

CHAPTER SEVEN

ALMOST by accident, Hollywood-by-the-Sea became a city. Its founder and first mayor, Joseph W. Young, began it as just another subdivision, but almost before he knew it he had a \$20,000,000 municipality on his hands.

Young decided in 1919 that his Indianapolis crew of real estate salesmen could improve the shining winter hours best in Florida, particularly Miami, where there was some talk of real estate possibilities. Accordingly, Young bought and sold several subdivisions in Miami during 1920 and 1921, and then reached out for bigger things. He acquired most of the land for Hollywood from the Allsobrook interests of Dania in May, 1921, and started on this unoccupied pine land to construct a bigger and better subdivision, figuring that Miami soon would reach out to touch it.

His smartest move was to induce Frank C. Dickey, then a Miami Beach councilman and former United States engineer in charge of Miami harbor, to join him. Streets, sewers, sidewalks, light and water plants and other public works costing between \$15,000,000 and \$20,000,000 were built under Dickey's direct supervision. Probably the finest F. E. C. railroad station south of Jacksonville was put up and advertised extensively.

The first part of Hollywood-by-the-Sea, as it was then called, sold like hot cakes, and Young's next step was to fill in 1,000 acres of swamp land along the ocean and subdivide it. He had surveyed the adjoining Lake Mabel for a deep water harbor in 1923, and the rapid disposal of his pine land lots forced him to hatch his harbor idea to give added pull to the property sales on the new-filled area. Nine dredges, 300 trucks and seven steam shovels were at work in Hollywood early in 1925 as a fleet of busses began bringing customers from all over the East and Middle West.

Young probably was the first Florida developer to use the motor bus extensively. First, he brought clients from Miami, 17 miles away. Then he found he could lure passengers in from other parts of Florida, and finally he was running busses on regular schedule from his ornate offices in New York, Chicago and other remote cities. From 30 to 50 busses were in use, including the slightly ridiculous tallyho with its red-coated footmen. He had a cruising houseboat named the Jessie Fay, built on the Miami



JOSEPH W. YOUNG

river for \$200,000, and devoted it to the more subtle cajoling of large investors.

The backbone of the city is Hollywood boulevard, one of the widest streets in Florida. On the western end is the former Hollywood Hills Hotel, built and opened late in the boom at a cost of \$750,000 and now occupied profitably by the Riverside Military Academy. On the eastern terminus at the ocean's edge is the beautiful Hollywood Beach Hotel, which cost \$3,500,000 and was opened in January, 1926.

Along the Hollywood boulevard one finds the city hall, the building of the First Hollywood Bank, the Park View Hotel, the Great Southern Hotel and the Hollywood Country club, whose removable roof and shimmy dancers were the sensations of 1925. All these and many more were built by Young as the profits from sales and resales pyramided his assets to dizzy heights. By the time the boom started to subside, he could look with satisfaction upon a city of 2,500 residences, 13 hotels, 63 apartment buildings, two schools and nine churches in addition to the business section.

It was a peculiarity of Young, the builder, that he distrusted and avoided contracts and most of this development became the personal responsibility of Dickey, who is now the city manager of Hollywood. Probably the only major contract that Young entered into cost him his city. As the boom was fading, Young cast about in desperation for some means of completing unfinished improvements so he would have something to sell. He contracted with the Highway Construction Company of Ohio to build more than \$2,000,000 worth of streets and sidewalks, and pledged his tangible assets to pay for it.

Unhappily for Young, Hollywood property in 1926 could not be revived even with such artificial stimulants as the new harbor. So by 1930, the thousands of lots and other property owned by the Young interests, including the Hollywood Beach Hotel, were assumed by the creditors. These interests merged into Hollywood, Inc., on which much of the future of Hollywood rests today.

The harbor deserves special mention. The aged Gen. G. W. Goethals, builder of the Panama canal, was brought to Hollywood in 1925 by Young to make a harbor out of Lake Mabel, which was separated from deep water in the Atlantic only by a narrow strip of land. The name of Goethals was all Young wanted; he expected Dickey to direct the digging. The general never got geared up to boom tempo and ultimately departed without having added much to the harbor, except to inspire the numerous salesmen then throwing out to the public the lots surrounding the harbor site.

The outcome we can see today. But Young found the job too big for his shrinking purse, and in 1927 the cities of Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood were joined in a harbor district by legislative act, were bonded for \$4,000,000, and the work proceeded. Otherwise, it was whispered at that time, Young would have fallen afoul of the United States government for using the mails to de-

fraud had he not delivered a deep water harbor as per his advertising.

Regardless of the methods or the hysteria of those days, Hollywood became a splendid community with good government dating from 1925. As evidence that it had fundamentally strong foundations, we need cite only that the First Hollywood Bank was one of the very few small town financial institutions in south Florida that came through the boom and hasn't closed since. This was the only bank in Hollywood, started by Young to finance his mushrooming companies. That it did not blow up in a cloud of ruined depositors like so many others may be laid in part to the fact that the First National Bank of Miami helped guide its course, and in part to the very obvious fact that the boom did not convert Hollywood's future into its past.

It looks like old home week in Fort Lauderdale these days, with G. Frank Croissant, W. F. Morang, A. G. Kuhn and other giants of the boom returning to their former stands and picking up development of water front lots right where they left off 10 years ago.

Croissant Park was the largest and most spectacular of the boom exploits in Fort Lauderdale. It occupies most of the south-central part of the city and is cut by Andrews avenue, that broad roadway which angles off from the Federal highway toward the center of the business district, through wide expanses of vacant lots, past the demolished ruins of the Croissant Hotel.

Croissant was a dynamic salesman and developer. He formed Croissant Park out of 1,193 acres, bought for \$1,250,000 late in 1924, and it soon was sold out. The proceeds of these sales later went into a new subdivision north of Fort Lauderdale, named "Croissantania." He labeled it "My Masterpiece" in lavish advertising but it actually was the downfall of the builder of Calumet City. After years of residence in Spain, Croissant is back at work in Fort Lauderdale development again.

Scarcely less remarkable was Lauderdale Isles, north of Las Olas boulevard, which leads out to the ocean from the heart of Fort Lauderdale. Like most of these seaside subdivisions, it was based on the "water front lot" appeal. The water front was produced by digging ditches or canals through these various subdivisions, and thereafter postal authorities could not arrest you for advertising "water front property" in the unsuspecting cities of the nation.

Lauderdale Isles is distinguished today by the bridges which hang out over the canals with scant benefit of connecting roadway on the north side of the boulevard. It was a boom product of William F. Morang & Son, following his successful promotion of Lauderdale Mar, today that city's best ocean front section.

The bridges and the canals were part of a plan to produce 1,000 water front lots, by digging the canals between long strips

of subdivided land, two lots and a street in width, and joining them with the waters of the bay, the sound or Middle river. Recently most of this property has been dug out from under the jungle growth which mantled it during the depression. P. A. Wells and associates of Chicago bought nearly 700 lots in the west section of Lauderdale Isles, and H. H. Davock and associates of Detroit took over the remaining lots to the east. Some day, perhaps soon, the bridges will lead somewhere and the canals will help the lots regain some of their value.

We suggest that a shrine be erected by these developers to perpetuate the name of C. G. Rodes, West Virginian, who started the subdivision of Venice in 1925 and still is working at it. He is credited with originating the idea of making a lot more attractive by putting water in front of it. The low, marshy lands which lie between the business part of Fort Lauderdale and the sea lent themselves admirably to this scheme of development.

The late Thomas N. Stilwell was another big figure of Fort Lauderdale's boom; not so big physically as his brother Horace, but more active in real estate. In 1920 he started Idlewyld, on New river sound, still one of the best residential sections. In 1925 he put Riviera, west of Idlewyld, on the market and sold it out in 48 hours.

The years of inactivity ended in 1934 when Thomas Stilwell cleared off one of the attractive little islands south of Las Olas boulevard and got some houses started on it. Then he began on another weed-matted island, and at the time of his death last December was making notable contributions to the signs of progress. His widow is associated with Dr. Shalor Hornbeck and others in carrying on the island improvements.

The canal-in-front-of-your-door plan was carried on by Morang and E. B. Hamilton, both of Boston, in Rio Vista Isles in 1925. This development followed the shore line toward Lake Mabel, now Port Everglades, and was entirely completed in 1926, after the boom was ended. Morang's last effort of the boom was Lauderdale Harbors, around the north end of Lake Mabel. He is back in Fort Lauderdale specifically to reopen Rio Vista Isles.

Practically all of Fort Lauderdale is taking on new life. Even Chateau Park is about to awaken from its death-like sleep. Started by Harrison McCready of Miami, it occupies relatively high land in the northwest section and is being eyed today for a building program that may make it another Riverside. Only Croissantania seems doomed to perpetual rest.

Rio Vista, put on in 1922 by C. J. Hector, and Virginia Park, product of A. G. Kuhn's efforts, form substantial portions of the city's framework today. Kuhn has returned recently from a prolonged visit in Mexico City. He is a brother of Count Byron Kuhn de Proray, noted archaeologist.

The largest tombstone of the boom in Fort Lauderdale is the Wilmar Hotel skeleton, intended to be a seven-story hotel, but left

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with only the frame completed when the boom began to collapse. It was owned by William Marshall, who used \$180,000 in profits from land sales to start it. He was forced to stop late in 1925 and the property subsequently was obtained on tax certificate by H. R. Marsh of Miami. Recently it was announced that Robert H. Gore, former governor of Puerto Rico, has bought the Wilmar. He declared he acquired it because it is an "eyesore" and he expects to complete it.



. . . William Jennings Bryan, "Boy Orator of the Platte," standing on a runway over Venetian Pool making ballyhoo speeches for Coral Gables.