Cash Penney and James Deering arrived in December, breathing confidence, the former to go to his Belle Isle home and the latter to his magnificent estate, Vizcaya. Wrote a commentator of that day: "In Miami Mr. Penney is known and esteemed for the pleasing approachability of his personality." This was some time before the City National Bank In Miami had opened and closed, and Mr. Penney's "approachability" had disappeared.

Fourteen New York bankers were brought to Miami by A. E. Fitkin Company, owners of the Pinellas County Power Company, which later became the Florida Power Corporation. They were entertained by Banker E. C. Romfh, by E. G. Sewell and Frederick J. Osius, and were properly impressed with the soundness of investments in Florida. The First National Bank held \$15,049,571 at the close of 1924, and the Bank of Bay Biscayne boasted \$11,000,000. The Miami Bus Company was carrying from 15,000 to 20,000 passengers a day in the 160 passenger automobiles then in use. Remember the electric shock when you reached out to grasp a jitney bus door handle on a hot day?

At Miami Beach, N. B. T. Roney was planning to spend \$1,000,000 to put up the Roney Plaza Hotel. John S. Collins, who had come to the beach many years before in a fruitless effort to grow coconuts, announced that he would return to his former home in New Jersey no more. James A. Allison let a \$500,000 contract to John B. Orr for Allison hospital. It was built on a made island in upper Indian creek, to insure isolation and quiet, and was later renamed St. Francis hospital. Work began on the King Cole Hotel. Julius Fleischmann planned an \$18,000 clubhouse for polo friends. With 33 hotels and 80 apartment buildings, Miami Beach estimated it could care for 25,000 visitors, providing they didn't all come at once.

Up the coast from Miami, the Florida East Coast railroad finished a \$1,000,000 roundhouse at New Smyrna. The \$125,000 Pelican Hotel was started at Stuart with John E. Taylor and W. I. Schumann handling the bonds. The \$50,000 casino at Fort Pierce beach was under way. The towns of Daytona, Daytona Beach and Seabreeze were preparing to merge into the one city of Daytona Beach. As in many other Florida coast resorts, the urge then was for a name containing "beach" or "sea" or "ocean." There was real estate gold in them there frills.



. . . tallest public building in Florida is this \$2,000,000 county-city building at Miami. (inset) The old court house that served through the boom.