

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

**A**LL publications were at some pains in April, 1925, to impress upon the people the conviction that Miami was not having a boom, only a natural growth.

Example: "Miami is not having a boom like the West where professional speculators made paper towns out of nothing, disposed of lots and went their way to pastures green." In a section bursting out at the seams with "professional speculators," that must have caused some amusement if they had time after scanning The Herald want ads to read it.

It may not have been a boom, but the binder boys in April had made their headquarters at the Ponce de Leon Hotel in Miami. At Miami Beach, their favorite meeting place was the Fleetwood Hotel. Current then was that famous query: "Are you married or living at the Fleetwood?" The public generally decided that there was no more "winter season," because the newcomers obviously were more numerous in April than in January.

By public demand, the famous Miami banker commission was continued without opposition, although Mayor E. C. Romfh was forced by pressure of business to withdraw and was replaced as mayor by Parker Henderson, the elder, until he died a short time later and Romfh was recalled to the commission. Petitions were circulated for Harry Platt of the Platt-Tingle Paint Company and William P. Mooty, secretary of the state federation of labor and owner of the Franklin Press, but these were withdrawn in the face of a general belief that having moneyed men in the seats of power gave confidence to new capital.

Up in conservative Tallahassee the legislature of 1925 was met by an impassioned resolution from Representative Charles H. Taylor of Plant City for an investigation of "race track gambling and other immoral conditions in Miami." Norris McElya was Dade's only representative then, but between his efforts in the house and those of Senator James E. Calkins of Fernandina in the upper body, the investigation fell through.

Gov. John W. Martin, in his message, urged reapportionment of the legislature to give south Florida more votes, Everglades drainage, increase of the gasoline tax to provide \$12,000,000 yearly



E. G. SEWELL

for new roads, increase of the speed limit from 30 to 45 miles an hour, creation of a fresh water fish and game commission to protect the diminishing wild life, and in a later special message asked for adoption of a constitutional amendment to permit the state to appropriate money for the support of common schools. This he carried before the people and it was approved in the next election. On the basis of that amendment today, the state is promising to pay \$9,000,000 yearly for elementary education where then it couldn't appropriate a dime for the little red school houses.

We like to boast of no state debt in Florida. It wasn't the fault of Representative Charles W. Hunter of Ocala. He advocated a \$70,000,000 state bond issue to construct 3,508 miles of paved highway, but Martin frowned on it. "Pay as you go," was the motto. Some public clamor arose from the Singletary bill to compel the reading of the Bible daily in public schools.

Real estate men from all over Florida converged on the capital when the senate considered a bill to give the state land custodians control of all riparian lands, that is, the land between high and low water line all round the state. T. J. Pancoast and Hamilton Michelsen led the local delegation, which finally succeeded in diverting what they all felt would be a mortal blow to the boom by stopping ocean and bayfront improvements.

A great clamor arose in the south end of Dade county at that time for a new county of Redlands, to include Homestead and even part of the keys. L. L. Chandler of Goulds headed an organization that finally halted it despite the lobbying of S. A. Livingston of Homestead. Martin and Indian River counties were carved out of the East Coast in that session, along with Gulf and Gilchrist in the western part of Florida. There was some agitation for creating Connors county out of the western half of Palm Beach county, but that effort to perpetuate the name of the builder of Connors highway got lost in the shuffle.

The first legislative step in the improvement of the East Coast canal was the bill passed at this time pulling \$10,000 out of the treasury to survey the canal, see what could be done with the Coast Line Canal and Navigation Company, the owners, and make recommendations to the 1927 legislature. On the basis of the new state census, showing Florida with 1,253,600 people, Dade county and Pinellas county, St. Petersburg, received two more state representatives, and Senator John W. Watson's district was reduced from six south Florida counties to Dade alone. This was pushed through by the administration group, in the face of bitter dissent from north and west Florida.

Miami's neighbors began shoving and pushing for more room at this time. Miami Beach started to stretch out its limits to the Broward county line on the north, and to the lower tip of Virginia key to the south, but after protest from Miami Shores and the Ta-

tums, decided not to extend its northern limits. The legislature incorporated Coral Gables as a city, with Doc Dammers as first mayor and Constable M. P. Lehman, later sheriff, as director of public service. In a signed statement, George E. Merrick declared it was his hope that Coral Gables would be absorbed by Miami as soon as the major improvements under his plan could be completed.

Buena Vista had a small but violent boom of its own in April, with \$2,000,000 in construction announced, principally on the belief that the Florida East Coast railroad would build a new passenger station in the Buena Vista yards, which were to be abandoned in favor of Hialeah. The F. E. C. already was putting the drawbridge in place over the Miami canal back of the present jai alai fronton. Its officers began to spend \$3,000,000 on new freight terminals at Hialeah, planning to build 125 miles of storage tracks and 20 miles of freight sheds to handle the business of the line. They refused, however, to say anything about a new passenger station, another municipal sore point, or about rebuilding the venerable Royal Palm Hotel.

Miami let nearly a million dollars' worth of paving, sewer and sidewalk contracts while the voters granted new 30-year franchises to the Florida Power and Light Company and the Miami Water Company, the largest majority being 574 to 118. The school board received approval of \$3,800,000 in bonds by votes of 301 to 33. Very few had time or thought for voting when there were so many prospects to see.

Fred Rand and Ben Shepard decided that the next thing to do was to widen First street from the Urmev Hotel to the western city limits, and proceeded to start it. Arcades were built along Burdine's and other stores, front porches were lopped off all down the way, some front yards were paved and others were not. Eventually a new bridge went over the river and First street, at least as far as the senior high school, has all the makings of a boulevard.

E. G. Sewell was re-elected president of the chamber of commerce, in recognition of the work of the chamber in getting a deep water harbor and an estimated 300,000 visitors the preceding season. New directors were George Stembler, W. W. Culbertson, J. Avery Guyton, O. A. Sandquist and James Donn. They listened to a lengthy Sewell report, which showed 515,000 pieces of Miami literature distributed the preceding year and an invitation sent to the Seaboard Air Line railroad to come in; held a great testimonial dinner for United States Senator Duncan U. Fletcher, who urged Miami to strive for 30 feet of water in the harbor. His advice was taken.

Having done his share as secretary of the chamber, Fred L. Weede resigned at this time and joined the real estate firm of Lee & Brooks. He was no exception. Nearly everyone in Miami and the

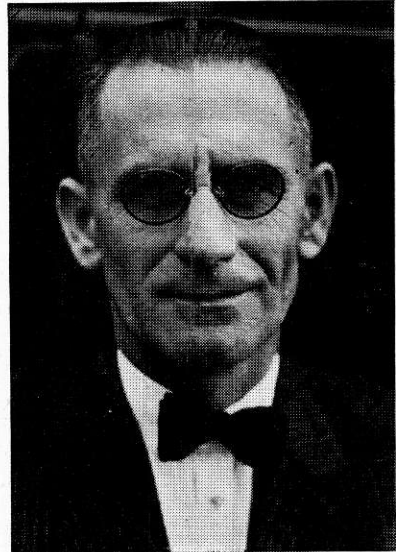
environs who was not actually licensed to sell real estate, was acting as a "bird dog" in sniffing out prospects and revealing them to brokers for part of the commission.

Traffic conditions were so bad during April, 1925, that motorists and officials alike ran temperatures all day long.

Originally adapted to horse and mule vehicles, Miami streets during the early motor age had little bothersome congestion. But suddenly these streets were filled with vehicles from every state, including the Bronx, all competing with the home boys to get somewhere in a terrific hurry. This condition was aggravated by a scarcity of bridges over the Miami river, and the presence in the streets of piles of building material and trucks blocking half the paving while disgorging their contents onto the sidewalks.

First light in the civic darkness was cast by Stanley Ray, public safety commissioner of New Orleans, who suggested one-way streets combined with the newly-installed traffic lights as a cure for congestion. The citizens reacted unpleasantly. "What?" some of them would snort, "mean to say driving two blocks out of our way to get by a one-way street will make it easier to get around? 'T don't make sense." But early in April the city commission instructed City Manager Wharton and W. S. Maxwell, secretary of the Miami Motor club, to work out a one-way street system for downtown Miami. Wharton forthwith appointed as the first traffic director a desk sergeant of the police department named H. H. Arnold, later nicknamed "Honk Honk" for his traffic exploits, and the evolution of a one-way system began.

The first stop-and-go lights were put in operation, directed from a traffic tower on the Bank of Bay Biscayne corner. We shall soon see how even blood was shed before citizens surrendered their rights to roam the streets as they pleased. Many were of the opinion that the only way to relieve the impossible condition at the F. E. C. crossing on Flagler street was to build a high level viaduct over the tracks. Hearings were held on closing the Miami river bridges to all but large yachts, but the city never exercised the rights which Lieut. Col. Gilbert A. Youngberg told them they had in the matter of requiring masts and smokestacks to be hinged.



H. H. ARNOLD

Despite the turmoil downtown, the First Baptist Church decided on a new skyscraper building on its Fifth street and N. E. First avenue lot. It was to rise 12 stories, costing \$1,250,000 and seating 5,000 in the auditorium. The first million was subscribed when the plans were announced, B. B. Tatum heading the list with \$200,000. Dr. J. L. White led his congregation to an evangelist's tabernacle while the new church was being started. Although the abrupt decline of the boom forced the Baptists to abandon the skyscraper idea, and bondholders recently became importunate to the point of foreclosure, the First Baptist Church is solidly anchored in a much better church than it had before the boom.

As we have recounted, E. B. Douglas had sold his store and adjoining property for \$2,000,000 and retired to lead the Community Chest in a successful \$207,000 drive for that year. Less than a month after the sale, the former Douglas holdings were leased by the Knights to Hugh M. Anderson and Roy C. Wright for 99 years on a \$3,000,000 valuation. The new owners began plans to tear down the old department store and to put thereon the present Venetian Arcade, which was to be three stories for the moment but built for expansion to 18 stories later. The same sort of plan accounts for the 3-story height of the Shoreland Arcade, which Anderson and Wright also put up.

Hurrying throngs in downtown Miami were entertained during the latter part of April by the placing of three 18-ton steel girders spanning the whole banking space of the new four-story addition to the Bank of Bay Biscayne, which was being built by the Fred T. Ley Company. Some of our most expert lookers watched these giant supports into place. They bear the upper floors on their mighty backs, making columns through the main floor unnecessary. This unobstructed view makes it possible today for Kenneth Keyes to keep a better check on the salesmen of his large real estate organization, which has taken over the former banking room.

Big deals were almost becoming commonplace. The site of the old Trinity Episcopal Church at N. E. Second avenue and Second street was sold by the Ralston brothers to Milton J. Kern of Allentown, Pa., and his associates for \$550,000. Kern also paid \$500,000 for the lots on Biscayne boulevard north of the Columbus Hotel which are graced today with a soft drink stand and a parking lot. The Evergreen Gardens of 25 acres in Allapattah were sold for \$500,000. John Sewell disposed of five river-front lots north of the Scottish Rite Temple to Dr. John W. Shisler for \$225,000. They had cost originally \$5,600. Farther up the river the Waldeck-Deal Dredging Company was building the largest dry-dock in the South for the yacht and dredging business.

At a gala dinner in the Ponce de Leon Hotel, M. C. Tebbetts of Fulford-by-the-Sea was showered with encomiums and assurances of local support for declaring he would build a \$400,000 mile-and-a-quarter board track for winter automobile racing. John M. Burdine leased the Burdine & Quarterman building diagonally

across from the First National Bank from John B. Reilly, first Miami mayor, with an option to buy at \$400,000. The southeast corner of Tenth street and N. E. Second avenue, running 175 feet on the avenue, was bought by Florida Enterprises from J. R. Anthony for \$500,000. The year-old Henrietta Towers in Dallas Park was leased on a valuation of \$1,000,000 by J. E. Junkin, sr., E. P. Grimes and T. V. Moore. The United Cigar Stores bought three lots at N. E. First avenue and Sixth street for \$400,000.

R. J. Marshburn was planning to open 15 more Piggly Wiggly grocery stores to reinforce the 10 already scattered about Miami. A two-story addition to the courthouse was hastily thrown up to give the judges elbow room. Railey-Milam Hardware Company had to have a \$150,000 addition to its building on Flagler street, and the Miami Furniture Company moved into its new building at Miami and N. W. Fifth street.

The biggest society event of the spring was the wedding of Dorothy Dean, daughter of S. Bobo Dean of the old Metropolis, and Robert M. Davidson, soon to become Coral Gables' first city manager. Scarcely less stirring was the marriage of Dr. White's daughter, Martha, to R. E. Kunkle. Ruth Bryan Owen was restored to American citizenship, her marriage to Maj. Reginald Owen having made her a British subject despite her Jacksonville, Ill., birth.

Bank deposits in Miami had more than doubled in a year, with \$99,259,751 on deposit at the end of March call in 1925, and \$41,629,833 in 1924. Judge W. E. Walsh had obtained a charter for the proposed University of Miami and the new regents were weighing the advantages of sites offered by four big real estate developers.

Circuit Judge H. F. Atkinson refused to dissolve an injunction against Eugene Couture and 50 other Miami Beach property owners attempting to close the Ocean drive north of the Firestone estate and move it back toward the bay. Couture had started a house on what the county commissioners contended had been a public road for 40 years and he refused to give way. Not far from the scene of this deadlock, J. C. Baile as chairman of the Baker's haulover commission pushed a plunger which blew out the last shred of dirt between bay and ocean under the new bridge, and the ocean tides came in Baker's haulover to sweep upper Biscayne bay. This haulover got its name from an early Captain Baker who found it convenient to swing small boats, loaded with plunder from wrecked vessels, over the narrow strip of land into the concealing security of the bay.

The calm of an April Sunday afternoon was shattered by a tornado which rose over the municipal golf course at Hialeah, bounced once on the White Belt Dairy and reduced a two-story apartment and several houses to kindling, bounced several times through the northwest section with equally disastrous results, and moved out to sea, leaving five dead or dying and 34 injured in its wake.

Arthur Pryor, the band leader, said he was standing on his

front porch at Hialeah watching a hail storm when the whirling black funnel formed almost before his eyes on the golf course and moved past with a terrifying roar. Roads and streets were blocked for miles by those trying to get to the scenes of the accident, or away from them, and ambulances frequently had to take to the fields on errands of mercy.

The lessons of September, 1926, would not have been so severe if builders of the preceding year had taken time to see what the power of wind did to houses they were so busily throwing together like stacks of cards.



. . . just before the boom these Florida costumes were somewhat daring, but the law required stockings and style dictated hats.



. . . and today the Miami News Bureau advances this fish-net bathing suit held by a modest row of corks as the proper beach garb.