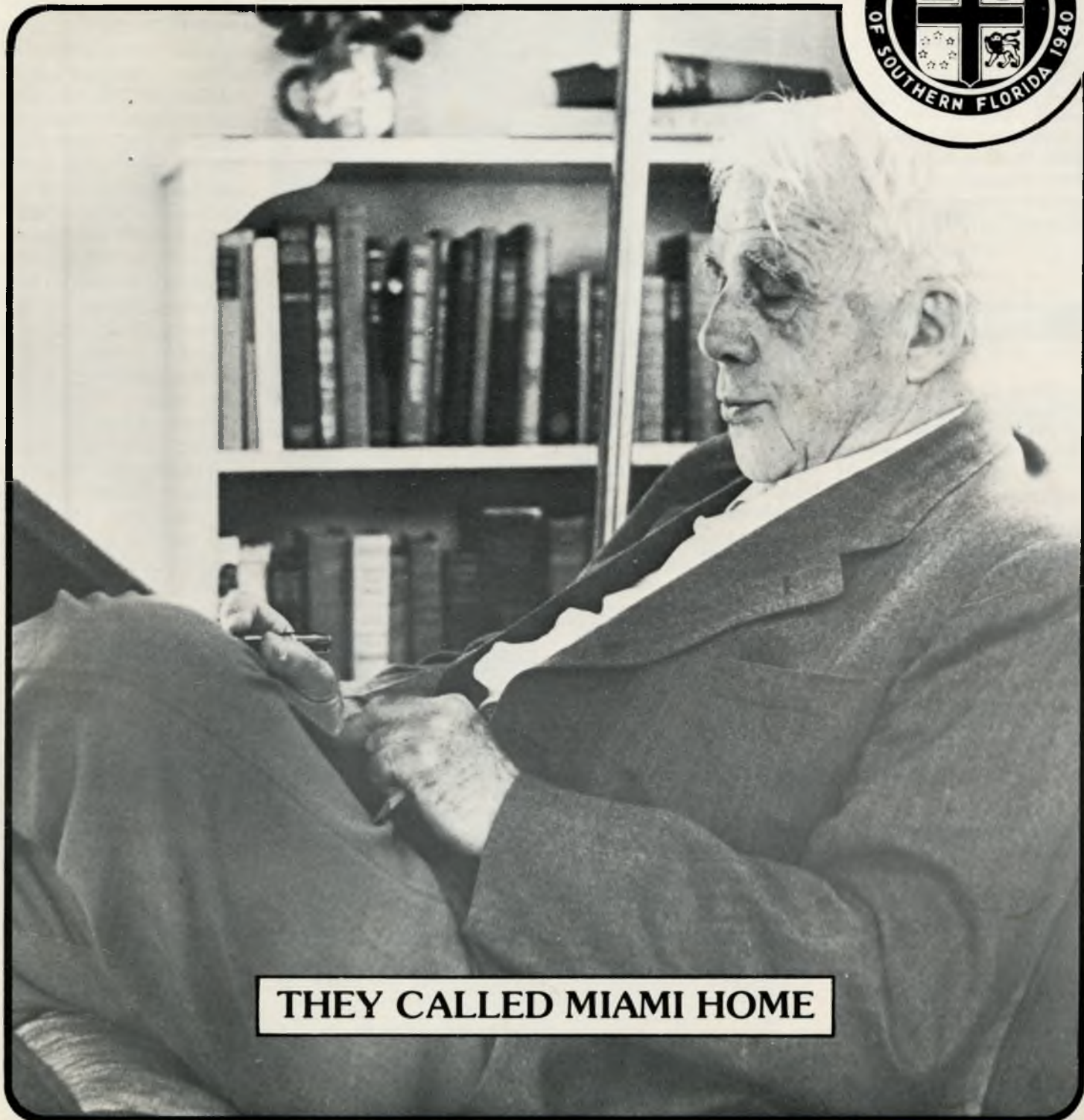


# Update



THEY CALLED MIAMI HOME

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**COVER:**

Poet Robert Frost seated in the living room of his South Miami home, Pencil Pines. (Photo from Mr. and Mrs. Donald Gordon)

**UPDATE**

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**LECTURE SERIES**

by Arva M. Parks and Zee Shipley



Dr. Charlton Tebeau stands beside the metal sculpture by artist Joan Lehman that was commissioned by the Historical Association. The sculpture is now hanging in the Charlton W. Tebeau Library of Florida History at the Museum. (Photo from the HASF Collection)

The 1976-77 lecture series of the Historical Association of Southern Florida was launched in the Museum on Tuesday, October 12, 1976 by Dr. Charlton W. Tebeau with his informative and entertaining talk on the Miami River.

Dr. Tebeau began with the earliest known description of the river written in 1575 by Do d'Escalante Fontaneda, who was shipwrecked on the South Florida coast.

Dr. Tebeau told of the natural features of the river and how they have changed. The river forks near what is now 27th Avenue. A short distance up the north fork there used to be a falls and above that the vast expanse of the Everglades which is the source of the river.

In the early twentieth century, in an effort to drain part of the Everglades, the falls were dynamited and the river somewhat straightened. As a result it became little more than a drainage canal for the Everglades and a dumping place for the sewage of the growing city of Miami.

Although city fathers passed an anti-pollution ordinance as early as 1896, it was not enforced until the 1970s when the same ordinance was used in a major effort to clean up and beautify the river.

After Dr. Tebeau completed his lecture, Arva Parks showed several 1880s views of the river from the Munroe Collection.



A capacity audience attended the October HASF Lecture Series meeting at the Museum and listened to Dr. Charlton Tebeau's talk on the Miami River. (Photo from the HASF Collection)

Following the program Randy Nimnicht, representing the Historical Association, announced that the Officers and Directors of the Association had voted to name the library at the Museum the Charlton W. Tebeau Library of Florida History to honor Dr. Tebeau for his many years of support for local history research and the Association. The capacity crowd then assembled in the library for the unveiling of a piece of metal sculpture by artist Joan Lehman, which incorporated a quotation of Dr. Tebeau's about local history. It reads: "I am interested in people, and this interest finds an outlet in history, particularly local history. History is more than information. It is the meaningful story of people in action . . ." This sculpture was commissioned by the Association and funded by contributions from Dr. Tebeau's friends, students and colleagues. The donations were so generous that a check was also given to the library for purchase of much-needed books and materials.

# ROBERT FROST and the UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

by George W. Rosner

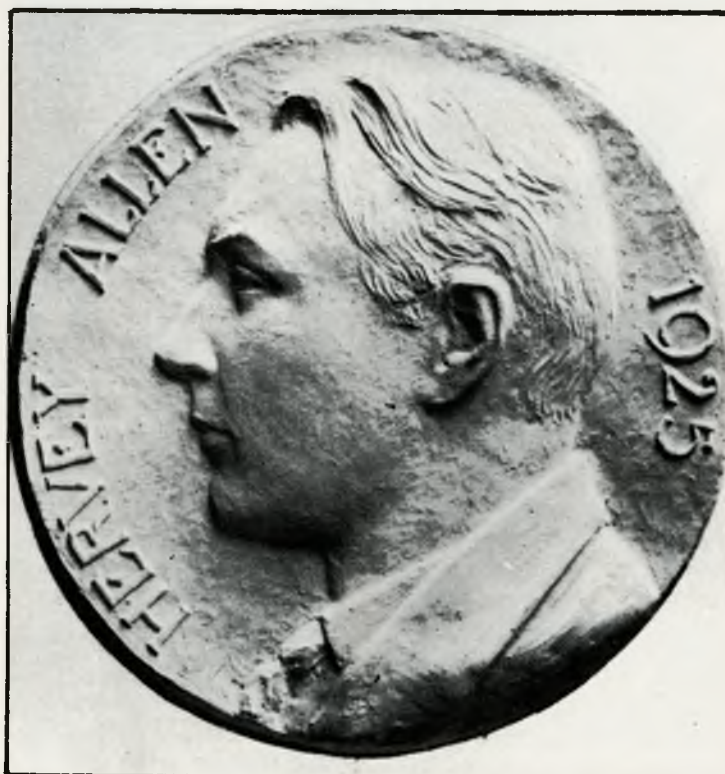
Printed by permission of the editors of *The Carrell; Journal of the Friends of the University of Miami Library*.

Robert Frost was no stranger to South Florida. In December of 1934 he and Mrs. Frost, both in precarious health and fearing a repetition of the previous winter's severe bout with pulmonary ailments, arrived in Miami and by Christmas they were residing in Key West. The sojourn lasted until April 1935. In March he gave the concluding lecture of the fourth in the annual series of the University of Miami's Winter Institute of Literature. In the same series as lecturer was the author Hervey Allen. An enduring friendship developed between the two authors. Allen, after the success of his gigantic novel *Anthony Adverse*, with subsequent lucrative moving picture rights of the book, bought a large undeveloped acreage in South Miami (then part of Coconut Grove.) He built a main house, "The Glades," for himself and family and a group of smaller cottages for guests. Frost was a guest in February 1939. The Allen lifestyle, the climate, the widening of acquaintances and the deepening of friendships all probably appealed to Frost in his search for a retreat from commitments and from the rigors of northern weather. In March 1940 he wrote authorizing Allen to make overtures for purchase of five acres near "The Glades." Two months later, again in a letter to Allen, Frost proclaimed himself as "a cross between a Vermont farmer and a Florida farmer," adding

*George Rosner is Archives Librarian, University of Miami Library. He was Robert Frost's next door neighbor on Davis Road for the last nine years of Frost's life.*



Poet Robert Frost (above) and author Hervey Allen (*Anthony Adverse*) were friends and neighbors in South Miami for many years. Before purchasing his own homestead, Frost was a guest at the Allen Home, "The Glades." In 1940, Frost wrote Allen thanking him and his wife "for choosing the plot" for Frost's Miami home, "Pencil Pines." Both men were frequent speakers at the University of Miami's Winter Institute of Literature. (Photos from Miami Dade Public Library and *The Carrell*.)



that a check as a binder was enclosed and thanking Allen and his wife Ann "for choosing the plot."

Shortly thereafter he had shipped from the manufacturers in Massachusetts, two prefabricated New England style clapboard cottages. Subsequent winters until a year before his death he retreated to these cottages on Davis Road in South Miami for rest and relaxation after strenuous reading and lecturing tours. The stays were short; usually from the end of January to the first or middle of March.

In later years it pleased him to call the place "Pencil Pines."

Robert Frost's continuing friendship with Hervey Allen undoubtedly led to his forming closer ties with the University of Miami. Allen was a staunch supporter of the fledgling school. The University gave him an honorary doctorate in 1933, and as a trustee he helped guide its destiny through critical years from 1938 to his death in 1949. As well as being a frequent lecturer on the Winter Institute of Literature he served on the Institute's advisory committee from 1943 to 1946.

Frost's first appearance on the Winter Institute was well received by the students and by the community. His own reaction to the University was later expressed in a letter to his daughter, Lesley. He pitied both Dr. Orton Lowe, the director of the Winter Institute, and Dr. Bowman Ashe, the University's president. By contrast with "the real" universities he knew up north the University was "wretched."

Continued on page 9

# MY NEIGHBOR MR. FROST

by Nettie Bell Hjort Robinson

Robert Frost, the poet, was our winter neighbor for twenty some years. In 1940 he purchased the Davis Road property just to the east of ours and not far from the home of his friend, the author, Hervey Allen.

Davis Road, between Old Cutler and Red Road, was sparsely settled. The Herman and Peterson Groves were well established between Ponce de Leon and Erwin Roads, and it was rumored that some of Al Capone's gang wintered down near Old Cutler. From School House Road to Red it was undeveloped pine land in its second growth from boom-time cutting. Mail was RFD out of Coconut Grove and the Hjorts, Allens and Mr. Frost had huge boxes clustered at School House Road where it dead-ended into the Allen easement. South Miami was a mile away, as was electricity.

The Hjorts, seeking sun for my sister's poor health, had left the University of Pittsburgh and comfortable suburban living. Our ten acres were purchased in 1936 and my sister Edith entered the third grade and I the first at the South Miami School at School House and Sunset.

My Grandmother Caldwell's small house was the first built on the property. It was to accommodate her, Mother, Father and two girls while Dad built our home during summer vacations from the University of Miami.

Not trusting the ten foot pines to bulldozers, our front three acres were cleared by hand. At night we had bon-

*Mrs. Robinson, a former silversmith and jeweler, now spends her time keeping up with two active and involved young sons.*

fires around the kerosene soaked palmetto and pine stumps with buckets of water and shovels handy. There were no phones and the nearest county fire engine was over five miles away. The foxes in the back acreage stayed with us for years and we occasionally saw large rattlesnakes. The whip snakes be-



The coral rock wall that separated the Robert Frost homestead from the Hjorts was not built by the poet, despite the fact that he was frequently photographed standing nearby.

came so accustomed to us that they would go right over our feet, rather than take a detour.

It was pioneer living in a modern world. We even, for a month, had a privy until adequate water was available — first with a gasoline pump, and then two windmills. The

first small kerosene stove was replaced by gas stoves and the wooden ice box gave way to lovely kerosene refrigerators. Laundry was boiled in the backyard and what garbage couldn't go to the chickens was buried. Kerosene lamps were used for light and pump-up gas lanterns for study. Three years later,

He brought New England with him in the form of two prefabricated cottages connected by picket fences which formed a flower-bordered grass courtyard. The charm of the entrance gate with its arbor was enhanced by flowering vines and his favorite white Bauhinia tree.

The houses, shipped by rail, were put together by a Coconut Grove carpenter, whose claim to fame was fake key stone masonry. Every afternoon he would be waiting for my father's arrival home, and they would try to fathom the plans. Even so, two large buckets of left-over bolts were found some years later under one cottage.

The building accomplished, Mr. Frost's annual visits became a winter event. He would generally arrive alone and be joined a couple of weeks later by his secretary K. (Kathleen Morrison).

In those first two weeks it usually fell to my mother to take Frost grocery shopping and for other errands. We entertained him and got to know a warm, human individual as opposed to the celebrity.

Human that he was, he was not exempt from foibles and a great fear of catching cold.

A head of lettuce was thrown on the floor of Mr. Stang's grocery when some lady pushed ahead of her turn at the scales. There was another row at the Railway Express station in Coconut Grove about the dog's crate. "None for me," he said, and excused himself the night my sister Edith was maid and suddenly sneezed while serving the pie. The outbursts were more than compensated for by his genuine interest.

I happily remember the great luxury of gingerale. Mr. Frost was a tea and gingerale

when we got electric power, it took some adjusting to study without the hiss of those lamps. Solar units heated our water for many years.

It was to this rural pocket that Mr. Frost came to spend prescribed Florida Winters for a recurring bronchial problem.

drinker. After one grocery trip, Mother was presented with a bottle of it for one of my tummy aches. Those tummy aches were frequent in the third grade — starting in arithmetic and lasting until I was home in bed with a good book.

Mr. Frost permanently endeared himself to me by assuring my parents the reading might do as much good as the missed schooling. Years later we learned he had suffered from a similar malady.

Some evenings Mr. Frost spent with us reading his poems by firelight. Frost, read by Frost, was an experience we children could feel beyond the admonitions of our parents to be quiet and listen attentively to the great man. I can still hear his voice and picture him in Mother's rocker with his border collie, Gillie, at his feet.

Though not tall, Mr. Frost had a presence about him. The Frost nose is distinctive. His daughter Lesley has it — also the brilliant blue eyes. Lesley often reflected that blue with turquoise jewelry. Mr. Frost's eyes shone from under bushy brows and a mop of truly "bowl cut" white hair. His conversation was punctuated with chuckles and tisk-tisks.

For a man then in his mid-sixties, he was physically agile. He could chop the hard Dade County pine for his small stove. And to the chagrin of the Allen and Hjort girls, he and Hervey Allen thoroughly beat us at a picnic softball game.

Open necked shirts, corduroy pants and perhaps a jacket for cooler weather were his usual attire. He was a great stroller. We had little traffic and he had ample room on his property for strolling with Gillie or K. when she was down. Sometimes at night we would hear a phrase being

tried from across the stone wall that separated the properties.

My wonderful Welsh-born grandmother's little house was the closest to that wall, and she, being of similar age, took objection to Frost being photographed by the wall that Elmer (my father) built.

I build the walls now, but my sister inherited Dad's mental capability for math and languages and was exceptionally domestic in her early high school days. Whether it was the domestic science or all those A's in Latin and Trig that won her job, I don't know. But for an unremembered sum and a place to get away and think thoughts, Edith was made official summer custodian of the Frost cottages. She dusted, counted sheets, thought thoughts and carefully locked. And, she spent one summer with the Frost entourage in Vermont helping with the Morrison children to free K. for her secretarial duties. Edith came home full of experiences and too many of the cook's homemade doughnuts.

K. Morrison's arrival each year signalled a flurry of activity. The great and the aspiring were invited to tea and the neighbors were to enjoy first hand a literary Who's Who.

Our association with K. was close. Her family was faculty also — husband Ted was at Harvard. My first big commission, while at the Museum School in Boston, was an engagement ring for her son Bobby, tragically struck by a car on his honeymoon. Later I was to set many wonderful large stones collected by Mr. Frost. His favorite, however, was not a gem but a twisting white arrow head presented to him on a lecture tour in Georgia. It was a historical symbol to him and we

had to discourage his idea of having the adjudged date engraved on the front of the piece.

That arrowhead was remarkable. In the numerous washings required in making a piece, the tip of it would turn the color of dried blood.

During the late war years (W W II) Mr. Frost's daughter-in-law, Lillian, and her son Prescott (Bill) moved into the cottages while Bill attended the University of Miami. Bill met Phyllis Gordon at the University. After their marriage, her parents, Donald and Marie, lived in the cottages and truly made a garden setting. Later they built their own home on the back acreage of the Frost property. Lesley Frost Ballantine and her husband Joe built their home on the front acreage with its entrance facing the back yard and the many tropical trees common to the Far East of Joe's youth and diplomatic service. Mr. Frost's visits continued and our circle of good friends expanded with his family.

After my father's death in 1946, Mr. Frost's interest in Edith and myself became almost paternal. That interest also carried to the Allen children when Hervey Allen died the following year. Occasionally he would arrive with prime steaks and ask us to invite our current young men for a cookout. This rather obvious scrutiny was to continue. In 1960, my husband to be, John, and I were invited for cocktails and dinner. Mr. Frost extended a good many jabs at the medical profession — John is a doctor — and John was given the delicate task by K. of reminding the ageing gentleman to zip up before we left for dinner. John enjoyed it, survived and "passed inspection."

Marriage, a new-old home in Kendall and attending duties broke the continuity of my visits with Mr. Frost, until I was summoned to Baptist Hospital to visit him. With a handful of John's orchids hastily picked from the backyard, I really wondered as I drove over, what I could do to cheer up this old and obviously sick gentleman. But such thoughts were naive and the old pro skillfully led the conversation.

Mr. Frost came to visit us in Kendall on the way home from that hospital stay — still wearing his pajama shirt. He announced he had to see if I were living in a proper place. The old paneled frame house pleased him and he insisted in walking our acre over K.'s and our protests that it might be too much. He said he was bound for Greece on a good will tour and was facing the chore of signing 1500 new volumes for his publisher, neither of which pleased him.

John introduced him to India Ink fountain pens for the latter chore the next day. Those were our last visits.

*Continued from page 7*

The book crams into its brief compass much background material and hard facts about tropical hurricanes. It is well worth buying by the hurricane fan, but not if he has the earlier edition, the only new material being Dr. Frank's discussion.

*Hurricane* is on sale at the Museum's gift shop.



## VILLA SERENA

by Valerie Fisher Lassman

Situated on quietly elegant Brickell Avenue in Miami is Villa Serena, former home of William Jennings Bryan and his wife, Mary Baird Bryan. The Spanish-style mansion was constructed on a two-acre parcel of land affording a magnificent view of Biscayne Bay.

William Jennings Bryan acquired title to the property in January 1912 through Mary Brickell, a Miami pioneer. The Bryans, after having spent the winter in Jamaica, decided to come to Florida after the fruit trees on their ranch in Southern Texas had frozen for two consecutive years. Mrs. Bryan preceded her husband via train down to Miami, which was at that time nothing more than a small village. Mrs. Bryan was so taken with the balmy sea air and brilliant bougainvillea that she discovered blooming by the railway station that she decided to stay and make Miami their home.

For the first time in her life, Mrs. Bryan took a sightseeing bus which traveled through what was then Brickell's Hammock and saw the part of the jungle which would soon become the beautiful Villa Serena. A surveyor secured by Mrs. Bryan spent two days staking out the site, cutting through the dense growth with his machete. Near the water's edge at about fifteen feet above sea level they discovered a cliff which was perfect as a break front. And it was there that Mrs. Bryan decided to purchase the land for around \$500 from Mary Brickell. It was two years before James Deering, the International Harvester

magnate, bought adjacent land to build the renaissance palazzo, Vizcaya.

William Jennings Bryan at the time of the purchase was occupied in political affairs in the north, so the actual construction of the mansion didn't begin until 1915.

The development of the estate, which fronted 200 feet on Brickell Avenue and extended back over 400 feet to



VILLA SERENA

Biscayne Bay, was a very personal matter with the Bryans. Bryan laid out the curving front entrance, driving in the stakes himself to direct the workers. They then cleared a space where the house would stand, and carefully emptied the pockets, a feature of the coral formation of Florida. The large holes were filled with cement. There was, at the northwest corner of the house, an extremely large and deep pocket. The men carefully removed the sand and the hole grew deeper and deeper. Mr. Bryan stood by watching this with great interest and said, "I will give another lecture and we will fill this hole, no matter how deep it is." The bottom was finally reached and it took many bags of cement to fill and reinforce the hole, which otherwise would have created a weak place in the foundation.

Mr. Bryan said he would build a house that would last

for centuries so it was constructed of solid concrete reinforced with steel rods. The mere fact that the house withstood the many hurricanes since its creation is proof that he accomplished his task.

The two-story house contains about 5,000 square feet of space. Patterned after the Spanish architectural tradition, it has an enclosed court-

yard in front and a detached guest house and two-car garage. The house has a living room, dining room, den, kitchen, and two sunporches downstairs. Upstairs there are five bedrooms and two baths. While the woodwork in the house was not heavy or ornate, the tile, however, was very carefully selected by the Bryans in a Cuban tile factory.

The dominant colors on the tiles across the entire first floor are of a yellow and terracotta color which blend into a type of Moorish design. There is a staircase on each side of the entrance leading up to the bedrooms which display a unique interior design in tile artistry. The tiles are laid on the riser of each step and each tile thereon blends the colors of red, blue, and yellow into a particular design. The pattern repeats itself every fourth step, with different tiles in between. The total effect is most dramatic and unusual.

The four marble mantelpieces in the house were brought from Washington, where an old mansion had been condemned and razed by the government. The mantelpieces are located at opposite ends of the house, one in the living room, one in the dining room, and two upstairs. The grilles on the front windows are the original Spanish grilles that came from Cuba. The large knockers on the wooden doors at the entrance were also from an old mansion in Havana. The small wicket in the gate is of architecture from Latin America. There is a fine cistern of two hundred fifty barrels, so there was always a plentiful supply of rain water.

When the Bryans first lived at the house, they particularly enjoyed the roof garden between the two towers, and as they spent more and more time at the Villa, they decided to bring down their books from their former home. The large room between the two towers was built to house their private library. It had an imposing solid copper roof.

The landscape surrounding the house was truly a gardener's delight, as was evidenced by Mrs. Bryan's horticultural interests. "Out of the woods I brought the nightblooming *Cereus* and trained it up some of my trees. During one evening we counted sixty-eight of these incomparable blossoms open to the moonlight." The house enjoyed shade from the many vines and trees nearby, and the upper garden had many hundreds of dollars worth of good black dirt spread on it to promote the growth of lush, verdant lawns.

Mrs. Bryan, who also took an avid interest in the marine life on the bay by the house, had intended to build an aquarium with gray stone as a background and a sheet of heavy glass for its front to watch the "gaily colored fish, the growing sponges, and the little sea-horses."

Amidst all the beauty of the house in its new tropical setting, William Jennings Bryan was hardly a recluse to the budding community growing about him. After his neighbor James Deering's extensive house was completed, Bryan used to remark, "I didn't live near Deering, Deering lived near me! I lived at Villa Serena in 1911; Deering moved in at Vizcaya on Christmas Day, 1916!"

Bryan, who defended Tennessee's right to prohibit the teaching of evolution and was a candidate for President of the United States three times, was very much a part of early Miami. While guests enjoyed strawberry shortcake, Bryan would lecture at Venetian Pool every day during the winter of 1924 about the new real estate development for George Merrick, who was at that time building Coral Gables.

They also entertained frequently at the Villa Serena during these years, and their guests were many and distinguished. Among the notables who visited the Bryans were Dr. Anna Shaw, the Suffragette; Evangeline Booth and her brother Herbert, John Wanamaker and the Samuel Untermyers were guests on more than one occasion. Vice-President Dawes and President Warren G. Harding came to share their hospitality, as did the Premier of Greece, Venizelos, while in exile in this country. Leading men from the churches of all

denominations were always welcomed by the Bryans, who were quite religious people. Besides Mr. Deering, they numbered among their distinguished neighbors the world-renowned jeweler Louis Tiffany.

Reports disclose that the Bryans sold Villa Serena before Bryan's death and acquired Marymount in Coconut Grove which was their home at the time Bryan passed away on July 26, 1925. Marymount was near the Bryan Memorial Church in Coconut Grove.

Mary Bryan in later years recounted, "You may ask why we ever left this place (Villa Serena) when we found it so satisfying. It was only when it became too valuable for us to occupy. If Mr. Bryan were living, I am sure that he and I would not pass this ideal home on to anyone, but with him gone and I a cripple I cannot keep it."

Public records reveal that Samuel Carver paid a quarter of a million dollars for Villa Serena in 1925. However, the estate had to take the property back under a mortgage because of the devastating hurricane of 1926, the stock market crash in 1929 and the ensuing economic depression.

William Jennings Bryan made a voluminous will on July 5, 1925, and died on July 26 of the same year at Dayton, Tennessee, while involved in the sensational and controversial Scopes trial. The will is replete with religious intonations throughout. He made elaborate bequests to his wife and children, his grandchildren, his sisters and his brother. He also made generous bequests to a dozen Presbyterian churches, the Miami Library, the Y.M.C.A., and the Baptist Church with

which his parents were affiliated. He then made a large bequest to establish an academy to intertwine the intellectual and spiritual qualities of man.

Unfortunately, Bryan's philanthropic desires never came to fruition. No sooner had probate been initiated than came the hurricane of 1926 and the economic crash

of 1929 which diminished his estate to the extent that none of the charitable bequests were fulfilled — including the establishment of the academy. Nevertheless, the will itself can be considered a masterful testimonial in revealing Bryan's high ideals, his fervent religious conviction, and his generosity and stalwart character.

## BOOK REVIEW

### **HURRICANE by Marjory Stoneman Douglas.**

*Mockingbird Books, Atlanta, 1976 (Revised Edition). Paperback, \$2.95.*

Reviewed by JERRY PARDUE

This brief little book, 119 pages plus some excellent photographs, does an acceptable job in presenting broad-based knowledge of the hurricane as it existed in 1958, when the hard-back predecessor book of the same title was published.

Dr. Neil Frank, Director of Miami's National Hurricane Center, has contributed an eleven-page chapter entitled "The Hard Facts about Hurricanes". This afterword draws sharply into focus some of the recent advances in hurricane knowledge, particularly the potential of the hurricane for creating a catastrophe surpassing that of 1900, when more than 6000 lives were lost in the Galveston hurricane.

Every worker in the field is aware of the hurricane threat; in fact, only recently the American Meteorological Society has published a "Statement of Concern" relative to the hurricane disaster potential. This statement officially calls the attention of the professional meteorologist and of the public to the dangers cited by Dr. Frank in his afterword.

*Hurricane* is organized into three main sections: "The

Nature of Hurricanes", or the birth, growth, and death of the typical storm, if such a thing exists. The second part, "The Beginning of Knowledge", begins with early studies by Franklin, Bowditch, Redfield, Espy, Reid, and others. Colonel Reid, of the Royal Engineers, came out from London to assist in the rebuilding of Barbados, devastated by the great 1780 hurricane. He was so horrified by the damage that he saw and so motivated by the lack of hurricane knowledge that he made a study of this and other hurricanes. The 1780 hurricane, incidentally, is still the greatest killer in the Western Hemisphere, having destroyed some 300 ships and killed 23,000 people in the West Indies and at sea. By damaging the British Navy and merchant fleet, it is said to have hastened the end of the Revolutionary War.

The afterword by Dr. Frank is presented as the third main section of the book. There are several excellent photographs of hurricane damage from 1954 onward. A map of hurricane tracks is a reproduction of one prepared by this reviewer for the original hardback book nearly twenty years ago.

*Continued on page 5*

## REMEMBERING CHARLES DEERING by Mary Warren Hudson Leary

Soon after my father, Frederick M. Hudson, returned to his private law practice in Miami after five years' service in Tallahassee as attorney for the Railroad Commission, he acquired as clients James and Charles Deering and their father, William.

I met James Deering not more than two or three times, and only once had a tour of his mansion, Vizcaya. My recollections of James Deering could add nothing to an issue of *Update* devoted to some of the famous who have lived in the Miami area. However, Charles Deering was very kind to and gentle with the little nine-year-old I was at the time I first knew him. Our friendship continued until his death in 1927 when I was in college. He always remembered me at Christmas. His last gift to me was a shawl which I added to what today seems to me to have been a far-from-chic outfit when a picture was made of Mr. Deering and me outside his Cutler home.

At one time the Deerings lived on Brickell Point. It was there that I first met Mr. Deering. I remember the occasion more for an uncharacteristic action of my father's than I do for my first impression of a man of whom I grew very fond. I had stopped by my father's office in the old Lawyers Building on Avenue C (now N.E. First Avenue) as I was walking to our home on the corner of Avenue K and 12th Street (now Seventh Avenue and West Flagler Street) from the old Central Grammar School, now the site of the Post Office. My father had to see Mr. Deering on some business matter and

he suggested that I walk over to Brickell Point with him. As we started out, he decided that my shoes looked shabby. We bought black shoe polish for them, but the polish seemed to compound the felony. He had me then kick a little dust on the shoes — a very vivid memory for me, for I have never known anyone

Mrs. Deering as well, were very kind to a small girl.

On another occasion, a Spanish artist, a long-time friend of the Deerings, was a guest. I believe that he was one of the artists who painted portraits of Mr. Deering. There was also a Spanish pianist at the same luncheon.



The author posed for this photo with Charles Deering outside his Cutler home. The shawl she is wearing was a gift from Mr. Deering. (Photo from Mary Warren Hudson Leary.)

who gave less thought to appearance than my father.

After that first meeting, I was in the Deering Cutler home many times. Mr. and Mrs. Deering frequently entertained at Sunday luncheons and, when my parents were invited, I was always included, no matter how distinguished other guests might be. I remember one luncheon when the President of Northwestern University was there. I don't recall that my older sister and brother were ever invited, and I don't know why I was included, except that, as I have said before, Mr. Deering, and

I was given the impression that he was a well-known performer, but unfortunately I have no clue to his identity. The artist, for my amusement, took a grapefruit from a nearby serving table, drew eyes and a nose on it, and cut a large mouth into it. Then he lit a cigarette and put it into the grapefruit mouth. On being pressed on each cheek, Mr. Grapefruit expelled the cigarette with some accompanying fluid: a demonstration of what might happen to a smoker. I remember Mr. Deering smoking cigarettes frequently, but never with such dire result.

My grandmother was in her 90s when Mr. Deering met her. He learned that she had pioneered in five states, so he teasingly asked when she planned to go to South America and "grow up with the country."

Mr. Deering was an ardent and knowledgeable bird watcher. Once my father complained that birds were eating all of his strawberries; the Deering response was to ask if more birds might be attracted to the Cutler place if he planted strawberries also.

The Deerings owned property in the Buena Vista area, where at one time he planned to build, though he never did. Incidentally, he never referred to Buena Vista with the usual Florida pronunciation — always the correct Spanish. At the time he was ordering animals and birds to be put on the small islands included in this property, he ordered monkeys also — I am not sure of the exact number, but I believe that it was twelve. But whatever the number was, he was sent not that many monkeys, but that many pairs of monkeys. He thought that I might like to have a pair as pets. I thought it was a great idea. My parents did not concur. When we were next invited to luncheon, the pair of monkeys which might have been mine were there for my enjoyment. They ran about, upsetting vases and causing such general havoc that even a ten-year-old girl realized that her parents' decision had been a wise one.

I imagine that most people are aware of Charles Deering's interest in art and artists. John Singer Sargent was one of his friends. But I



wonder if many know of the generosity of both James and Charles Deering to the Jackson Memorial Hospital.

Shortly after Mr. Deering's death, Mrs. Deering sent to our family a Zorn etching ("St. Gaudens and Model") and a privately printed volume of memorial tributes to her husband, containing also copies of some of his correspondence with artists, photographs, and reproductions of some of his art collection, as well as his own memoirs of his father, William, and his brother, James. The etching now hangs in my home, a valued possession because of the Deering association, although I have been told that Zorn's work is not so highly esteemed as it once was.

The memorial volume I have donated to the Historical Museum, which seems to me a fitting place. I hope that many of you will want to see it, for it will give a much more detailed picture of the man than my scattered recollections can.

The Deering home at Cutler was very different from James Deering's palatial Vizcaya. It was a warm and inviting place, beautiful, obviously a place of unpretentious wealth and fine taste. And my memories of Mr. and Mrs. Deering are of two people, warm and responsive, gentle and kind. I also feel privileged to have known their two charming daughters, Barbara Deering Danielson and Marian Deering McCormick. Their brother, Roger, I met several times, but I did not see him as frequently as I did his sisters. Association with the Deerings added a great deal of pleasure to the years I was growing up in Miami.

*Continued from page 3*

Nevertheless he returned the following year, 1936, this time as the main speaker for five lectures during the week of January 30. His fellow lecturers were Padraic and Mary Colum, Bernard de Voto, Dhan Gopal Mukerji and Herve Allen. His next appearance on the Institute was March 13, 1944 and his final appearance was February 8, 1945. Both times he gave only readings of his poems "with comments."

Frost's residency in South Miami brought friends and relations as visitors and sometimes as residents during the months he was not there. The cottages served as home for Robert's grandson, William Prescott Frost, during the years that Prescott was a student at the University. He received a B.S. in Engineering Science in 1947. During his undergraduate days he met and married Phyllis Marie Gordon. Phyllis is the daughter of Donald and Marie Gordon who now own and live in the south sector of the original Frost five acres. Another grandchild, Lesley Lee Francis, whose mother is Lesley Frost Ballantine, received her MA degree from the University in 1959.

Recognition of Robert Frost by the University continued over the years. In 1961 at the January commencement he was awarded its highest tribute, an honorary Doctor of Letters. But perhaps the happiest display of mutual respect and admiration was the celebration of his 75th birthday. On Sunday evening February 19, 1950 (the date set because he would not be in residence on March 26) a joint effort of the University's departments of Drama, Speech, Radio, English and Journalism sponsored dram-

atization of Frost's *A Masque of Reason* in the Box Theatre of the old Anastasia building with "a reception afterwards in the patio." By way of acknowledgment and appreciation Frost read some of his poems and gave autographed copies of his collected works to the members of the cast. In turn, Frost was given a pair of high powered binoculars in recognition of his interest in bird watching.

Florida's poet laureate, Vivian Larimore Rader, wrote a dedicatory poem especially for the occasion. As a point of historical significance it is interesting to note that the United States Senate also marked this birthday in a somewhat more pompous manner with a string of Whereas resolutions (S.Res.244). Frost's reaction to this, in a memo to his friend Louis Untermeyer was a cryptic, "My only comment is the senatorial 'No comment.'"

Frost's next University connected appearance locally was on March 3, 1959. Before an audience limited by space to six hundred he spoke at Plymouth Church in Coconut Grove. Sponsored by Beaux Arts of the University's Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery, the occasion was a feature of their Art and Religious Festival.

On February 24, 1960 Frost accepted an invitation initiated and paid for by the undergraduate students. An overflow crowd of several hundred jammed the lounge of a campus dormitory. After reading from his poems he met with a group of ardent admirers in an adjoining garden for a "bull session." A reporter stated: "It was one of those rare times when age and youth seem caught up in a blend of perfect harmony—in the give and take of searching and seeking."

Two days later, his final appearance on campus, he was guest speaker at the Spicer-Simson lecture series of the Friends of the University of Miami Library. In a way the Friends of the Library, organized in 1959, bridged the gap between the Winter Institute of Literature which was concluded in 1947. The Institute's final speakers of a program called "Poetry Today" included Frost's friends Paul Engel and Edward Davison. The Friends' first program in February 1960 had Padraic Colum, Edward Davison, Alistair Cooke and Robert Frost.

On Sunday March 24, 1968, five years after his death and two days before his birth date, the Dade County Federation of Women's Clubs dedicated an enduring memorial to Robert Frost. Atop a gentle rise below the entrance of Beaumont Lecture Hall where he made his final University appearance and where thousands of students pass daily, stands a six foot rose granite stone inscribed simply ROBERT FROST.

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There are those who still remember the Great Commoner to this day as the most vibrant and powerful orator, and, had he lived longer, through the medium of radio he could have become the most powerful political figure in America.

Villa Serena has had several owners since the Bryan years there. It was purchased by William F. Cheek in 1933. Cheek was the grandson of Joel Cheek, founder of Maxwell House Coffee Company. Mr. Cheek passed away in September of 1970 at the age of 87, whereupon the house was bought by a Miami builder, and today it is privately owned by the builder's family.

## THE SAGA OF LAKE WORTH CREEK

by Gordon L. Williams

In the first chapter of Charles W. Pierce's *Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida*, he tells of going with his parents from Jupiter to Lake Worth in October 1873 via the sawgrass route or Lake Worth Creek. When I was a lad, some fifty years later, I had roamed that area in considerable detail, and I knew of no such creek. Now, after still another half century, I have pieced the puzzle together — pieces that I recall from the 1920s. It is a story, not unlike many others, involving the drainage of Florida swamps.

Somewhat like Charles Pierce, I moved to West Palm Beach, with my parents, brothers and sisters in September 1918.

In early 1923 we moved to Mr. H. S. Kelsey's Silver Beach, whose name was then being changed to Kelsey City, now called Lake Park, north of West Palm Beach.

In August 1924 we moved north to Monet. That name had just been changed from Prairie Siding and is now known as Palm Beach Gardens. We lived on a dairy farm that my father had just bought, on the north side of Monet Road, east of the Dixie Highway and the F.E.C. Railway.

In the boomtime summer of 1925 we moved those dairy buildings to the Indiantown Road where the Jupiter Turnpike Exit now stands. Later that summer we returned to Kelsey City, but to a different house.

In 1928, after the Bust, we returned to dairy living at Jupiter, some months before the hurricane that Septem-

ber destroyed our dairy buildings.

During these years of living on both sides of the swamp drained by Lake Worth Creek, I attended school in West Palm Beach, spending most of my summers surveying in that area. I knew it well. While living near Jupiter, I'd heard that Jupiter was blessed with three rivers, but for the life of me I could name only two — Indian River and Loxahatchee River. Now, thanks to Charles Pierce, I can report on the third, long since vanished.

Florida has two almost continuous sand ridges which parallel its East Coast from Jacksonville to Miami. Much of Florida's population resides on these two ridges, which are frequently high enough to support short-leaf pines — far above water level. Between these ridges lie the Tolomato River, Matanzas River, Halifax River, Mosquito Lagoon, Indian River, Lake Worth, Biscayne Bay, and lesser bodies of water, with numerous natural outlets to the ocean. To the west of these two ridges natural outlets are far less frequent, causing long swamps to form. The main natural outlets are the St. Johns, St. Lucie, and Loxahatchee Rivers, the New River, and the Miami River. Lake Worth Creek, being the southern affluent of the Loxahatchee, must have drained these swamps from Jupiter to about Boca Raton. So, as Mr. Pierce comments, in working their way up Lake Worth Creek they entered a very big swamp.

The name Lake Worth Creek was actually a misnomer, apparently of short duration. It might better have been named for Lake Mon-

gonia or Clear Lake, to the west of West Palm Beach, because it actually conducted water from that swampy area. An old map owned by Jupiter's Mrs. Bessie DuBois, showing the Jupiter-Juno Railroad, calls it North Creek — presumably because it flowed north, as does the St. Johns River. The bridge sign on alternate highway A1A north of Lake Park calls it Earman River, named for the father of Joe Earman of the Palm Beach Post.

Since Lake Worth Creek was to the west of the two ridges, and Lake Worth is between them, travelers of the "sawgrass route" traversed a haulover across the westerly ridge, to reach one body of water from the other. Mr. Pierce mentions that the Indians had found and used this route. This rather low gap in the ridge is in what is now called North Palm Beach.

When the East Coast Canal was excavated through this area in 1896, it followed the sawgrass route, deepening Lake Worth Creek, then cutting through into Lake Worth a bit short of the haulover. This route is shown on Page 121 of Mr. Pierce's book. This sea-level canal cuts through some rapids, doubtless lowering the swamp that fed the creek. Incidentally, rapids indicate the presence of rock, and we once made quite a search in that area for rock for Kelsey's construction work, all to no avail. Rock had to be shipped in from Ojus, near Miami.

The map also shows a small area where the canal short-cut a bend in the creek. The area bounded by the canal and old creek bed is of special interest to me. When we

lived at Monet, my father had a pasture in there which we called "beyond the corduroy". Until I saw Pierce's map, I wondered — for fifty years — what kept the cattle in that pasture. The old creek bed of knee-deep water was so grown-up with jungle that cattle could not cross it. Somebody once cut a lane across that jungle and laid a corduroy trail, logs crosswise of the lane, so cows could traverse without bogging down. I presume enough dirt was put on the logs to keep them from floating. There was a rail-gate, also called a cattle guard, across this lane in the middle of the jungle. No other fence building or maintenance was necessary. I once rode across this corduroy, driving some cattle, but never explored the pasture. I had heard that the pasture was bounded by that swamp and the East Coast Canal, but never guessed that the swamp was the meander of an old stream — more particularly a stream that once carried water from the Earman River to the Jupiter inlet; or that that cattle-proof jungle marked the favored boat route by which pioneers traveled from Jupiter to Lake Worth!

Probably a bit after the East Coast Canal was dug and the swamp lowered, the Prosperity Farms Company moved in and completely drained the portion of swamp east of the F.E.C. Railway, digging a system of canals that followed the land lines. They subdivided the swamp bottom into five-acre tracts and sold part of them to homesteaders. The remainder they sold to H. S. Kelsey, for whom my father was Chief Engineer. We expanded the area considerably, driving white 2 x 4-inch stakes at the corners of hun-

*Mr. Williams a native of Palm Beach County, is a retired civil engineer who specialized in water resources development all over the world.*

dreds of five-acre plots. Unfortunately, much of the drained, fertile swampbottom dried out and burned, as the years went by.

I presume the drainage of this swamp land into the East Coast Canal made something of a delta in the canal. Anyway, about the time of the first World War, a canal was dug, more or less along the old haulover, draining the water from the Earman River bridge directly into Lake Worth, discharging some distance from the East Coast Canal's entrance into the same lake. By 1923 there was considerable vegetation on the banks of this drainage canal, and the wooden bridge carrying the Prosperity Farms access road across it was by no means new. We also built a new wooden bridge across this drainage canal in 1923, in connection with the construction of the Kelsey City Golf Course, which straddled that canal. There will be more about this bridge later.

There was an older bridge across Lake Worth Creek just south of where it discharged into the East Coast Canal, which was on the south side of Monet Road and its subsequent draw-bridge crossing of the East Coast Canal. I don't know when that old bridge was built, but I remember its sudden and ignominious death, about 1925. It had been condemned some time before that. People still used it, but my father forbade me to drive across it, and with good reason!

October 1924 was a very wet month. Water crossed the Dixie Highway in several places and took out its Earman River bridge. Tourists driving down from the North to spend the winter in balmy Florida were stranded right there. There was no other

road into South Florida. Many of them camped there for several days. We were fortunate to have our milk-delivery truck on the south side of the bridge when it washed out, so could get our milk to West Palm Beach by means of that truck, light trucks on the north side of the river, and a row boat.

In working our milk-ferrying process past those camped tourists, I told one of them that it was possible to bypass this washed-out bridge and the reflooded old swamp by using the condemned bridge and the newly built bridge in the Kelsey City Golf Course, keeping to the high ground. I agreed to scout them through that route — collecting a bit of change for the service. When I told my father of my plan, he said "No." "Just cautioning people that that bridge was condemned wouldn't make it right if it fell in with a car." "So I had to renege on my deal, making several tourists most unhappy with me. Well, those Yankees were a bit ingenious, and found the route by themselves, dozens of cars passing safely over that bridge.

A few months after that, Mr. Kelsey, who had been cautioned by my father not to use that bridge, crashed through it in his Buick coupe. Fortunately, he wasn't hurt; he confirmed my father's caution that some day there would be a last time for him to cross that old bridge!

Thus ends the Saga of Lake Worth Creek. It was incorrectly named in the first place and has not been a creek since 1896, but ironically its water for fifty years has flowed into Lake Worth. This shift was probably a good thing, as it has helped to flush Lake Worth, which has received much raw sewage over the years.

## FAMOUS MIAMI VISITORS



President Calvin Coolidge and Mayor and Mrs. E. G. Sewell, January 14, 1928.



Songwriter Irving Berlin, February 28, 1926



Will Rogers, 1924.



Sir Winston Churchill at the Parrot Jungle.



The Duke and Duchess of Windsor, September 24, 1941.



Henry Ford, Chinese Lindberg and Thomas A. Edison, 1925. (All photos from the Romer Collection, Miami-Dade Public Library).



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### MILITARY CONFERENCE AT PENSACOLA

The seventh Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference will be held in Pensacola February 18-19, 1977. The theme is "The Military Presence on the Gulf Coast." Papers and major topics of discussion concern: Military Education on the Gulf Coast; The European Military Presence: Spain, France and Great Britain; and The United States Military Presence: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. Brig. General E. H. Simmons, Dr. William Maloy, Dr. John T. Mahon,

Dr. George Pearce, Mr. Gary Morton, Dr. W. W. Prophet, Col. James W. Stanley, Dr. Robert R. Rea, Dr. Jack D. L. Holmes, Lt. General Robert P. Keller, Dr. Frank Futrell, Prof. W. James Miller and Dr. David Hardcastle are among the scheduled participants. Proceedings of this conference will be published.

Further information and copies of the published proceedings of the six previous conferences are available by writing to Professor W. S. Coker, The Library, University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida 32504.

### LOCAL HISTORY SEMINARS SPONSORED BY VILLAGERS

Local history will be the focus of a series of seminars sponsored by the Villagers. The programs are free to the public and will introduce South Florida's history from earliest times to the present.

The schedule is as follows:

Friday, January 21 will be *South Florida Before 1821* presented by Samuel J. Boldrick, president of Dade Heritage Trust.

Friday, February 18 will be *The Era of the Bay—1821 to 1896* presented by Arva Moore Parks.

Friday, March 18 will be *Southeast Florida After 1896* presented by Dr. Thelma Peters.

The programs will be from 9:30 a.m. until noon at the Historical Museum, 3280 S. Miami Avenue, Bldg. B, and will include illustrated lectures, discussions and refreshments.