

CHAPTER TWELVE

AS the mounting tempo of real estate sales and building went into May, 1925, many of the older Miami residents began to slip away for trips to Europe on the riches that had so magically come to them. By then nearly everyone had convinced themselves that Miami was having its first real "summer season," as all hotels except the Royal Palm, the McAllister and the Urmev remained open.

An all-time record for high prices on Southern land was set in May by the sale of the Charles Deering estate north of Buena Vista for \$6,500,000, or \$30,600 an acre. The paradise which Deering had built up there during many years was taken over by a corporation headed by the ubiquitous Roy C. Wright and Hugh M. Anderson of the Shoreland Company and the sale later made it possible for the new Biscayne boulevard to take its present route. The Deering tract consisted of 212 acres, extending from N. E. Second avenue, where part of the old rock wall still runs, over to the bay.

But that was only part of the high finance of the Anderson-Wright combination. Acting as the Shoreland Company, they leased a large area east of the First National Bank from Thomas J. Peters on a valuation of \$4,000,000, for the site of the future Shoreland arcade. The mixture of frame one-story stores and shacks which huddled in that block and nudged up between the bank and the old Dade County Security building on First avenue were torn down in short order and there, as on the Douglas site they had recently acquired, Anderson and Wright started to put up a three-story arcade that could be increased to 18 stories as times demanded.

Miami Shores then had its main office in a building next to the Wayside Inn, on the eastern edge of their new holdings and in the shadow of the Halcyon Hotel. It was there, some remember, that Bill Snell, as a salesman for Miami Shores, conceived and carried out the idea of leading the assembled prospects in community singing before turning them over to a spellbinder, giving special emphasis to that other theme song of the boom, "On Miami Shores." It was believed that singing somehow softened the heart and loosened the purse strings.

The Trinity Methodist Church got the building fever and



ROY C. WRIGHT

decided to follow the example of the First Baptist in putting up a combination commercial and church property at N. E. First avenue and Fourth street. Marcus A. Milam headed the Trinity Methodist committee to raise \$250,000 in pledges to finance the church part, and the \$750,000 for the 10-story commercial wing was to be financed with bonds. The Baptists were to have 375 offices and a gymnasium. It seemed a very simple way to get self-liquidating houses of worship.

T. W. Palmer was starting the first 300-room unit of the Columbus Hotel, next to the McAllister, with plans complete for a \$2,000,000 building. The Henrietta Towers, one of the most popular hotels in Miami, changed hands nearly every month, being unloaded by the hometown boys in May to Samuel Risman of Buffalo on a valuation of \$1,250,000, a quarter of a million gain in a month.

The South Atlantic Telephone and Telegraph Company announced through Manager Vernon Baird it would build a greatly improved central plant for \$1,200,000, in addition to spending \$600,000 for outside betterments. Recent merging with the Southern Bell system unlocked the doors of this new capital.

T. O. Wilson began to increase the Congress building from five stories to its present 17 at a cost of \$1,000,000. George B. Dunn and the Miami Transit Company swept the jitneys off the Miami streets with 30-passenger busses, ignoring the anguished wails of the idle jitney drivers. The county commission decided to sell the Central school grounds to the school board for \$1,000,000 to meet part of the cost of the new courthouse and to levy taxes for the remainder instead of selling bonds.

Just before he left in May for his summer vacation, Carl G. Fisher contributed another chapter to his feud with S. A. Lynch, the Atlanta capitalist, over what we know today as Sunset Islands. Lynch and his associates owned the tips of these four nubs that stuck out like fingers from the western side of Miami Beach north of the Venetian islands. Fisher owned the base of the nubs and the mainland. He feared that Lynch would hold him up if he tried to buy them, and he didn't want Lynch to have a rival development right under his nose.

He appeared, therefore, to oppose successfully a petition by the Lynch interests for permission to bulkhead and fill a considerable area around the four nubs. Later, Fisher made certain that Sunset Islands would not trouble him by cutting them off with a canal running along the shore. As he owned the land on both banks of the canal, Lynch couldn't even put up a bridge to reach the shore. The feud is over, Lynch having returned this spring and put Sunset Islands on the market, but Fisher kept them out of the last boom.

The Minneapolis Journal at this time described the Florida movement as a "feverish land boom," which local journalists felt was caused by the Minneapolis writers not being familiar with local conditions.

Perhaps the Minneapolis observers had read in the May annuals of the sale of Silver Crest, for example, a subdivision at Grape-land boulevard north of Coral Way, which was completely sold out in 10 minutes after the sale started. Five binders were offered on every corner lot days before C. Edward Clarke threw the subdivision open. Or they might have heard of Addison Mizner's Boca Raton, where eager buyers had gobbled up \$2,190,000 in lots the first day they were offered, and took an even greater amount two weeks later.

Perhaps they even were informed of the Arthur-Manley-Birch subdivision of East Shenandoah, which got rid of \$3,000,000 in lots the first offering and was completely sold out in two days. Perhaps the Minneapolis scribes didn't think it normal for whole subdivisions to be gobbled up like a June bug thrown to a duck, but we knew, down in Miami, that it was only our way of growing.

Armstead Brown quit practicing law with John P. Stokes in Miami at this time and was appointed to the Florida Supreme court, to succeed Judge Jefferson B. Browne of Key West, who wanted to return to the island city to live. A. C. Alleshouse resigned as principal of Miami High school after 25 years in teaching to look after his property, and W. R. Thomas stepped into the principal's office from that of assistant.

Roddey B. Burdine was elected head of Miami Rotary. John W. Claussen merged his insurance interests with the Stembler insurance agency, Duncan MacDonald becoming treasurer. M. S. Tucker came to Miami from Jacksonville as Dade county's first auditor and purchasing agent, and was embroiled for months in a legal fight over his newly-created office. Ollie H. Gore, business manager of The Hollywood Magazine, went to New York to represent 50 Florida chambers of commerce that summer. Sherman Minton, now United States senator from Indiana, came to Miami to join the law firm of Shutts & Bowen.

Ed Howe, the Sage of Potato Hill, was honored on his seventy-first birthday. C. E. Riddell of Galveston succeeded Fred L. Weede as secretary of the Miami Chamber of Commerce, and brought Marvin Brown from Beaumont to edit The Miamian and handle Miami publicity. Neither seemed to fit in with the local picture. John Seybold concluded 25 years in Miami business by selling his bakery to the Southern Baking Company, and retiring to watch his new Central arcade rise above downtown Miami.

Dan Hardie, longtime sheriff, joined the caravan of Miamians on world trips, visiting the Holy Land and many other foreign countries while new owners took over the pioneer casino at south beach from which he had retired.

The first warning cloud in the bright sky of the Florida boom was the discovery in the middle of June, 1925, of a picked squad of 20 federal income tax specialists in the county courthouse and federal building checking the profits of the speculators.

Some men began to take stock and to reef in their sails. They even contemplated the end of the year and the profits they might have to declare then. A man could make a million dollars profit on a sale, but he would be lucky to get 20 per cent of it in cash. The remainder was paper, but Uncle Sam demanded at least 50 per cent income tax in cash. Many a luckless paper millionaire found himself hard pressed to dig up the real money to pay taxes on his 1925 profits. If that was done, he found he had only reduced his equities and might better have waited to make a fresh start with the new year, instead of selling so soon.

But that was only a small cloud and the bulk of us paid no attention to such remote signals. Fred Rand began in June to build the \$600,000 Huntington building on the site of the "Gables" at S. E. Second avenue and First street. Far out on the other end of his Second avenue business strip, at Fourteenth street, he started the \$2,750,000 Roosevelt Hotel, whose unfinished walls and rude interior furnished a haven for hoboes and the homeless of 10 years, while two hurricanes did their unsuccessful best to ruin it. The structure was bought in January, 1936, for \$38,000 by Lindsey Hopkins, sr., Atlanta capitalist, who will repair and finish it.

George E. Merrick made the best offer for the proposed University of Miami, promising 160 acres in the southern part of Coral Gables and a \$5,000,000 endowment conditioned upon another \$5,000,000 being obtained. That was easy, in those days, for the men who incorporated it. The founders were W. E. Walsh and Frederick Zeigen, who had nursed the idea of an open-air university for a year; William Jennings Bryan, Clayton S. Cooper, James M. Cox, Bertha M. Foster, Henry Salem Hubbell, George Merrick, Ruth Bryan Owen, Thomas J. Pancoast, Mitchell D. Price, Leslie B. Robertson, E. G. Sewell, Frank B. Shutts and B. B. Tatum. The announcement was blazoned through 16 solid pages of Coral Gables advertising in one issue of The Miami Herald.

You rarely hear of Atlantic Shores today, but in June, 1925, it began a campaign of advertising and promotion second only to the scale on which Coral Gables and Miami Shores were being pushed. Atlantic Shores grew out of the purchase of 960 acres of swamp land and beach just south of Hollywood, from the ocean to the present Dixie highway where it curves into Hollywood. It was one of the last undeveloped tracts in the boom-beach zone and had a mile of ocean frontage. The buyers were headed by Judge T. T. Ansberry of Ohio and Washington. They paid \$4,000,000 for the land, most of it to Olaf Zetterland, a former Flagler railroad engineer who had acquired it for \$1 an acre many years before.

With Joy C. Clark pushing the promotion, Atlantic Shores got rid of \$17,000,000 in lots during the first three weeks of July, quite

dwarfing the Golden Beach development just south of it. At the height of the boom, it was estimated that \$30,000,000 was represented in the lots of Atlantic Shores, but all that remains today of those values is the land, a few houses near the Dixie highway, and the administration building back near the ocean.

While all these activities on land were absorbing the steady inrush of capital, five proposed new islands were plotted in upper Biscayne bay, running north from the new Venetian islands. Soon lots were being sold on paper, on locations then admittedly 10 feet under water. The new islands were to constitute a \$200,000,000 development of Hugh M. Anderson, Roy C. Wright, Robert H. Gamble of Jacksonville, J. F. Chaille of the Venetian islands, and F. C. B. LeGro, now a commissioner of Everglades drainage district.

All public groups and the county commissioners indorsed the new islands and the project was off in a swirl of glory. They were to be part of the ambitious upper bay development linked with Miami Shores, and possibly tied in with the new Seventy-ninth street causeway promised at that time by T. A. Winfield and finally opened July 19, 1928. How far the islands got before the boom collapsed may have been noted any time within the last 10 years by the line of pilings outlining them. LeGro was left holding the sack.

Just how valuable this bay bottom was considered is evidenced by the storm of protest which arose when the legislature passed a local bill late in the 1925 session to convey to the city of Miami control over a large part of the submerged bay bottom, even that within the limits of Miami Beach. Governor Martin listened to both sides, vetoed the bill.

The legislature of 1925 finally closed after Governor Martin had swung the big stick over them in a one-day special session to get the biennial appropriations bill passed without making a \$2,000,000 cut demanded by west Florida conservatives. The gasoline tax was increased from 3 to 4 cents to provide more money for highways. A fire board was created to fight Everglades muck fires. Free textbooks were provided in public schools for the first time.

"Honk Honk" Arnold got his one-way street and traffic light system ready for operation by June 21, with through streets designated on Flagler from the bay to Twenty-second avenue, N. E. Second avenue from the Royal Palm grounds to Thirty-sixth street, and all of N. Bay Shore drive, which then was being paved 200 feet out on the new fill from the Roval Palm to Sixth street.

Although the merchants grumbled, the people of Miami generally approved the change. The greatest trouble arose from the habit of pedestrians walking across on the green light. One of the new police contingent from Georgia, Patrolman Johnson, became so incensed at a pedestrian who disobeyed his commands to stop crossing when the "Go" light was on that he yanked out his pistol and

fired, hitting a citizen named C. F. Mowery half a block away. Johnson was discharged for his mistaken zeal, Mowery recovered, and pedestrians began waiting for the lights to change before charging into the stream of traffic.

The Wofford Hotel decided in June to remain open through the summer, after many requests from former guests. The Fleetwood reopened with one guest, in response to the apparent need for accommodations, as did many other hotels.

First hints that the Seaboard Air Line railroad would extend its lines from West Palm Beach to Miami came with a real estate advertisement early in June declaring the Seaboard station would be built at Flagler street and LeJeune road. Although the chamber of commerce and other civic bodies had been urging the Seaboard to come in for a year, W. L. Stanley of the railroad at that time labeled as "untrue" the statement that the Seaboard definitely had decided to extend its line south from West Palm Beach. The actual announcement came a month later.

Not all news then was buying and selling. Robert R. Taylor, of pioneer stock, became Dade county solicitor, a position he again holds this year. Thomas J. Overton resigned after 22 years with the Miami post office, to deal in real estate. Horace Stilwell was organizing the Republican party for Florida at Orlando, predicting the state would go Republican within a few years. E. D. Sullivan named his Patricia Hotel in Dallas Park for the young daughter of P. E. Hickey, his financial associate. M. B. Garris, local engineer, was plotting the streets in Dallas Park.

Eugene Hawkins, young bridegroom of three hours, was shot and killed near the Wildcat in Coral Gables by the enraged father of his bride, Ethel. The killer, A. C. Caldwell, also shot the daughter, and then disappeared into the palmetto scrub where his dead body was found a week later. The dirigible Los Angeles made its first appearance over Miami, going from Puerto Rico back to Lakehurst. It was the largest thing Miamians had seen in the air. O. B. Sailors of Kokomo, Ind., one of the builders of the Clyde Court apartments, died in Arizona, and Mrs. John Sewell died in North Carolina.

The Scopes evolution trial was about to begin in Dayton, Tenn., and William Jennings Bryan was the chief spokesman for the prosecution. On the eve of his departure the debate about evolution waxed and waned in many a pulpit and editorial column. It was a futile and fatal undertaking for the Great Commoner.