

# Library in a Pioneer Community: Lemon City, Florida

By Ron Blazek\*

It was the last decade and a half of the nineteenth century and this country had emerged from the Civil War into a period of accelerated maturation. Social, economic, political, and philosophical forces had blended into a course of action highly individualistic which became associated with the American tradition later described as rugged individualism. From an agrarian focus, the nation was veering toward an urbanized existence. Public library development came about largely through such individual effort, and presented a predictable pattern of growth in communities throughout the country. Through the efforts of women's clubs and improvement societies, the subscription libraries, in which interested citizens purchased memberships, formed an important component of the cultural establishment and are recognized antecedents of the public library as we know it today.

By the end of the century, the public library movement was well under way in the Northeastern and Midwestern regions, but had made much less impact in the South where the dynamism spawned by the industrial revolution was less pervasive. Florida, a relatively new state (1845), lacked the bookish heritage of others and early libraries were generally found in the northern parts of the state close to the seats of government. The public library did not appear until the 1870's in Jacksonville, and real growth did not occur until the twentieth century.

In truth, the southern part of the state in the 1880's was still pioneer country, and the settlers of Dade County had their counterparts in the Western frontiersmen of the pre-Civil War era. Squatters and later

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homesteaders were few and infrequent, and the pioneer communities were small in size. The story of Lemon City and the birth of its library is the story of the creation of a social-cultural agency in this type of setting. It is typical Americana and reveals the type of spirit which focused on higher-level needs once the barriers to survival and decent living were overcome. What happened in Lemon City occurred in thousands of other communities in which cultural interests were eventually aroused.

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### **Lemon City: A Pioneer Community**

At the corner of N.E. 2nd Avenue and 61st Street in Miami (a neighborhood marked by increasing change as a result of newly arrived Haitian residents) stands a marker identifying the area as "Lemon City Pioneer Settlement." It is doubtful that the new residents, or even some of the old ones, know that there was once a bayside village here that antedated Miami itself and served as a shipping center for numerous varieties of produce grown here, and as a supply center for the many homesteaders who were seeking a new existence.

Prior to the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862, white residents were few in South Florida except for Key West. Several early pioneers had settled in the Miami region and traded with the Seminoles, hunted, fished, and planted crops; but it was not until the homesteaders arrived in significant number that the area could be said to have a population. Even so, several of these early residents lived on the property for many years as squatters before taking the time and trouble to make formal application for the land. In the case of John Saunders and William Pent, they divided much of their land into small parcels and began selling it almost as fast as their deeds had been granted in 1889. Out of this activity emerged a pioneer hamlet of working class families accustomed to physical labor and eager for industrious pursuits. They were drawn to the region because of its fertility and potential for economic development unlike the community of Coconut Grove several miles to the South. The residents of Coconut Grove were of a more affluent class who chose their residence for its beauty rather than its possible yield.

Though Lemon City was a port, it never was a port of entry; though it called itself "City," it had no local government, no land taxes, no police or fire department, no newspaper, no zoning, no garbage pickup, no sewer, no water system, and until 1909, no electricity. Yet as a pioneer community, it functioned well. It had a school, post office, churches, stores, a library, a livery stable, and an active community improvement association.<sup>2</sup>

For a time the community had two names since a petition signed by twenty residents and presented to the federal government asked for a post office to serve the community of Motlo, named after a friendly Seminole chief. The post office was granted as *Motto* (the name victimized by the usual bureaucratic bungling) in 1889. At this time, the name Lemon City was also being used by some due to the presence of the lemon grove, planted either by Saunders or another early settler, Samuel Filer. Obviously, Lemon City, as a name, had more appeal and by 1893, references to *Motto* had ceased to exist. In this period, one would have been able to visit a general store, barbershop, saloon, (not without its detractors), blacksmith shop, wharves and warehouses, all prior to the coming of the railroad and the birth of Miami, some five miles to the south. The county had started a school in 1890, and Mrs. Cornelia Keys had opened a hotel in 1892.<sup>3</sup>

The regional weekly newspaper, the *Tropical Sun*, operating out of the county seat at Juno, regularly printed the business news as reported by its Lemon City correspondent. On February 18, 1892, it was disclosed that Captain Adolphus Russell completed fencing of his five acre lot for planting pineapples while his steamer was being repaired in Jacksonville.<sup>4</sup> On March 31, 1892, the paper was pleased to announce the reopening of the Lemon City Store under the supervision of Mr. Will Filer of Key West.<sup>5</sup> On September 29 of the same year, in addition to the opening of Mrs. Keys' hotel and the expectation for "liberal patronage" there, the big news was the beginning of a large steamboat wharf by Mr. Lewis Pierce to accommodate Mr. Colgrove's steamboat between Lemon City and Key West around November 1.<sup>6</sup>

A popular legend which has the possibility of truth and is retold by Peters is that former Standard Oil magnate Henry Flagler, who had built several luxury hotels in St. Augustine, was interested in bringing his railroad to Lemon City. He consulted Pierce in 1895, but found an unreceptive listener, who advised him to move his station south to the Miami River. Subsequent discussions with Julia Tuttle, who owned much of the land where Fort Dallas once stood, brought the kind of concessions that Flagler sought. Thus, Miami was to emerge and prosper and eventually swallow up the pioneer town of Lemon City.<sup>7</sup>

### Brash Youngster to the South: The Growth of Miami

Up until the time Flagler brought in his railroad at the urging of Julia Tuttle in 1896, the area around the Miami River did not attract community development as did Lemon City and Coconut Grove. The two major developments in the Miami area were Fort Dallas built during the Seminole Wars on the north side of the river and the trading post of William Brickell on the south side. Julia Tuttle, daughter of an early settler, E.T. Sturtevant, had purchased thousands of acres around old Fort Dallas and had used it as a residence since 1891. She was business-minded and had great expectations and hopes for the area; at any rate, she, more than anybody else, induced Flagler to invest in Miami. Unfortunately, she died rather unexpectedly only two years after the arrival of the railroad which was to change the course of events for the region. At the time of her death, she left so many land holdings, mortgages, and pending deals that it reportedly took two years to straighten out her estate.<sup>8</sup>

With the coming of the railroad, the effects were felt immediately in the arrival of new residents from the north, and on May 15, 1896, the *Miami Metropolis* published its inaugural issue. This was the precursor to the *Miami News* and in 1896 offered an impressive eight-page chronicle on a weekly basis. In that historic inaugural issue, it set the stage for the type of publicity it wished to provide for the bay region.

It is the first paper ever published on Beautiful Bay Biscayne — the most southern newspaper on the mainland of the United States, published at the most southern railroad point in Uncle Sam's domain, and at the most southern telegraph terminal and express office on the mainland, at Marvelous Miami. The town with over a thousand souls and the survey of the place not yet completed. The coming Metropolis of South Florida.<sup>9</sup>

In the next two months, the major issue was incorporation and voter registration lists were prepared, boundaries were determined and enthusiasm was kindled. Finally, in its July 31, 1896 issue, the *Metropolis* was able to report that a city had been born. Out of about 440 registered voters, including 182 blacks, 344 votes had been cast. Elected were a mayor, several aldermen, a clerk and a marshal.<sup>10</sup>

The next few years saw great expansion and growth which was religiously reported in the pages of the *Metropolis*. Typical of such paeans was the story of August 3, 1900: "We find ourselves now after a life of four years a prosperous little city of 3,000 people. . . In four short years we have made a modern city, with paved streets, sewerage, water-

works, telephone, electrically lighted modern business blocks and dwellings, schools and churches that would reflect credit on a city of 50,000 population." The main point of the article was to bring attention to what must be done for the future, which included "appropriations for the harbor, additional industry, and bonds for public buildings."<sup>11</sup> In 1904, Miami reached a size of 4,500 augmented by a winter population of visitors.

By July of 1904, the *Metropolis* was issuing two newspapers, a daily for the city and a weekly for the surrounding area, and the headlines were filled with events of national and international importance; the World's Fair in St. Louis, the Chicago meat packers' strike, Teddy Roosevelt's nomination and subsequent election, and the Russo-Japanese War. Through it all Miami expanded and new growers, planters, tradesmen, businessmen, and construction workers arrived in a continuous stream, advertised their services in the newspaper, and helped put the city together. Flagler was the major contributor through his railroad, which provided transportation for passengers and freight, his construction of the elegant Royal Palm Hotel in the center of town near the terminal, and his many gifts. Tributes to the giant appeared frequently in the pages of the *Metropolis*, and he was identified "as the most important force and influence in developing the East Coast Country."<sup>12</sup>

The effects of this expansion on the surrounding towns were easily seen in examining the reports of local correspondents in the pages of the *Metropolis*. This slightly bitter reflection from the Lemon City reporter in June of 1896, soon after the railroad was completed and just before Miami was incorporated, was typical: "The exodus still continues from Lemon City and the prospect is that only a few of the original settlers will be left to hold the fort. Everybody seems to be eager to get to Miami, and the ambitious youngster is daily taking on more airs and vaunting itself over less fortunate neighbors."<sup>13</sup> Although the article did indicate some hope for future development, the "ambitious youngster" in reality effectively had rendered such nearby communities as Lemon City, Coconut Grove, and Little River to a steady growth and eventual annexation.

### **Creating a Library in Lemon City**

Probably the most interesting and appealing legend regarding the founding of the library at Lemon City is the story of the "Remittance Man" which was widely reported in the newspapers of the 1950's when the Lemon City Library and Improvement Association made a determined bid to the members of the City Commission to authorize the

building of a new branch. The story can be traced to one Joseph Faus, local resident, spokesman and member of the Lemon City Library and Improvement Association, part-time journalist, and amateur historian. Although Peters is not willing to completely discredit all parts of the story, since folklore in many cases does have the ring of truth, she informed the author that documentation did not exist for the story and was not a necessary prerequisite to Mr. Faus' journalistic style.<sup>14</sup>

The most detailed version of the story appeared in the *Miami Herald*, April 3, 1955. The stranger was born in England of a baronial line and was disinherited by his father in 1869 for marrying a commoner. In 1885, he arrived in Lemon City, ill and widowed, with books of poetry and a Bible in his knapsack. He had made the trip with Ned Pent, the second barefoot mailman who charged \$1.00 to escort people along the beach while delivering his mail to and from Lantana. The stranger lived in a rented cabin and was called the Remittance Man because once a month he would go to the post office to receive his remittance. His days were spent reading poetry to all who would listen and his audience was generally made up of the good ladies of the town who were starved for culture. His influence was such that he spurred them to get a school established in 1885. Later when he died, he was buried in a field of wild oleanders.<sup>15</sup>

The story reappeared in the *Miami News* with a few embellishments almost nine years later at a time when the new Lemon City Branch of the Miami public library was to be dedicated. The year of his death was established as 1896, and the sad event inspired Mrs. Keys to step in and get the "girls" to procure books for library development. The seeming inconsistency of reporting the date of founding of the Lemon City Public Library as April 7, 1894 (two years earlier) is not clarified.<sup>16</sup>

The problems in dating the library at Lemon City, the inception of the Library Association, and the opening of its new building occur as a result of confused thinking which, in effect, has given rise to the development of another myth of larger proportions — that of Lemon City having primacy in community library development for the region.

The historical marker at the site of the present Lemon City Branch Library on N.E. 61 Street (old Lemon Avenue) identifies the Lemon City Public Library as the earliest public library in South Florida, organized and open to the public on April 7, 1894. The Florida Library Survey of 1935 also reports the year of 1894 for Lemon City, and 1897 for Coconut Grove. What has happened is that the beginning date of the "public" library at Lemon City has been confused with the inception of a school



Lemon City Library on N.E. 61st St., circa 1945.

library started there by Miss Ada Merritt soon after she came to town in the 1890's. The good works of Mrs. Keys, and the creation of a library association, were not to take place until 1902.<sup>17</sup> This, in effect, establishes the Coconut Grove Library and Coconut Grove Library Association as the earliest active library agencies serving the community in these parts, a fact supported by careful examination of the records.

E.V. Blackman, a local historian and former president of the Dade County Historical Association, fixes the date of founding the Coconut Grove Library as June 15, 1895 (two years prior to the date given in the Florida Library Survey), and reports a donation of books by Mrs. Andrew Carnegie after attending a meeting. In 1897, the library was moved to a storeroom and called the Exchange Library. Four years later, the library occupied a new building on donated land.<sup>18</sup> On November 5, 1900, a petition was filed for incorporation of the Coconut Grove Library Association with the general purpose being to maintain "a circulating library for the use of its members" (white persons of good character who will pay dues).<sup>19</sup>

Confusion exists also with respect to definitions of a public library; but neither Lemon City nor Coconut Grove conformed to that ideal, and neither used the term "public" to describe its character or its base of support. Instead, they preferred the term circulating library which more correctly described their operational modes. In both cases we have true subscription libraries which charged membership fees. In January, 1897,

an item appeared in the *Miami Metropolis* announcing formal installation of the Exchange Library of Coconut Grove in its new quarters. "A membership fee of one dollar per year confers the right to take out a new book every week, besides granting the privileges of a reading-room equipped with all the latest magazines and periodicals..."<sup>20</sup> The same situation existed in Lemon City several years later when its library was finally completed.

At one point in 1902, Coconut Grove even attempted to share its library resources with Miami and provide a delivery service but "owing to a lack of patronage" found it impossible to continue. Fifty subscribers at \$1.50 each were needed to make it pay, but only half that number subscribed. The library at that time contained about 1,200 books and had about 125 subscribers in Coconut Grove.<sup>21</sup> This was at the time that the good ladies of Lemon City had just decided to form their library association and were beginning to operate out of Mrs. Keys' house.

It is obvious that the town of Coconut Grove exerted library leadership in the area and was the first to serve its community with a library agency of some public dimension. This is not surprising due to the higher socio-economic level of the residents and the leadership of a few affluent, educated people. Notable among them was the children's author and travel writer, Kirk Munroe, who was the chief stimulus and first president of the library association there. When in town, he was constantly working on behalf of the library and the pages of the *Miami Metropolis* are filled with reports of his efforts in the late 1890's and early 1900's. Such activities included essay contests on the value of books,<sup>22</sup> lawn socials,<sup>23</sup> and library memberships given to children as a reward for good school behavior.<sup>24</sup>

### The First Library in Lemon City

As the pioneer town of Lemon City grew in size and industry, it was natural that people form into groups related to social and cultural interests. From the *Tropical Sun*, the first newspaper in the area, comes the following report from November 3, 1892.

Lemon City will soon be noted as the Club City of Dade. They have now the "Pleasure and Profit Club"—object, mutual improvement and church and Sunday School work; a society called "The Busy Bees of the Everglades" composed of the young people and school children of the neighborhood—object, the establishment of a circulating library, and general improvement. They have already on their shelves more than one hundred books. "The Lemon City Literary Society" meets every Wednesday evening for debate, readings, recitations, etc. "The Lemon City



Yacht Club” is yet in its infancy, and last but not least is “The Lemon City Baseball Club” which, from the talk of its members, must have reached its full stature weeks ago.<sup>25</sup>

The desire to join organizations is a predictable phenomenon with respect to human dynamics and was even more important to the pioneer culture where both independent thought and cooperative action were required for survival. Social life, therefore, dictated the union of like spirits in such a way as to extract personal pleasure from group activities designed to promote worthy causes. Thus, religious and cultural groups and clubs abounded then (as they do today), and when a social, educational, or religious agency was the object of such consciousness its creation was generally assured.

The “Busy Bees of the Everglades” was formed by Miss Merritt, the highly regarded school teacher, soon after she came to Lemon City. Tributes to this dedicated lady appeared frequently, such as the one in the *Tropical Sun* of February 18, 1892.

The patrons of the Lemon City school should more than appreciate the effort that Miss Ada Merritt is making to establish this as the best public school in the county. It is perfectly phenomenal the progress all the pupils have made under Miss Merritt’s instructions. . . .<sup>26</sup>

The Busy Bees did, indeed, succeed in their quest to establish a library in the school, and it may well have been the first formal library in these parts. That it has become confused with the development of the Library Association and the public library is unfortunate, but understandable, historically. The pages of the newspaper of the time are replete with reports of the Bees’ activities in behalf of their worthy cause, and are the same types of activities waged in behalf of the community library by members of the library association some ten years later.

On November 10, 1892, came the report that “The Busy Bees will give a supper on Thanksgiving evening for the benefit of the library. They cordially invite all to come, and to come hungry that they may be fed.”<sup>27</sup> The success of that venture was reported over a month later: “Thanksgiving was duly celebrated here, and that evening a large assembly gathered at the school house to partake of a beautiful spread given by the Busy Bees of the Everglades. It proved a success both socially and financially.”<sup>28</sup> A final reference may be included here because of an interesting name change as a result of a printer’s error or reporter’s carelessness early the following year. “A society of maidens calling themselves *The Buzzing Bells* gave a pleasant supper and dance at the residence of

Captain A. Russell on February 17, to raise money to purchase a library. Forty-seven dollars and thirty-eight cents were taken in."<sup>29</sup>

Another factor which may have added to the confusion is the rebirth of this group ten years later with a true name change from the "Busy Bees" to the Pioneer Literary Society. "The pupils of the Lemon City School reorganized their old literary club and are now in excellent working order. . ."<sup>30</sup> They had built a collection of 400 volumes over the years, and evidently, the desire for further activity was strong. This came at a time when the Library Association had been in operation for eight months and was busily pursuing its own course.

### **The Village Improvement Association and Library Involvement**

The biggest step forward in the development of a community library in Lemon City, as it was in many nineteenth century towns, was the creation of an organization composed of ladies who had the time, interest, and energy to give to community betterment. These individuals were usually of the upper or upper-middle socio-economic strata and represented a compelling force in local affairs. So it was in Lemon City when, in 1896, the ladies "met at the residence of Mrs. C.H. Keys and organized an improvement society, object—to improve the streets of the city."<sup>31</sup>

What followed was a series of activities designed to earn money and gain the cooperation of the community in building better roads. Rocking a road was hard labor and Lemon City men had very little time to give to the crushing and laying of stone; therefore, it is not surprising that progress was slow and references in the newspapers were fairly frequent with respect to the need for volunteers or the importance of the work. "The V.I.A. had a number of men yesterday on the streets. The pavement from the railroad station to the city dock will be completed in a few days and will be an improvement which will do great credit to a town of our size. Too much praise cannot be given the enterprising members of this society."<sup>32</sup>

The oyster supper given by the ladies of the Improvement Society for the benefit of the road fund was fairly attended and a complete social success. About \$10 was realized. The ladies are doing a good work in this direction, for this community. Good hard roads are being built and that means more for a place than anything else. People are glad to settle in a community where they have good roads.<sup>33</sup>

The difficulties associated with the procurement of volunteers to do heavy labor must have been burdensome to members of the V.I.A.,

and we can only speculate on the degree of relief they felt when Dade County took over the job of building roads and sold bonds for this purpose in 1902. They had already demonstrated their prowess in fund raising activities of social nature in the past, staging such events as poverty socials,<sup>34</sup> box lunches,<sup>35</sup> holiday balls,<sup>36</sup> and social dances,<sup>37</sup> as well as the aforementioned oyster supper. Fortunately, the development of a library became their next project, one to which they brought five years of wisdom and experience.

### **The Push for a Community Library The Lemon City Library Association and its Success**

The first newspaper reference to the future development of a library was a rather innocuous item in November of 1901. "There are good prospects that a circulating library will be established here at no late day. This will be a grand thing for Lemon City and vicinity and we trust it will be done."<sup>38</sup> There is no telling who provided this information, for the Library Association had not yet been formed, but it had evidently been considered by the ladies of the V.I.A.

Just as the V.I.A. had been organized in the home of Mrs. Cornelia Keys six years earlier, it ended its existence in the same place and the Lemon City Library Association was born February 4, 1902. Mrs. Keys, twice widowed and relatively affluent, had come to Lemon City from Chicago in 1890 and had taken charge of the cultural life of the community. Her house was to serve as the library for nearly three years until a library building was finally completed. In attendance on that historic occasion in 1902 were thirteen women (most of whom were members of the V.I.A.) who had agreed to pay ten cents per month dues, bring a book to donate, and take home a book to read. Officers were elected on a six-month basis; Mrs. Dupont, president; Mrs. Higgs, librarian; Mrs. R. Russell, assistant librarian; Mrs. Brown, treasurer; and Mrs. Keys, secretary. Mrs. Brown was able to report a total of \$3.10 (\$1.30 in dues and \$1.80 from the treasury of the V.I.A.). The newspaper carried an item on February 14 announcing the entertainment to be given by the Lemon City Circulating Library on Washington's birthday. "The proceeds to go towards buying a bookcase and other equipments necessary for furnishing the library room. Oysters and other refreshments will be served. It is ardently hoped and expected that a large audience will be present to help with their money and appreciation in this most laudable enterprise."<sup>39</sup>

This was only the beginning of a stream of activities conducted,

staged, and organized by the members of the Library Association, as they were encouraged by the success of their effort. "The social the night of the 22nd proved a success, and the sum of \$19.00 was made for helping the circulating library."<sup>40</sup> In reference to a Saturday evening affair held two weeks later in which oysters, ice cream, and cake were served; "The social held Saturday evening—in the interest of the library—was liberally patronized, and a neat sum was added to the fund already collected."<sup>41</sup> Two months later, in May: "The Library Association of Lemon City will give a pie social at Lemon City hall, Wednesday evening, May 14th, the proceeds to go for the benefit of the library. All are cordially invited to attend."<sup>42</sup>

Association members evidently succeeded in getting others to help them conduct a dance the following month.

Refreshments were prepared by the following ladies of the Library Association... Also, some non-members of the Library Association kindly consented to assist the ladies in preparing the refreshments, as the burden of these entertainments always falls on the first-mentioned above ladies, and this should not be, as all ought to be willing to "lend a hand" as all are mutually benefitted.<sup>43</sup>

Evidently, volunteerism was still a problem, but at any rate, the dance cleared \$10 for the library and was an enjoyable affair.<sup>44</sup>

The Independence Day issue of the *Miami Metropolis* reported in dramatic fashion the first substantial material donation to the library cause:

The monthly meeting of the Library Association was held Tuesday and proved to be even more interesting than usual. After the general routine business of the meeting was over, our dear generous member, Miss Dellie Pierce, presented in a few modest words—a handsome lot for a library building.

Now that the Association has had such a handsome donation, it trustingly hopes that in the not distant future, a neat and commodious library building can be erected. One that will be a pride to the Association and a credit to the settlement.<sup>45</sup>

Up to this time, philanthropy, a necessary ingredient to public library development, had been manifest in terms of time and energy generously given to the library cause. Working-class people of Lemon City could afford little else, but Dellie was the daughter and heir of Lewis Pierce, land developer and businessman, who is reported to have rejected Henry Flagler's offer seven years before. Her gift was a tangible one

which spurred even more vigorous fund-raising activity; the largest affair to date was thrown the very next month.

The young ladies of Lemon City have about completed the arrangements for the library entertainment to be given a week from next Tuesday, August 19th, in the town hall. The library has grown to such large proportions that a building has to be built to accommodate it. Two lots have already been donated and now the young ladies have taken it upon themselves to start the ball rolling towards the building. They have gone to a great deal of work and have prepared a program which cannot fail to please everybody. The admission, 25 cents for grown people and 15 cents for children, is very reasonable and there is no reason why the hall should not be crowded with people willing to be entertained and eager to help the library along.<sup>46</sup>

The *Miami Metropolis* of August 29 carried a detailed account of the entertainment and called it a "decided success," consisting of an orchestra of home talent, broom drill, chorus, recitations, and duet while "ice cream and cake disappeared like magic, and a jolly sociable time with it." It must have been a long evening and an ambitious undertaking for in addition there were two tableaux, "Cupid Conquering Mars", and "National Colors", and a light drama entitled *The Precious Pickle*. "The proceeds will benefit the library about \$50.00."<sup>47</sup>

The final newspaper item regarding the Library Association in its maiden year appeared on October 17 and acknowledged with thanks for "favours shown and generous donations to the library fund by Messrs. Beck and Froscher of Miami. They hope these young men in their laudable ambition to furnish the best of entertainment and amusement for the people will meet with good success."<sup>48</sup> It, indeed, had been an eventful year and the sum of \$240.77 had been raised. This type of activity was to continue for the next two years until the dream of a new library building was finally realized. In the year 1903, \$195.20 was raised, and in 1904, \$247.49 was earned for a total of \$683.46 in three years.<sup>49</sup>

Work on the library building was begun during this third year and was finally completed in December 1904. It was a single-story frame edifice much like an auditorium with a stage at one end. Furnishings were only a few tables and chairs and the books and bookcases brought from Mrs. Keys' house.<sup>50</sup> It must have looked very grand, though, to the members of the Library Association who had worked so hard to achieve this end, and they had every right to feel proud of their collection of 346 books all neatly shelved. Unfortunately, the Association had to employ the more contemporary economic policy of deficit spending since the \$683.46 was about two hundred dollars short of what was needed. Expenditures over the past

three years were \$727.85 for land and building, and \$125.90 for books and furnishings, a total outlay of \$853.75, or a balance yet to be raised of \$170.29. A loan was obtained for \$200.00 to meet such obligations in opening the facility.

### **Dedicating the Library—January 13, 1905**

At the time of the dedication of the library building in 1905, the president of the Association was Flora Simpson, the second wife of Lemon City's most illustrious citizen, Charles Torrey Simpson, biologist, naturalist and author. The Simpsons had arrived in Lemon City in 1903 in order to give Mr. Simpson the opportunity to study and write about tropical wildlife. Flora opened the dedicatory exercises with an expression of gratitude for the successful results of their mission.

During the three years, the Association membership had swelled to 35, including seven men, among them the Reverend George Waldron, the main speaker at the dedication of the library on January 13. Waldron apparently had served as minister of the Congregationalist Church in Miami, and had been a respected citizen of the area for several years. His acknowledgement of the male membership at that time is tongue-in-cheek:

Thirteen women and not a man! But the new organization, wise beyond its years made provision for the admission of these lords of creation, and with noble haste they rushed forward in large numbers to ally themselves with these women, until today there are a vast army of seven men members of this Library Association! And, beyond a doubt whatever has been accomplished for good in the past three years is the work, not of the women who have slaved for many a hard-earned dollar, but of the seven men who have permitted their names to do honor to this library.<sup>51</sup>

Waldron also addressed the debt and freely admitted the "impeachment", but spoke with optimism of its resolve. "But let me remind you that the association has only to continue raising funds with the same success as in the past and one year more will see the society free from debt." Thanks were extended to Mr. B.B. Tatum, editor of the *Miami Metropolis*, Captain W.B. Shaw, and County Clerk E.C. Dearborn for their valued services in bringing about the legal incorporation of the Library Association, and to Frederick Morse and Henry Flagler for donations.<sup>52</sup>

The dedication was a joyful event before an enthusiastic audience. "During the early part of the evening a beautiful supper was served while the Biscayne Orchestra of Miami discoursed sweet music to the assembled guests." Waldron's speech closed with a hopeful look to future participa-

tion by the community in meaningful activities housed in the new library. As if a sign of future success, that memorable day was a financially rewarding one: "A very substantial sum was added from the receipts of the evening to the funds of the library."<sup>53</sup> Already the debt was on its way to retirement, and the pioneer community had gained a permanent cultural center.

### Epilogue

That the early activists were successful in establishing a permanent agency is seen in the fact that the Lemon City Library outlived the community itself. In 1925, Lemon City became part of the brash youngster to the South, but it was not until 1942 that the library was joined to the Miami Public Library System. Up to that time it continued to serve its public with volunteer workers managed by the Lemon City Library and Improvement Association. The original building was in service until 1963 and, itself, became a legend and the subject of much attention.

During the 1950's when Joseph Faus and the Lemon City Library and Improvement Association made a determined bid for a new branch to be built while at the same time having the old building protected as a historical shrine, it was described in glowing terms. "What the old North Church is to Boston and the Hermitage is to Nashville, this sturdy and attractive edifice is to Southeast Florida."<sup>54</sup> The theme was picked up by local columnists like Jack Bell in his *Town Crier* column,<sup>55</sup> and reporters like Lawrence Thompson.<sup>56</sup> This romantic press treatment heightened in view of its scheduled closing in 1963 and upon the occasion of its removal in 1964 (after a fire had made it impractical to restore). What most of these pieces had in common was the misinformation associated with the story of the "Remittance Man" and dates of founding.

It is certain that the old library, indeed, had met the Reverend Waldron's expectations in serving the community as a center for meetings, projects, and entertainments. It is probable that some of these events were of far reaching consequence as reported in a two-minute picture and narrative feature for television station WTVJ. Among these were the disclosure by State Senator F.M. Hudson of his plan to create an additional two political divisions out of Dade County, which resulted in the creation of Broward and Palm Beach Counties, planning meetings for the establishment of Everglades National Park as attended by Charles Torrey Simpson, the building of the Dade County School System, and the deep water harbor for Miami.<sup>57</sup> In his 1955 article Faus also described the advocacy, here, of Dr. J.G. DuPuis, early physician and druggist, for the establishment of a

Pan-American university, later developed by George Merrick into what was to become the University of Miami, and the idea for the Palm Fete (forerunner of the Orange Bowl) as presented in a forum by E.G. Sewell.<sup>58</sup>

To be sure, this is the stuff of which dreams are made and upon which human interest thrives, but whether or not these events really occurred there, the building of the library at Lemon City is an important event. It is tangible evidence of the cultural progress in American community life which bespeaks a higher level of felt need than that of mere survival. The necessary social, cultural, economic, and industrial forces were melding here in the nineteenth century to create a condition favorable to permanent establishment of community libraries. The natural evolution of those which had begun as membership-for-fee agencies into public libraries was symptomatic of this country's growth and progress, an important component of the adult education movement. The Lemon City Library was an example of that condition in South Florida, its development inexorably bound to the people it served.

## NOTES

1. Thelma Peters, *Lemon City, Pioneering on Biscayne Bay, 1850-1925* (Miami: Banyan Books, 1976), p. 302.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
3. HASF Exhibit, "Beginning of Community Development", March 1981.
4. "Lemon City Locals", *The Tropical Sun*, February 18, 1892. Historical Association of South Florida (HASF) has two microfilm reels of this elusive publication dating from this time period.
5. *Ibid.*, March 21, 1892.
6. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1892.
7. Peters, *Lemon City*, pp. 68-69.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
9. *The Miami Metropolis*, May 15, 1896 (R-1—Miami Public Library). The Library has a complete run of this publication in which the reels are numbered sequentially.
10. "Miami Incorporated", *Miami Metropolis*, July 31, 1896 (R-1).
11. "Miami's Past, Present, and Future", *Miami Metropolis*, August 3, 1900 (R-3).
12. "Our Prosperity and Its Contributing Causes", *Miami Daily Metropolis*, December 31, 1904, (R-7).
13. "Lemon City Matters", *Miami Metropolis*, June 5, 1896, (R-1).
14. Thelma Peters, personal interview, February 12, 1981.
15. Joseph Faus, "Library Was Cradle of Dade's Culture", *Miami Herald*, April 3, 1955.



16. Agnes Ash, "Library Bugs Beneath the Lemon Trees," *Miami News*, March 29, 1964.
17. Peters, *Lemon City*, p. 208.
18. E.V. Blackman, *Miami and Dade County, Florida: Its Settlement, Progress and Achievement* (Washington, D.C.: Victor Rainbolt, 1921), p. 75.
19. "Coconut Grove Library Association," *Miami Metropolis*, November 2, 1900, (R-3).
20. "Coconut Grove," *Miami Metropolis*, January 29, 1897, (R-1).
21. "Coconut Grove," *Miami Metropolis*, April 4, 1902 (R-5).
22. "Coconut Grove," *Miami Metropolis*, January 29, 1897, (R-1).
23. "Coconut Grove Notes," *Miami Metropolis*, March, 12, 1897, (R-1).
24. "Coconut Grove School," *Miami Metropolis*, April 28, 1899, (R-2).
25. "Lemon City Locals," *Tropical Sun*, November 3, 1892. HASF Microfilm. See Footnote no. 4.
26. *Ibid.*, February 18, 1892.
27. *Ibid.*, November 10, 1892.
28. *Ibid.*, December 15, 1892.
29. *Ibid.*, February 23, 1893.
30. "Lemon City Items," *Miami Metropolis*, October 31, 1902.
31. "Lemon City Gleanings," *Miami Metropolis*, November 13, 1896, (R-1).
32. "Lemon City Items," *Miami Metropolis*, May 14, 1897, (R-2).
33. "Lemon City Lispings," *Miami Metropolis*, February 25, 1898, (R-2).
34. "Lemon City Items," *Miami Metropolis*, February 26, 1897, (R-1).
35. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1897.
36. "Lemon City Liners," *Miami Metropolis*, February 8, 1900, (R-3).
37. "Lemon City Items," *Miami Metropolis*, September 13, 1901, (R-4).
38. *Ibid.*, November 22, 1901, (R-4).
39. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1902, (R-4).
40. *Ibid.*, February 28, 1902, (R-4).
41. *Ibid.*, March 14, 1902, (R-4).
42. *Ibid.*, May 8, 1902, (R-5).
43. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1902, (R-5).
44. *Ibid.*, June 20, 1902, (R-5).
45. *Ibid.*, July 4, 1902, (R-5).
46. *Ibid.*, August 8, 1902, (R-5).
47. *Ibid.*, August 29, 1902, (R-5).
48. *Ibid.*, October 17, 1902, (R-5).
49. "Lemon City's New Library," *Miami Metropolis*, January 17, 1905, (R-9).
50. Peters, *Lemon City*, p. 209.
51. "Lemon City's New Library," *Miami Metropolis*, January 17, 1905, (R-9).
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*
54. Joseph Faus, "Library Was Cradle of Dade's Culture," *Miami Herald*, April 3, 1955.
55. Jack Bell, "Town Crier," *Miami Herald*, January 19, 1958.
56. Lawrence Thompson, "Progress OK, But Lemon City Wants History Too," *Miami Herald*, February 9, 1958.
57. Joseph Faus, Television Transcript, WTMS, two minute feature untitled. Dade County Reel no. 63, "Dade Libraries—Miami Public through 1963," Florida Collection, Miami Public Library.
58. Joseph Faus, "Library Was Cradle of Dade's Culture," *Miami Herald*, April 3, 1955.

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