

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

**A** BITTER quarrel over development of the Miami harbor was going full blast by the first of November, after John B. Orr and the Miami planning board had submitted the so-called Orr plan for creating a long island from Miami to the Fisher docks, from the spoil to be dug out of the ship channel with the new federal appropriation.

The Orr plan resulted in the pine-clad clumps of land lying south of the ship channel today and harboring little but refuse and human derelicts. But as planned by Col. F. W. Allstaetter of Savannah and submitted through Orr, these islands would have been mantled with warehouses, surrounded by a 200-foot channel, and linked with Fisher's development on Peninsula island. A railroad would have run virtually from the ocean to the Miami docks and the harbor would have been full of shipping. The plan was adopted by the cities of Miami and Miami Beach, but opposed so strenuously by E. G. Sewell as president of the chamber of commerce, that The Herald had to quit taking all advertisements of a controversial nature relating to the harbor.

Finally in December the directors of the Miami Chamber of Commerce delivered the unexpected blow of indorsing the Orr plan unanimously, and Sewell resigned with the parting warning that the net result would be only a disfigurement of the bay. How true his prediction was is evident to all who care to look.

But with the Orr plan adopted, Miami quickly swung into action, got the special session of the legislature to pass the bay bottom bill giving Miami title to all the bay from the causeway power plant to a point opposite the mouth of the Miami river, and began sending \$500,000 to Lieut. Col. Gilbert A. Youngberg in Jacksonville, as a loan to the war department, to start the 25-foot dredging.

To relieve the immediate shipping congestion, at the suggestion of C. D. Leffler, the city dredged out a channel along the new Bayfront park and soon this was lined with the schooners bringing lumber and building materials into Miami. The Clyde Line brought 150 longshoremen from New York to speed the unloading of ships, as the freight situation got worse instead of better.

After three weeks of the embargo, the city of Miami decided something drastic had to be done, so Thomas E. Grady, rate and traffic expert from Savannah, was appointed to lead the way out of the wilderness, with a drawing account of \$5,000 the first month. After a meeting with 15 leading citizens and George W. Berry, interstate commerce commission agent sent here as an adviser, Grady picked W. A. Snow, Lou Crandell, Norman W. Graves, B. R. Hunter and Arthur A. Ungar to help him break up the embargo.

The advent of the great citrus crop and a strike of 1,800 teleg-

raphers on the Atlantic Coast Line soon resulted in the embargo spreading to all Florida south of Jacksonville. Perishables and humans only moved over the rails of Florida. This embargo included road materials and was a staggering blow to the highway construction program which the state had under way.

A classic of that period was the story of the ingenious Miami contractor who had a carload of building bricks sent out of a Northern city billed as lettuce. The car was carefully iced all the way down, but when the trick was discovered in the Miami yards, there was a general discharging of all hands involved, and no more iced bricks came through.

Late in October, the SS. H. F. Alexander, pride of the Admiral Line, came to anchor on the edge of the Gulf Stream, opposite Miami Beach after its first 48-hour run from New York, with 421 passengers aboard. The vessel was too big to come up the channel, so the lighter Shinnecock took off passengers and freight and unloaded them on the causeway docks, in the new Admiral Line offices, near where Don Dickerman's pirate crew held forth. On the heels of this voyage came the announcement from New York that an even larger boat, the Kroonland, would enter the Miami service in December. The Clyde Line chartered the Dorothy Alexander to replace the burned Comanche, and began building two new Miami boats with a \$2,250,000 loan from the United States Shipping Board.

The co-operative apartment was the rage in New York then. Feeling that land on Miami Beach would soon be as scarce as on Park avenue, Carl Fisher and several associates planned the \$8,000,000 Villa Biscayne as a co-operative apartment on Fisher land south of La Gorce island. The prospects indicated it would dwarf anything south of Baltimore. As near as we recollect, Mark H. German signed up for the first apartment, at \$68,000, but the buyers were too few after the first of the year even to suggest starting the building.

Meanwhile the near-by Miami Shores island—today the Indian Creek Golf club island—had been filled in by the Shoreland Company and the lots around the golf course were sold the first day for \$6,474,000. This was the next to the last big lot sale of the boom, and the last, we believe, at Miami Beach.

The Miami real estate dealers had done a fine job of stable-locking by November. The binder period was shortened from 30 to 10 days, and other safeguards against the return of the binder boys were taken. The Gralyn Hotel was leased by H. H. Mace to Harry Shapiro of New Jersey on a \$2,500,000 valuation. Peacock Inn, the oldest hostelry in Dade county, dating from 1883 and the hospitality of Charles Peacock, was torn down at Coconut Grove to give space to some newer building.

Harry Kelsey unloaded his holdings at Kelsey City and Palm Beach harbor in October for \$30,000,000 to a group headed by Col. Henry D. Lindsley, first national commander of the American Legion. Kelsey had come to Palm Beach county from Boston in

1918, bought 100,000 acres amid the horrified protests of his friends and founded thereon a city. Adjacent thereto was Palm Beach Ocean and other holdings of Paris Singer, who even then was toying with the idea of running a tunnel under the Lake Worth inlet which separated Palm Beach Ocean from the Gold Coast of Palm Beach.

Kelsey bought the East Coast canal from the Rhode Island Hospital Trust Company a month later, for a price reported then at \$25,000,000 but which must have been much less. The legislature several years later created the Florida Inland Navigation District which bought the canal from Kelsey for around \$600,000, although most state officials believed the state really owned it.

The canal was started 25 years before by the Coast Line Canal and Navigation Company, on a contract with the state by which the company was to get about 3,000 acres of land for every mile of canal built. Presumably having built 380 miles from Jacksonville to upper Biscayne bay, the company took more than 1,000,000 acres of Florida land, and ducked under the hospital trust to avoid future difficulties. The state knew that it had not received a full depth canal, but it would have been politically unwise to start suit against a hospital for the return of the land.

In Jacksonville during October, an elevator in the Mason Hotel dropped nine floors and carried the elderly United States Senator Duncan U. Fletcher with it. In the car also were Congressman R. A. Green and First Assistant Postmaster General John R. Bartlett, and several Jacksonville men, all of whom had been having lunch with Mayor John T. Alsop. They suffered a bad shaking up but no broken bones. This was only one of a series of accidents which the senator has survived in the last decade, to the utter astonishment of friends and enemies alike.

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The silvery voice of Rachel Jane Hamilton singing "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" opened the winter tourist season in the green bandshell of Royal Palm park for the last time in December of 1925. Arthur Pryor's band poured forth notes as sweet as ever, but nearly every other note in Florida was turning sour.

The stock market was recovering a little as business stopped for the holidays, but it had taken a skid in November, following a hike on rediscount rates by Federal Reserve banks that pulled the punches of many a Florida operator. This joined with the undeniable fact of the freight embargo on Florida to cause financial houses elsewhere to begin withholding loans, bringing the headlong flight of the Florida boom to a grinding pause.

Another signal that sales were not so easy came from V. Earl Irons of Irons Manor, who offered to finance the construction of a \$15,000 house in his subdivision for as little as \$3,000, to buy the lot. When they began making concessions to the customers, you knew sales were off. Joe Mitchell Chapple succeeded the late William Jennings Bryan as head spellbinder at Coral Gables, and al-

though he exceeded the Great Commoner in volume of noise, he lacked the oratorical magic.

The Miami Chamber of Commerce was greatly disappointed when its building back of the First Trust brought only \$165,000 at auction from Baker-Riddle Company. The chamber had plans for a 10-story structure which was to be placed on a lot across S. E. Second street from the Alhambra Hotel, for which land \$350,000 was to be paid.

Over on south beach, G. R. K. Carter was starting his million dollar pier out over the ocean near Smith's casino. Miami Shores drove the first pilings in November for the proposed causeway from the end of Grand Concourse to the ocean. Most of the concrete pilings assembled for that work have been lying around ever since. Mrs. Sue D. Kauz started the 10-story hotel on N. W. Second street, whose unfinished frame with the somewhat mocking name of Kamp Kum-N-Go has stood for 10 years as one of the derelicts of the boom.

Among notable visitors come to see what was going on that winter was Halsted L. Ritter, real estate and corporation lawyer of Denver, Colo. W. R. Asher finally was turned out of the Dade county jail after 22 months' imprisonment, when the Supreme court held insufficient the evidence on which he had been convicted of killing R. D. Niles, taxi driver. Hamilton Michelsen Company inaugurated the use of motor trucks for hauling its packed citrus fruit to Northern markets at the holiday season, when the embargo stubbornly refused to yield.

The Florida legislature held a short session late in November to give Key West the legal right to lay a fresh water pipeline down the keys from the mainland, over the Florida East Coast right of way. But while that bill was being rounded out, 400 local bills changing city charters and rearranging the legal scenery for the boom were rushed through. The senate upheld Governor Martin's removal of Judge H. B. Philips from the state road department, and made provision to spend \$600,000 on a state penitentiary and the road department building.

The aged Albert W. Gilchrist, beloved Florida governor of older days, was finally located alone and ill in the New York Hospital for Crippled Children when a legislative group sent word they had named a new county in his honor. Okeechobee City began a move to have the state capital moved there from Tallahassee, in recognition of the shifting center of activity southward.

Will H. Price was named the new third circuit judge in Dade county and Paul D. Barns became judge of the new Civil Court of Record. Attorney General Rivers Buford succeeded Justice T. F. West of Milton on the State Supreme bench. Harry S. New, postmaster general, called for bids on the first air mail from Miami, Tampa and Jacksonville to Atlanta, while Henry Ford prepared to open an air passenger line with his new Stout three-motored monoplanes. The honor system among state prisoners was ended at Raiford and armed guards patrolled the stockades into which the

strange new criminals from the North were being shunted from south Florida.

Thirty-two schooners jammed the Miami harbor by the time the holidays came on, moored head on and rail to rail alongside of the Bayfront park, wedged side by side into every dock, and periodically running onto the reefs outside the channel in their eagerness to make Miami. Forty more schooners were on their way, some from as far as Seattle with lumber, presenting the greatest windjamming armada gathered at any place on the globe. Ships tied up at Peninsula island, and some even tied up along the causeway waiting a chance to unload. One schooner carelessly threw its hook over the Western Union cable to South America, stopping wire communications between the continents for several days.

Just before Christmas the interstate commerce commission at a series of hearings in Washington announced that the principal cause for the continued freight jam in Florida was disagreement between officials of the railroads, and moved to take a more active hand in the game.

Meantime the Seaboard was having trouble getting right of way from West Palm Beach to Miami, land owners running their prices up out of reach. A great mass meeting was called by the Miami Chamber of Commerce, with William H. Burwell as chairman, and the outcome was that cash and land to the value of \$1,500,000 was handed to the Seaboard, ending its land troubles. Meantime, Governor Martin made two appearances in Washington on behalf of the railroad and full permission to build the extension was granted.

Miami was a billion-dollar town by Christmas, bank clearings having reached that amount for the year 1925. The city of Miami alone had issued 7,500 real estate licenses, of which it estimated 3,000 still were active by the first of 1926. A chamber of commerce survey late in December showed a surplus of rooms and apartments, which was the end of high rents.

Four hundred and eighty-one hotels and apartments were added in Miami during 1925. One of the last links of the older Flagler system with Miami was broken when William H. Beardsley, chairman of the F. E. C. board and long-time chief assistant to Henry M. Flagler, passed away in New York.

D. P. Davis, the wonder boy of the Florida West Coast, sold out the last of Davis Islands at Tampa as the year waned, disposing of \$18,138,000 worth of lots in 31 hours. He thereupon moved to St. Augustine and began a new boomlet with Davis Shores, doomed to failure as the spreading movement of the speculators withered over Christmas.

Davis Islands stands today as a fine testimonial to this developer who finally ended his life from a steamer at sea. It is believed to be the only major property begun during the boom that has been carried through to completion. It was started by Davis

in 1924, when he converted three small marshy islands of about 40 acres into a magnificent site of 832 acres, with paved streets, lights and sewers. At the opening sale it was stated that people stood in line as long as 40 hours to get the first lots, and by the end of six hours \$9,000,000 worth of property had been sold. They were even giving Miamians free train rides to and from Tampa just to look at the islands.

Today Davis Islands is one of the master subdivisions of Tampa. On it is the new Peter O. Knight airport, the \$1,500,000 Tampa Municipal hospital, the beautiful Spanish apartments, the Venetian apartments and many others. Near-by a 40-acre site has been deeded to the government and a Spanish War Memorial park will be built on it. D. P. Davis was like most of the other promoters here; he didn't know when to stop, but he left more permanent reminders of his activity than most.

Another who didn't know when to quit was G. Frank Croissant, who had sold out Croissant Park in the southern part of Fort Lauderdale, and late in December was putting on Croissantania, north of Fort Lauderdale, as "My Masterpiece." He had taken a three-year lease on the ground floor of the Johnson and Moffat building at 151 E. Flagler street for the Croissantania sales rooms, at a rental of \$500,000. To christen "My Masterpiece" suitably, the salesmen and citizens in Miami gave him a banquet, and the sales force presented him with a shiny new Rolls-Royce touring car. Money was simply no object before Christmas, however much it may have been conserved after New Year's.