

Tequesta:

MIAMI on the Eve of the Boom: 1923

By FRANK B. SESSA

The year 1923 was an important one for Miami. The slight setback of 1922 was soon forgotten as bank deposits increased and building permits became more numerous and larger in amount, as real estate ventures became more extensive and buyers more responsive. Florida might be the last great "American Frontier," as one writer suggested, but Miami looked upon itself as the coming American Riviera. The spirit of optimism became contagious; few who remained long in greater Miami entertained the least doubt as to the magnificence of the region's ultimate destiny. Physical growth, it is true, remained haphazard except in special development areas, but had not Miami's population shown an increase of 440 per cent in the last decennial census? If law enforcement left something to be desired, there was plenty of crime elsewhere as the featured crime stores on the front pages of the Miami newspapers would testify. Whatever shortcomings might have gone unrelieved, the year brought satisfaction to Miamians: a banner season and a vital upward surge in real estate activity.

Miami was primarily a resort area. Its thinking, its business, its improvements were all geared to the tourist season which began almost imperceptibly in December, rose to its height in February and early March, and lingered briefly past April first. In April and May, citizens took stock of the past season, contemplated a chimerical summer season for June, July, and August, and then began talking of preparations for next season. There was, nevertheless, an element in the city that envisioned a Miami grown strong through trade and industry with an economy virtually independent of the whims of a growing winter colony. To them, catering to the visitor emphasized the ephemeral, or worse, the parasitic nature of the area and unconsciously implied that the harvest should be reaped while there were still crops to gather. Essentially, their problem lay in the fact that until trade and industry grew, the resort business was all too necessary. Those who frankly preferred the tourist trade enjoyed their neighbors' discomfiture.

Such was the dilemma of the Miami newspapers, particularly the *Miami Herald* which extolled the beauties of the area, the evenness of the climate, and the salutary effect of constant blue skies with their magnificent banks of lazily drifting white clouds. But the *Herald* lost no opportunity to publish any item, however brief or unimportant, that seemed to indicate the city was developing on its own, independent of the visitor, who, in 1923 as later, really pointed out the direction Miami must travel for some time to come. Miami was growing. It mattered little that the visitor caused the growth. Service to him brought increasing numbers to the city and those in turn needed services.

Perhaps the two pages of "Happy New Year" advertisements for "Miami's Progressive Real Estate Dealers" were a prophecy of a major interest soon to claim almost full attention of the newspapers. "Land at Retail—But at Wholesale Prices," claimed the Montray Corporation, "A NEW YEAR'S PROMISE." But at the moment one editorial masthead carried this platform for Miami:

1. Secure pure water with municipal ownership of plant.
2. Provide for sewage disposal and necessary sewer extension.
3. Deepen the ship canal.
4. Build a railroad to the West Coast.
5. Complete the Tamiami Trail.
6. Inaugurate Greater Miami.
7. Abolish all grade crossings.
8. Early completion and beautification of the bayfront property.

Miami had much to do if the above program were to be realized. The city budget, passed for 1923, contained little appropriation for the attainment of those ideals. Its amount was \$1,337,995.11 and estimates submitted to the City Commission by City Manager Wharton a little more than seven months later, approximated only \$1,525,000 in expenditures for the next year. As finally approved by the commissioners the amount was \$1,574,354.62.

Improvements were planned for Miami. Early in January, the City of Miami published in a legal notice City Resolution 605, signifying intent to seek authorization from the state legislature to extend the city area to about double its size. It would include the communities known as Silver Bluff, Coconut Grove, and a part of Larkins (later South Miami) on the south, Allapattah on the west, and Buena Vista, Lemon City, and Little River on the north. The boundary would run on the north from the bay to a point westward about four miles, thence southward about five miles, and turn

east to the bay. The increased population would number 75,000 or more. Presented to the voters at the same time would be a \$2,730,000 improvement bond issue. It was not planned to "railroad" other districts into the city and no outstanding indebtedness of areas taken in would be added to the city's indebtedness. Nor would any previous city debts be placed upon the newcomers whose tax money would be exempted from servicing already existing Miami debts. The election was planned for March 20.

As in so many similar attempts to include suburbs within city limits elsewhere, Miami's efforts met with a storm of protest from the communities so affected. On January 23, representatives of Coconut Grove and of Allapattah appeared before the City Commissioners to protest annexation. The Coconut Grove committee agreed that eventually their community would become a part of Miami, but felt that the present was not the time. They were also interested in knowing what improvements the city intended to make in Coconut Grove, a subject the commissioners were not prepared to discuss at the moment. The arguments of the Allapattah delegation were in the same vein. The *Miami Daily Metropolis*, while reporting some of the protest meetings, observed that there was "no general agreement about annexation," but the *Miami Herald* recorded the controversy in detail. On January 18, a mass meeting was held in Allapattah to protest annexation. Representatives from Coconut Grove, Larkins, and Silver Bluff were present to state that their people were also opposed. The Federated Improvement Association met Monday evening, January 30, to map a program to combat annexation effectively. Twenty-nine delegates, representing Lemon City, Allapattah, Everglades Avenue (Seventy-ninth Street), Little River, Old Forty-second Street, and Rockmoor, proposed such devices as sending delegates to the state legislature, employing legal talent, providing public speakers to voice opposition, and on election day hiring autos to get voters to the polls. Multigraphed letters also might be of assistance. As a matter of protection in the event of annexation, however, the association went on record as favoring an amendment to the city charter to divide the city into five districts with one commissioner elected by each district. Coconut Grove proposed through its council to canvass its citizens by sending each one a printed return post card with the questions: Do you favor annexation to Miami? Do you want the Council to request the state legislature to amend the town charter so that the consent of a majority of town voters would be necessary before annexation?

Favoring annexation was a formal resolution of the Miami Realty Board which unanimously supported the actions of the city commissioners in the

proposed boundary extensions: "Whereas the wonderful city of Miami, the fastest growing city in the United States, occupying as it does approximately 15 square miles, is unjustly handicapped by lack of proper territorial possession" and since it furnished pleasure, accommodations, life and growth to outlying districts, Miami should have a territorial extent of about sixty square miles, like other cities of its size. The resolution also stated that public benefits to be derived from a greater Miami were more extensive than those to be obtained from individual communities. A spirit of full cooperation was needed to push Miami ahead. According to the *Miami Herald* opposition came "almost entirely from the outside," engineered by a few persons "whose interests in the matter are not at all considerable."

In the middle of the debate the city decided to withdraw its call for an election to extend city limits; it also withheld submission for approval of the public improvement bond issue. The decision seems to have been influenced by legal complications in the city charter and the advice of a New York bond attorney, Chester B. Masselich, who advised that sale of the bonds would be difficult if a part of the city were exempted from servicing the bonded indebtedness. The city attorney also submitted his opinion to the commissioners. His advice was to submit only the bond issue to the voters for approval. The matter would not then create confusion when annexation came up. Accordingly, on March 15, the city commissioners, in a two-page newspaper spread, proposed a \$2,730,000 bond issue. One million dollars were to be spent for acquiring and improving lands for public park purposes. The city had bought two years before at a cost of \$1,000,000 the bay waterfront from Sixth Street north to Second Street south. The plan was to fill in the bayfront one thousand feet from the shore line. A part of the money would also go to improve, beautify, and buy parks elsewhere. Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars would be devoted to securing an adequate, wholesome water supply, \$400,000 to an extension of the street railway system and new equipment, \$100,000 to the city hospital and its equipment, and the balance to projects for comfort stations, sewers (sanitary and storm), an incinerator, widening the turning basin at the city docks, a fire alarm system and hydrants, and to acquire property for street widening and extension. The issue was submitted to the voters on Tuesday, March 20 and was carried. A total of 560 property owners voted.

Since 1921, Miami had had a commission form of city government and the five commissioners were the city's leading bankers. In May, nine aspirants qualified for the run-off primary to be held on June 9, and the *Miami*

Herald complained that less than half of the qualified voters went to vote, a total of 1118. In June, the commission, James H. Gilman, Charles D. Leffler, J. E. Lummus, James I. Wilson, and Edward C. Romfh, were returned to office. While Mr. Romfh was out of the city, the question of choosing the mayor came up. The position was largely honorary since executive functions were carried out by a city manager, reappointed or newly chosen by the commissioners after each biennial election. Charles Leffler had been mayor, but Mr. Lummus decided to oppose him. As a result the vote was split evenly. On the return of Mr. Romfh "harmony again reigned among the commissioners," for they elected Edward Romfh unanimously. The commissioners also reappointed City Manager Frank H. Wharton and made Frank B. Stoneman, current managing editor and former owner of the *Miami Herald*, municipal judge.

In an advertisement of the Winfield Investment Company, greater Miami's population for 1923 was set at 50,000. The source of the estimate was not given. The same company hazarded the prediction that by 1925, it would be 100,000; in 1927, 150,000; and in 1930, 250,000. More authoritative figures from a local survey, taken to determine whether the Eleventh Judicial District (Dade, Broward, and Monroe counties) warranted an additional circuit judge, showed a population of 72,481 for Dade County and 47,021 for Miami, respective gains since 1920 of 69.6 and 55 per cent. At the close of the year the *Miami Herald* announced that based on statistics from local sources, Miami would enter 1924 with a population of 50,271.

There were evidences to support these estimates of growth. A. B. Greene, telephone engineer for the State Railroad Commission, who had conducted a survey from July 8 to October 18, 1922, predicted that the South Atlantic Telephone and Telegraph Company would have to spend about a half million dollars a year to keep up with Miami's expansion.

As a result of population growth the company was operating at a loss, set at 8 per cent in 1922. The Rotary Club, Civitan, Advertising Club, Realty Board of Miami, and forty subscribers, all but one of whom had written favorable letters, advocated an increase in rates. The *Metropolis*, opposed to an increase, quoted figures to show that if rates were changed as desired, Miami would have the highest ones in the State of Florida. Company figures indicated an increase of 1,500 subscribers in six months, an average of 55,000 calls daily, some 18,000 more than at the same time the previous year. The increase was granted as requested. In August, the company announced it would spend \$500,000 on expansion. By December, the

Commission had further granted permission to extend lines to Coral Gables and to set up a separate exchange, an improvement calling for an expenditure of \$140,000 to \$150,000.

The Miami Electric and Power Company, anticipating heavier demands, doubled its capacity by adding a new \$200,000 generator unit of 6,000 kilowatts, a steam driven turbine.

Transportation to and from Miami was supplied by the single-tracked Florida East Coast Railway or by steamship. There was some talk that the Seaboard Air Line Railway in its extension to the east coast of Florida would run its lines on to Miami. While company officials would neither admit nor deny, an Interstate Commerce Commission report indicated that the southern terminus would be West Palm Beach. The Commission, however, did give the Florida East Coast Railway, "F.E.C.," as it was known to Miamians, permission to construct a line from Okeechobee, seventy-five miles northwest, to Miami at an estimated cost of \$4,839,500. The road, to be completed January 1, 1928, would tap some 1,671,000 acres of land and produce an anticipated revenue for the company of \$1,956,000 annually. Much of the area was suitable for sugar cane and would add to the sugar refining business anticipated for the city.

Steamship traffic for Miami promised to increase, too. The *Miami Herald* noted on January 11, that the Baltimore and Carolina Steamship Company would equip two of its ships, the *Esther Weems* and the *Mary Weems* for passenger service to Miami. The Peninsular and Occidental Steamship Company early in February announced that there would be three sailings weekly instead of two for the trip to Nassau. The new schedule would be operative February 19 through February 26, when the regular schedule would be resumed. The last trip would sail on April 5. An addition to the Nassau route was the *Nassauvian*, presently undergoing reconditioning in Key West. The former two-masted schooner, owned by W. C. B. Albury would be in year round service. The vessel had been caught in a hurricane in September, 1921, and everyone aboard was lost. The ship was salvaged by the Coast Guard in the Gulf of Mexico and had subsequently been purchased by Albury. Freight as well as passenger business came into the Miami port. The S.S. *Santurce* brought 2,300 tons of building materials into Miami in early May as did the four masted schooner *Azua* which brought 1,007 tons of cement, the first of many such loads scheduled. The *Miami Herald* editorially complained that up to the present prevailing opinion seemed to be that the waters of Biscayne Bay must be preserved to create beauty spots.

Could the city afford to devote harbor facilities to beauty alone, it asked. That the city would not entirely ignore water borne freight was shown by the announcement that work would soon begin on additional warehouses at a cost of \$75,000 to accommodate new steamship lines. In August, the *Miami Herald* included an "Ocean Transportation Section" in honor of the arrival of the S.S. *Esther Weems*, entering the Miami to Baltimore service. In October, the journal passed on a waterfront rumor that the Clyde Line might come from Jacksonville to Miami or perhaps directly from New York to Miami.

Miami began to look skywards, too, in transportation. An additional seaplane was added to the Miami-Nassau flight of the Aeromarine Airway planes; the "Buckeye" joined the "Cordeaux" and the "Waldorf" and all three were available for charter flights. The Ta-Miami Air Line was granted a charter by the state (capital \$100,000) and planned to begin carrying passengers from Miami to Tampa in its four planes about March 1.

Although the *Miami Herald* recorded faithfully each item indicative of Miami's progress, it gave considerable support to its contentions of newspaper leadership by publishing daily its advertising records and rather frequently its circulation statistics. By comparisons with statistics of previous years, the expansion of metropolitan Miami was manifest in yet another way.

"Want ads" in the year 1922 totaled 187,504, a gain over the previous year of 52,289. In March, 21,993 advertisements were printed as opposed to the March, 1922, figure of 15,722. In April the figure was 18,561 (April, 1922, 13,847) and in June, 17,030 (June, 1922, 12,592). During the summer months, the monthly average figures remained slightly higher than 13,000 advertisements, indicative that the season was still a major factor in Miami's economy. In October, the figure climbed sharply to 21,253 and in November to 27,033. In the first eleven months of 1923, the previous year's total had been passed by 19,166. Indicating its growth in circulation, the paper pointed out that its increase in daily circulation in January, 1923, over that of January, 1920, was 105 per cent (16,831 over 8,205, average daily circulation). Corresponding figures for Sunday editions for the same periods were a 110 per cent increase or 19,178 over 9,495 average Sunday circulation. Certainly, it added, those figures would justify a twenty per cent increase in advertising rates, the first in three years.

One complaint about Miami's planning or lack of planning was its narrow streets and lack of sidewalks in areas immediately removed from the center. Although the newspapers duly recorded new paving contracts

for asphalt streets and concrete sidewalks from time to time, they belabored the narrow roadways, "the inadequacy of which its founders could not have foreseen." A *Miami Herald* editorial, on May 26, pointed out that the time to prepare for later population increases was then, not when the situation had gotten out of hand. Proper zoning should be instituted, too. During the season of 1923-24, the *Miami Herald* again stressed the need for wider streets. Some public-spirited citizens, it indicated, were donating a few feet of property to help. Such was Fred Rand, developer of Northeast Second Avenue, who not only gave property but built a large apartment house in such a way as to give an added ten feet.

Two days later the journal again hit upon the same theme and observed that the main reason for such slender width was the selfish desire for a few extra lots. Blocks should be longer, too. Thus stirred to action, the Miami Realty Board decided to take up the fight to relieve congestion. As an improvement on street lighting Miami began to plan for "White Ways." The plan called for a complete loop along Flagler Street, Northeast Second Avenue, Southeast Second Street, and Miami Avenue. It was estimated that the cost would run one dollar a front foot to property owners along the loop. To make the city more attractive to the visitor and to the citizen the city commissioners decided to take advantage of the presence of Warren H. Manning, landscape architect brought to Miami to consult on Bayfront Park planning. Perhaps Manning's pronouncement that he believed Miami was destined to become the "big city of the south," was an influence, but he was commissioned to survey the city's parks, streets, harbors, and street planning, and submit a report with recommendations. The *Miami Herald* was delighted with the move. Everyone knows something should be done, said the editorial writer, but what? "The city is outgrowing its clothes."

Not all civic improvements were initiated by the newspapers or the City Commissioners. Frequently prominent citizens or the Chamber of Commerce made suggestions and began movements. The Chamber, for instance, moved to secure waterfront property for the city. It began agitating at Tallahassee, the state capital, for giving Miami title to all submerged bay bottom land in Biscayne Bay south of the county causeway and within the city limits. The bill was defeated in the Senate. Marjory Stoneman Douglas spoke on city planning to the Ad Club, but the first city planning conference had already been held on May 8 in the First Presbyterian Church. The conference, described as "packed," was sponsored by the Miami Woman's Club. It recommended the city charter be amended to include a planning commis-

sion. Other ambitions for civic betterment turned toward establishing a university. The *Miami Herald* suggested editorially that a Pan American University be located in South Florida (with no suggestion as to how it could be secured) and the long-time resident, merchant, and real estate operator, Isidor Cohen, raised the question at a regular weekly luncheon of the realtors. Mr. Cohen felt that a college or university for Miami would give wealthy Cubans an opportunity of sending their children to Miami, a bit closer home, rather than to the North.

Statistics indicative of steady economic growth for Miami were amassing. Burdine's Sons Store, a leading department store, released figures through its manager, George E. Whitten, that showed February, 1923, sales to be 34 per cent higher than those of the previous February; comparable figures for March indicated a sales increase of 32.5 per cent. Miami hotels reported a 50 per cent increase in summer business over the summer of 1922. The inbound freight of the Baltimore and Carolina Steamship Company jumped from 20,000 to 35,000 tons, a 75 per cent gain in one year. The telephone company found that the continuous growth of Miami and Miami Beach forced the adding of between \$500,000 and \$600,000 worth of equipment to provide needed facilities; a like amount was estimated for 1924, and the company planned to spend that sum. The total investment was in the neighborhood of \$2,000,000 with about 8,700 telephones in operation in Miami in December 1923, and with an added 1,500 scheduled for installation in the next sixty days. Fruit and vegetable markets had their best year to date in 1923, 20-25 per cent above 1922 business levels. City payroll figures were averaging \$65,000 a month; the income of organized workers in Miami was set at \$6,000,000. The city tax roll for 1923 showed a total valuation of taxable real estate and personal property to be \$69,911,303, an increase of \$4,943,579 over the previous year's figures.

Miami's rapid growth was most evident in requests for building and alteration permits and in the increase of banking resources. For the first four months of 1923, \$1,763,200 in permits was issued, distributed as follows:

| | <i>Permits</i> | <i>Value</i> |
|----------|----------------|--------------|
| January | 195 | 295,200 |
| February | 136 | 209,100 |
| March | 233 | 422,600 |
| April | 230 | 836,300 |
| | — | — |
| Totals | 794 | 1,763,200 |

By the end of six months the total had reached \$2,913,400 or more than one million dollars greater than the entire previous year and a little more than \$175,000 in advance of the same period of the best year, 1921, when permits issued totaled \$2,735,500. Permits in July were \$1,229,900, the highest for a single month in the city's history. In percentage terms the gain in one year from July, 1922, to July, 1923, was 234.8, according to the figures of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. By November 1, a total of \$5,758,596 exceeded by \$342,796, the banner year of 1921, which totalled \$5,415,800. On December 1, the figure for the eleven months was \$6,232,034 and the entire year equalled \$7,201,267.

In January, construction was mostly residential, but as the year progressed larger buildings were more common which raised the aggregate value of permits issued. In May, two arcades, the Loraine and the Halcyon were planned, both on Flagler Street. Three new churches were erected, The Holy Name Church, locally known as Gesu, the Reformed Jewish Temple Israel, the Riverside Calvary Baptist Church. Several large hotels were projected, too. R. Earle Smith, manager of the Smith Battery and Electric Company, planned a year around, \$200,000 hotel on the southeast corner of Northeast First Avenue and Tenth Street, then somewhat removed from the center of activities. A half million dollar hotel, the nine-story Ponce de Leon was to be built on the site of 227-235 East Flagler Street; it would have, when completed, 126 apartments. S. W. Straus and Company, of New York and Atlanta, offered a \$500,000, 6½ per cent, bond issue on the Ponce de Leon Hotel. The bonds would constitute a closed first mortgage on the land and on the building to be erected; they would also constitute a first lien on annual earnings. The president and controlling stockholder was E. C. McAllister, who erected during the summer a third wing to the McAllister Hotel at the corner of East Flagler Street and North Bayshore Drive. The hotel would then have 350 guest rooms and represent an investment of \$1,500,000. Work began on June 8 on the new building of the Bank of Bay Biscayne, then Miami's largest and oldest bank. Although plans called for fourteen floors only five were to be constructed then. The Miami Woman's Club had plans for a \$250,000 club house and library to be located on the bayfront at Seventeenth Street; and Tatum Brothers were preparing to erect a ten story building on the southeast corner of East Flagler and Second Avenue, the site sold by the Womans' Club for \$345,000. The lot had a frontage of 152 feet on Flagler Street and was sixty-two feet deep. Even gasoline filling stations underwent transformation, like the Bayshore Station

at the end of the causeway which appeared so "unusual and picturesque" that "if it had been intended for a private residence or a bungalow tea-room there would not have been so much to wonder at." The architectural design was Spanish mission style. Large buildings, however, were still enough of a novelty to have the formal opening of the eight-story, \$200,000 Professional Building become an event of some consequence. The owners, the Realty firm of Davenport and Rich, held open house from two to five o'clock in the afternoon and supplied refreshments, souvenirs, and music.

THE SEASON, 1922-23

Whereas a member of our class, Mr. J. C. Williams, having reported certain bootleggers to the county authorities for a certain violation of the law, was assaulted on the streets of Miami by said violators and his life seriously endangered, we desire

First, to commend and approve the action of Mr. Williams as being that of a good citizen and worthy of emulation

Second, to commend the officers for their prompt action in binding over said violators of the law to the criminal court.

Nor, said Reverend J. L. White in support of the resolution of the Fellowship Class of the First Baptist Church Sabbath School of Miami, was Mr. Williams, as charged, a "stool pigeon." If the Fellowship Class and its pastor took a dark view of Miami's lawlessness, there was plenty of justification for it. The *Chicago Daily News* described Miami as a

city where, if you feel the need of a drink and don't happen to have your own flask with you, all you need to do is wait in the shade of a palm tree until a resident comes along, ask him where you can find a bootlegger, and if he is not one himself, he will tell you where to go. You can buy all the whiskey you want in Miami at \$5 a quart.

The article went on to point out that at one time a revenue cutter and a rum-runner were tied up at the same pier, nose-to-nose; the rum-runner reputedly had 40,000 cases of whiskey aboard. "Tommy-rot," said the *Miami Herald*. There are no boats of that capacity plying between Nassau and Miami; as a matter of fact it was extremely difficult to obtain liquor because of the vigilance of the officers. Kenneth L. Roberts, the novelist, who spent considerable time in the area before the boom and during it, observed: "Any prohibition enforcement agent that didn't have lead in his shoes and a daub of mud in both eyes, however, could easily get the goods on twenty or thirty Miami bootleggers in a day." Miami jewel thieves were also accomplished. On February 1, David Joyce, "Chicago millionaire lumberman," reported \$250,000 worth of jewels stolen from his home on Brickell

Avenue. For several days the robbery was a sensation. Almost immediately the police picked up four suspects and then had to let them go for want of sufficient evidence. The police remained "baffled by the disappearance of the Diamonds and Pearls from the Mansion." The paper finally felt constrained to observe editorially that Miami was no worse than any other city of its size and that its most "startling" crimes occurred in the winter when bad elements came to the city from elsewhere to prey on winter visitors. The paper even inveighed against evangelists who preached on religion and health and exhibited neither. They came merely for short periods in the winter, condemned the inhabitants without knowing them, and then left. The *Metropolis* was more outspoken in its condemnation of Miami's failings:

Oh, this Miami! It's getting so much advertising—of one kind and another—bright crooks can come and make a perfectly good clean-up. Sneak thieves and pick-pockets and big gentleman robbers can do a quarter of a million dollars worth of stealing. How they must enjoy a season here!

Activities of the John B. Gordon Klan No. 24 (Ku Klux Klan) went unnoticed except for straight, factual news reporting. Due publicity was given to preparations for the initiation of 150 candidates on Palm Island where a twenty-foot, fiery cross would be burned. The general public was invited to witness the ceremonies and the parade from Flagler Street along North Bay Shore Drive to the county causeway and along the causeway to Palm Island. Hundreds witnessed the parade and thousands the ceremonies on the island. It was estimated that 2,500 automobiles were parked along the causeway. *The Miami Daily Metropolis* carried a picture of the ceremonies, "witnessed by 12,000 people." The season was in full swing.

The *Miami Herald* had, on January 1, looked about with evident satisfaction, for 1923 promised "to be one of the most brilliant in the industrial history of Miami." Business conditions were better, there had been an early influx of winter visitors, a welcome portent of a successful season, and Miami-made products (auto parts, mattresses, baked goods, paints, drugs, hats, perfumes, to name a few) were enjoying a constantly increasing demand.

Despite the promising business outlook the season's social activities dominated the news. Pictures of prominent visitors began to appear on the front pages of the newspapers. William H. Luden who manufactured cough drops in tremendous quantities had arrived to spend some time at his home at 1430 South Bayshore Drive, in Millionaires' Row. William K. Vanderbilt had arrived aboard his three million dollar yacht, *Ara*; General T. Coleman DuPont, United States Senator from Delaware, was staying at the Royal Palm

Hotel, Harvey S. Firestone came to stay at the James H. Snowden estate on Miami Beach, which he bought ultimately at a reputed price of \$350,000. Others to follow were Secretary of Labor James J. Davis, J. C. Penny, "Merchant Prince," Elbert H. Baker, President and General Manager of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, William H. Durant, automobile manufacturer, and James M. Cox, unsuccessful candidate in the last presidential election. Cox purchased the *Metropolis* and assumed control of the publication with the issues of April 18, 1923.

Many of the visitors were prevailed upon to comment on Miami and its future. Mercer P. Mosely, Vice President of the American Exchange Bank of New York, observed that he had "no doubt at all about Miami's continued progress . . . because this country's gifts are God-created and not man created." Frank Hedges Butler of London, near the end of an 18,000 mile trip, told reporters that Miami's climate was superior to all, and "in addition to having the natural facilities for the most beautiful city in the world, Miami's development is marked especially by the efforts of the citizens to use every possible means for adding to the natural gifts." Clarence Darrow observed simply, "Chicago was never like this."

The high point in the round of visitors was the arrival of President and Mrs. Harding. Joseph Kealing of Indiana, David Mulvane of Kansas, national committeeman, and Attorney General Daugherty, recuperating from a recent serious illness, were awaiting the president's arrival while his houseboat *Pioneer* fought "another day's battle" with "the Florida East Coast canal sandbars." Although Harvey S. Firestone had reserved the Snowden estate for the President's use, the President preferred to stay at Cottage 4 of the Flamingo Hotel.

For recreation other than golf, polo, and the beach, the visitor might listen to Arthur Pryor's band which played daily in Royal Palm Park or during the season he might hear visiting artists such as Rachmaninoff, Madame Schumann-Heink, Jascha Heifetz, or Geraldine Farrar. As there was no civic auditorium large enough to hold a sizeable gathering, the artists appeared at the White Temple, a Methodist Church. Miami also had a philharmonic orchestra that was then in its fifth concert season. Celebrities other than musicians also visited Miami. Edward Markham, the poet, spoke to the Monday Club that held its meeting on the lawn of Villa Serena, the home of William Jennings Bryan, and later he addressed the Miami League of Pen Women. Mrs. Bryan spoke before the Housekeepers' Club of Coconut Grove, her talk "scintillating with brilliance and humor." The

target of her wit was Albert Einstein "whose theory of relativity haunted one's mental horizon." He had, she said, "succeeded in getting Euclid, Newton, and Galileo on the run—I am not sure which way they are running—but I am sure he is in hot pursuit." Mrs. Bryan also gave some "clever descriptions" to topics under "serious discussion" such as how to lose weight and how to look at one's back hair.

William Jennings Bryan began his annual tourist Bible Class, meeting in Royal Palm Park, at 9:15 A. M. Sunday morning, with the text: "The Prodigal Son." He also spoke to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union at its "chowder party and general jollification."

The season of 1922-23 was a distinct success. As early as mid-February the Chamber of Commerce was predicting that it would be the biggest Miami had yet enjoyed. More than 30,000 visitors were already in the city, it was estimated, and more would certainly come. To help tourists find rooms the Chamber opened a bureau which served more than 100 persons the day it began operations. Miamians who had rooms to rent were asked to list them with the bureau.

One reason for the increasingly satisfactory seasons, in the eyes of many, was the practice of advertising the city and its resort attractions in selected northern newspapers and magazines. A practice that had been started in 1916, it had been expanded yearly. In 1923, the task of handling the advertising was in the hands of the Chamber and there it remained for years to come. Under the plan the Chamber made the contracts and then the bills were audited and paid by the city. This advertising practice was the reason, said the *Miami Herald* editor, why visitors were turned away last season and why, even though 2,000 additional rooms were available this year, visitors were again being turned away.

NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES IN 1923

Clustered about the City of Miami were the development areas of Miami Beach, Coral Gables, Hialeah, and Fulford. As Miami grew these communities grew also. Their economic activity paralleled that of the larger city and their real estate business and building were as active if not more so. Of the four, Miami Beach, the oldest, showed the most advance. It was the only one that was an incorporated city; the others were real estate developments that had expanded rapidly but had not yet achieved autonomy.

Development for Miami Beach was of two kinds: that undertaken by the city government and that of those interested in the improvement and sale of real estate. Although each was pursuing its own interest, improvements

made within subdivisions with a view to increasing profits redounded to the city's benefit; and each step forward by municipal authorities tended to increase the value of the subdivider's investment.

Early in February, the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce held a meeting at which President Thomas J. Pancoast outlined for the 200 persons present a proposed program of civic improvement for the coming year. He advocated wider streets, a widening of the causeway viaducts, more hotels and apartment houses, and an increase in the advertising of the city. A little less than a month later the city council members announced that shortly there would be a bond election for city improvements and, on April 8, published the legal public notice required:

\$100,000 for water mains
 20,000 for street lights
 7,000 for a bridge to Belle Isle
 65,000 for sanitary sewers
 18,000 for storm sewers
 10,000 for street paving.

\$220,000

The property holders approved the issue as advertised and the city subsequently voted an additional \$200,000 in bonds. By December, further expansion, with projects totaling \$600,000, was planned, and a \$300,000 bond issue election set for January 21, 1924. Included were additional street paving, bridges, and installation of bulkheads along the canals.

While the city engaged in its program, private developers, notably Carl G. Fisher, pushed their programs. In April, it was reported that 100 men were working on a development north of Dade Boulevard. In a matter of a few weeks four or five miles of roadway and sidewalks had been laid, mostly along the new Sunset Lake subdivision. A roadway had been built around two new polo fields and pile drivers were hammering in steel bulkheads to form a new seawall. In the same subdivision a new \$500,000 golf course was under construction. As summer drew to a close developers were filling in the northern part of the city. Tractors cut trees and pushed them into piles to be burned; the area was then filled in and changed from "Mangrove Swamp to a City Beautiful." Always alert for the unusual, Fisher brought in two elephants, Rosie and Nero, who ploughed, hauled, and picked up heavy material. Late in November, Fisher interests were reported as planning to have in their developments fifteen miles of concrete bulkhead,

twenty-seven miles of sidewalk, twenty-one miles of independent water mains, forty miles of electric service extension, and two miles of telephone extension. Of the above they had already built four miles of bulkhead, eighteen of sidewalk and sixteen of watermains. The installations already boasted of 28,000 trees and 6,000 flowering shrubs. An additional 2,500 acres of land would be created, too.

Miami Beach was exhibiting many other evidences of expansion. In 1921, for instance, water consumption was 95,000 gallons; by 1922, it had increased 237 per cent, or 255,600 gallons. When installed in 1921, the 800 kilowatt hour electric plant was thought to be sufficient for three years; in 1922, capacity had to be increased to 1,500 kilowatt hours, and before the 1922-1923 season ended, to 4,000 kilowatt hours. Other utilities also found expansion of services essential. The street railway system went into an extension program entailing expenditures of from \$150,000 to \$160,000. The telephone company planned additional amounts for expansion totaling \$75,000. The coming winter, it estimated, would call for an increase of from 900 to 1,600 new telephone installations. Growth was also evidenced by the increase in the city's real estate valuation which rose from \$224,000, in 1915, to \$6,235,539, in 1922. By years the valuations were:

| | |
|------|------------|
| 1915 | \$ 224,000 |
| 1916 | 335,120 |
| 1917 | 647,500 |
| 1918 | 832,745 |
| 1919 | 2,579,600 |
| 1920 | 3,933,700 |
| 1921 | 5,540,112 |
| 1922 | 6,235,549 |

For 1923, the valuation was set at \$8,222,485. Pointing to the above figures, four leading real estate firms observed in a joint advertisement: "Nothing can stop the increase of property values at Miami Beach." Early in the year the state approved the charter of a second bank for Miami Beach, the Miami Beach Bank and Trust Company. In the early summer, the Miami Beach First National Bank advised that deposits were now over the million dollar mark, \$750,000 greater than they had been the previous summer.

One of the indices most frequently used to indicate progress, building permits issued monthly, was continually emphasized. In February, the *Miami Herald* indicated that more building had been started in January at Miami Beach than at four much larger southern cities:

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| Charleston | \$ 14,138 |
| Savannah | 86,370 |
| Miami | 315,600 |
| Tampa | 338,115 |
| Miami Beach | 341,950 |

And Miami Beach had yet to complete its eighth year of corporate existence. By mid-year the total was \$2,798,267. At the close of its fiscal year, October 31, Miami Beach showed the greatest percentage of building increase of some twenty-three Florida cities; it had issued permits in the amount of \$3,869,950. In terms of types of buildings, the first eleven months of 1923 had permits issued for 125 dwellings at an average cost of \$12,000, seventeen apartment houses at an average cost of \$17,000, and sixteen hotels at an average cost of \$94,800. Two houses costing in excess of \$100,000 were built on Star Island by Locke T. Highleyman and by W. P. Adams at 120 Bay Road. Outstanding among the hotels constructed were the Nautilus, so named by John Oliver LaGorce, and the Pancoast. The Nautilus Hotel was listed as a \$1,500,000 project involving a hotel and adjacent cottages. The site would include two islands, one of six and one-half acres, the other of one and one-half acres with bridges connecting the islands. The Pancoast Hotel, first announced as a \$750,000, 125 room hotel, was later estimated to cost \$375,000. It was to be located on the ocean front at Twenty-ninth Street. To build it, a Pancoast Hotel Company applied for a state charter; its \$500,000 capital would be made up of \$250,000 in preferred stock and a like amount in common stock. Subsequently, a fifty-eight room lodge was planned at a cost of \$150,000 to care for the overflow from the main building.

Although considerable building was in evidence, Miami Beach realtors were anxious to attract additional capital to provide further expansions. Four realty companies issued a call for:

Ten more hotels . . . guests are sleeping on emergency cots in the four large hotels at Miami Beach. Reservations sufficient to fill many hotels are being turned away daily . . . Miami Beach needs five more hotels the size of the Flamingo and five more the size of the Lincoln, Wofford, or Marlborough. We will cooperate with responsible builders in erecting such needed accommodations.

The above statements were at variance with an early seasonal advertisement of the Chamber of Commerce which boasted that Miami Beach had ample accommodations for tourists and "the best hotels in the South; twenty-five apartment houses, \$350 to \$1,200 for the season." Houses and cottages might be obtained at prices ranging upwards from \$700.

To protect investors and insure an attractive community, building restrictions, based upon the cost of the house, were established; the following were examples:

| <i>Subdivision</i> | <i>Minimum Cost</i> |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mid Golf | \$ 7,500 |
| First Addition | 7,500 |
| Ocean Front | 15,000 |
| Ocean Front (north of city limits) | 7,500 |
| First Pine Tree Drive | 15,000 |
| Miami Ocean View | 6,000 |
| Sunset Lake | 5,000 |
| Nautilus | 10,000 |

The above restrictions were set by the real estate companies, but in 1923 the state legislature had authorized the city council to pass ordinances zoning Miami Beach. Some of the realtors sharply attacked this legislation and formed the Miami Beach Anti-Zoning Association; John J. Hayes, an active, large-scale operator served as its president. The act was illegal, asserted the association, because it had not been advertised sixty days before passage. If permitted to stand it would take property without compensation and permit the government to control, use and dispose of private property. It would, moreover, demoralize the real estate market by deterring non-resident buyers from investing. A few individuals in office could thereby inflict damage on private property at a whim. The restrictions stood.

Like Miami, Miami Beach enjoyed a social season. In fact, its business other than real estate was caring for the needs of the visitor. Golf, polo, the beach, and fishing were its chief attractions, but others were offered. An art show of 113 paintings of 27 artists at the Chamber of Commerce building attracted 600 visitors on the first day, and the Carl G. Fishers gave a Sunday musical at thier home, the Shadows. Among the more than 100 guests who came to hear Reinald Werrenrath sing was Jascha Heifetz who was to play later in the week in Miami. Like Miami's, too, the 1922-23 season on the Beach was a thriving one. The Chamber of Commerce president, Charles W. Chase, Sr. estimated that hotels and apartment houses had four times as many people as last season. That indicated, he said, a need for moderate-priced hotels for persons who wished to spend merely a few days. The Flamingo Hotel had already spent more than \$500 in sending messages to say no space was available.

Miami Beach continued to develop as the year wore on. If there were those business men and city fathers who looked on with satisfaction, there were others who let their enthusiasm gain momentum. Two couples had

returned from a vacation trip to Asheville, North Carolina, and reported that they had advertised the community well. "In fiery red letters on several of the biggest boulders at the base of Chimney Rock" they had written: "Come to Miami Beach, Fla.," "Oh, you Miami Beach, we're waiting for you," and "Miami Beach, the playground of the world."

Across the bay and to the southwest of Miami lay Coral Gables. It was, in 1923, purely a real estate development subject to the political jurisdiction of Dade County, yet it continued to get from its founder and developer, George E. Merrick, more vital improvements than many autonomous communities.

George Edgar Merrick, who came to Miami as a boy in 1895, was the son of a Congregational minister who held a charge on Cape Cod. After the blizzard of 1895, the Reverend Merrick moved his family to the 160 acres that later became the center of the development. The name Coral Gables seems to have come from a combination of the material used in constructing the house, Coral Rock, (not a true coral, but rather a limestone resembling coral) and the father's admiration for Grover Cleveland, whose home was named Gray Gables. Merrick and his brothers worked together on the farm until he went to Stetson University and subsequently to New York to fulfill his father's wish that he become a lawyer. He seems to have studied law but "practiced poetry," always a major interest with him. On his father's death Merrick returned to Miami to run the farm. When Fisher began to expand his real estate operations on the beach, Merrick's thoughts turned toward having a development of his own, a suburb of Miami that would be a model city "wherein nothing would be unlovely." He added to his holdings as he could and, by 1921, he had 3,000 acres. In November, the first sale was held with E. E. Dammers as auctioneer. Initial success was followed by subsequent sales. As the development prospered, he called in architects and landscape artists. The buildings were all to be of similar style, a style Merrick called "Mediterranean," part Spanish and part Italian, "a combination of what seemed best in each, with an added touch of gaiety to suit Florida mood."

In 1923, sales were in the hands of the realty firm, Dammers and Gillette and Harry A. Burnes, who advertised that they kept "constantly at your command 40 private automobiles to take you to Coral Gables at any time you desire to go." Large, comfortable busses left Miami daily except Sunday at 9:30 A. M. and 2:30 P. M.

Merrick was not content to permit his projects to grow slowly or perhaps to grow stagnant because interest shifted elsewhere. The money he received from sales in a large measure went back into the development in the form of improvements. In January, 1923, a full page of the Sunday *Miami Herald* was devoted to an advertisement announcing the opening of the Coral Gables business section. It lay between Douglas and LeJeune Roads with Coral Way the southern boundary. The main boulevard, parallel to Coral Way, was named Alhambra Plaza, a 140 foot thoroughfare. Merrick had already erected the Coral Gables Garage and the electric plant, "two fine structures in the best Spanish design." A cement block plant, a tea room, a restaurant, an eight-store structure, two filling stations, and a water tower were also under construction. A little more than two months later the developer announced a \$5,000,000 development program for the year. Three million dollars would be expended for homes (300 of them), \$1,000,000 for business, industrial and educational construction, and the balance for parks, plazas, golf courses, club houses, streets, sidewalks, an electric lighting system, a water system, and other improvements. As a news item the *Miami Herald* carried the story that four new sections of the "big Suburb" would soon be opened and that the move would involve the building of twenty miles of streets and of sidewalks, and the extension of utilities. Later in the year a Venetian Lake (the Venetian Pool) was announced. The plans included a twenty foot diving rock with carved steps leading up to it, two waterfalls cascading five feet into the lake, a pergola pavilion, and locker rooms for men and women. As a sort of climax there would be a colorful float to cruise around the lake.

In September, Merrick added a 180 acre tract on the east that included the old John Douglas home and grove. This addition with 300 acres previously acquired on the northwest gave the development almost two miles of frontage along the Tamiami Trail and made the suburb a rough square running about four miles to a side. The main entrance from Miami would be at the corner of Douglas Road and the "Trail," or Southwest Eighth Street. Toward the end of the month, as preparation for the coming season, the Granada tract of 450 acres was opened for sale, and thirty modest-priced homes were planned for it.

As an example of the way in which Merrick provided facilities for his investors, there was the Coral Gables Utilities Corporation of Miami, chartered by the state, with a capitalization of \$500,000. Its stated purpose was "owning, operating and maintaining factories, plants, and necessary machin-

ery and equipment for the manufacture and distribution of electricity which is to be used for power and lights." Merrick was president of the corporation, Harry A. Burnes, vice-president, and Edwin G. Bishop, secretary-treasurer. In less than eight months of operation the \$100,000 equipment was outgrown; it had been considered adequate for a three to five year period. Additional equipment in the amount of \$50,000 was being added.

Nor did Merrick forget the social and recreational needs of those he would attract to "Miami's Master Suburb." In January, he opened a nine hole golf course, for use of which a one dollar daily green fee was charged, but a season membership might be obtained at a cost of twenty-five dollars. Soon he erected an outdoor cement and tile tea room and dancing pavilion between the club house and the professional's house. The club house "scarcely completed" was deemed so inadequate that an additional \$60,000 was to be spent erecting a second floor.

The *Miami Herald* accorded full recognition to the development's growth. In the late summer it began a three column section devoted to Coral Gables news items—on Mondays. The *Miami Daily Metropolis* had been carrying a Coral Gables section at intervals since January.

Several miles north of Coral Gables lay Hialeah, in greater Miami's northwest. In 1922, it, too, was just two years old and expanding rapidly. The original development was cut out of the Curtiss-Bright Ranch Company holdings. Hialeah was not only a subdivision it was also the catch-all for most of the sporting events around Miami. The dog track was located there as were eventually the major race track of the area and the Jai Alai fronton. It was also the location of the movie studios which were the Florida hope of a new and bigger Hollywood (California). It was also the home of a famous prohibition drink in Miami, "Hialeah Rye."

In 1923, Hialeah was being pushed as a real estate development. With \$503,803.65 spent on building in Hialeah in 1922, advertisements were pointing to the \$100,000 worth of building being launched in the first ten days of January of 1923. To demonstrate just how active the community was, a man was stationed at the post office building on New Year's Day to count traffic. He found that 1,257 vehicles had passed his post in one hour! With building operations reaching a total over \$200,000 in the month of January real estate sales began to pick up. In Hialeah was located the motion picture organization known as Miami Studios, Inc., capitalized at \$300,000 and founded in 1921. The studios with more land than needed

decided to offer for sale 84 lots "immediately east of the huge studio buildings at Hialeah."

In February, D. W. Griffith came to Miami to begin work on the motion picture the "White Rose." The event called forth a full page ad on the back page of the Sunday *Miami Herald*. There was just a small card in the center of an otherwise blank page:

DAVID WARK GRIFFITH
the eminent motion
picture director
has started production in
THE MIAMI STUDIOS
at Hialeah.

N. B. T. Roney, active in large scale operations in Miami Beach real estate, bought heavily into Hialeah real estate. The result was a small flurry in sales. It was reported that Agnes McGrath of Little River had bought a lot at 6:00 P. M. Saturday evening for \$1,000. On Monday she was offered but refused \$2,600. In the meantime notices of new construction continued to appear in the newspapers along with the interesting note that Hialeah found Seminole Indians "to be ideal golf caddies," for their "marvelous eyesight trained for years in the impenetrable fastnesses of the Everglades" enabled them to follow the ball.

North of Miami was the Florida Cities Finance Company's development, Fulford-by-the-Sea, which offered lots on easy terms at prices ranging from \$700 to \$1,500. They also advertised a stupendous improvement program promised to be completed in three years, "a scientific program of progressive development." Of all of the developments of major consequence in greater Miami, Fulford-by-the-Sea ran into the most difficulty. Its programs were always just a little more ambitious than those of its competitors. When Coral Gables announced a \$15,000,000 university, Fulford planned one to cost \$30,000,000. Of the developments also it was Fulford that fell before the charge of fraud.

Miami, in 1923, was on the threshold of its first great period of expansion, its boom. In a large measure the stage was set and the characters moved into place. The pattern of the boom was set, too, for Miami was a curious combination of the serious, the artistic, and the bizarre. For every conservative, well planned development offering attractive home-sites and improvements to its investors, like Coral Gables, for instance, there were

many which traded upon barbecues, jazz bands, and car raffles to attract buyers to lands of dubious value. Just so was the community with its established businesses, its lectures and concerts, and its Seminole golf caddies, beach honky-tonks, and fiery letters painted on North Carolina rocks.

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