

# **“Watch Miami:”**

## ***The Miami Metropolis* and the Spanish-American War**

By Thomas F. Fleischmann

Fought in 1898, the Spanish-American War marked the arrival of the United States as a world power. Few institutions celebrated this event more than the print media, especially the *New York World* and the *New York Journal*. During the three years preceding the outbreak of hostilities, these tabloids led the way in arousing a national mood of militarism through the techniques of sensationalism and yellow journalism.<sup>1</sup>

However, not all newspapers followed the lead of the national press. Founded on May 15, 1896, more than two months before the city incorporated, *The Miami Metropolis* was one such journal. It was an eight page weekly published Fridays at five cents a copy. Walter S. Graham and Wesley M. Featherly were the paper's first editors and publishers whose policy was to boast of Miami's weather and location as a means to boost the city and its commercial expansion.<sup>2</sup> Preoccupied with his insurance business, Featherly quickly leased the paper to Edward Byington, who became its manager and editor. Byington also saw the newspaper as an important factor in Miami's future, centering primarily on commercial and social growth. This practice was not uncommon for nineteenth century frontier tabloids and their editors.<sup>3</sup>

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This study will analyze *The Miami Metropolis'* coverage of one event, the Spanish-American War, as a case study of the nature of the newspaper and how it reflected the aspirations of the recently established city.<sup>4</sup> The Spanish-American War offers not only an excellent opportunity to study the tone of the newspaper and the new city but also to observe how a major national event affected Miami. The war caused Byington, *The Metropolis*, and the city to seize their first real chance to boost Miami nationally. It provoked patriotic excitement along with fear of invasion, and an opportunity to enhance the city's growth and development. *The Metropolis* recognized Miami's location and port as important factors in playing a dominant role in the Caribbean during and after the struggle.

From 1896 to 1898, *The Metropolis* paid little heed to the Cuban rebellion or the possibility of war with Spain. This lack of attention was typical. Historian William J. Schelling discovered that Florida's major newspapers underestimated the extent of the problem in Cuba while believing that war was unthinkable. Fearful Floridians believed that war would jeopardize the prosperity they had experienced throughout the 1890s. They also believed that the United States would annex Cuba, thereby creating economic rivalry in agriculture and tourism. He concluded that Florida's newspapers did not support the conflict until war was inevitable and until the Teller Amendment, disclaiming any intention on the part of the United States to annex Cuba, passed.<sup>5</sup>

As recently as five weeks before the outbreak of hostilities, in April 1898, *The Metropolis* predicted there would be no war with Spain. It based its belief on the fact that Spain appeared to have little money or credit, few men, and had been humiliated by the United States too often not to meet its demands, which included freedom for Cuba, an indemnity for the loss of the battleship *Maine*, and a pension for the survivors of those killed. The paper felt that a show of force and the appearance of a few warships in Havana harbor would get the compliance the U.S. desired. Locally, there was fear that if war came, Miamians would be attacked, not by invaders but by Spanish gunboats which would use Miami as their target.<sup>6</sup>

Several weeks later war seemed inevitable. *The Metropolis* realized that Miami's geographical liability could also be an

asset. "In the event of war between this country and Spain," the journal noted, "there can be no doubt Miami will play an important part."<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the eight-page tabloid began boasting the significance of Miami as a supply station for both the Army and Navy and an embarkation point and coaling station for the latter. Repeatedly, *The Metropolis* listed Miami's advantages: the most southern point by rail, closer than Tampa or Jacksonville to the seat of war, a harbor safely landlocked and sufficiently deep, with direct and quick railroad connection to the coal mines of Alabama. It reasoned, therefore, that "Very early in the fray the Navy Department will recognize its superior advantages as a base of supplies,"<sup>8</sup> and recommended, "that a regular army post should be established and suitable fortifications erected here without delay."<sup>9</sup>

Not surprisingly, *The Metropolis*' perspective echoed that of the city's and newspaper's chief benefactor, Henry M. Flagler. A founding partner of Standard Oil, Flagler devoted the last thirty years of his life to developing Florida's East Coast. His chief instruments were his railroad, the Florida East Coast Railway, and a chain of luxury hotels. For Miami, the coming of Flagler's railroad and construction of the Royal Palm Hotel signaled the beginning of the city's growth and expansion. When war was declared, Flagler, like other railroad men in Florida, saw an opportunity to increase the value of his developments at government expense.<sup>10</sup> And *The Metropolis* expressed in public what Flagler uttered in private.<sup>11</sup> In a letter written by the industrial magnate to Senator Platt, Flagler described the benefits which Miami could provide the government if troops were stationed in the city.

In my judgment, Miami would be a preferable point for a large number of troops . . . At Miami, we have an inexhaustible supply of purest water . . . I have built an iron water tower at Miami, 120 ft. in height. On the south side of the Miami River, across from the town, there is an unbroken stretch of five miles of bay front most admirably adapted for camping purposes. A water pipe could very easily be extended to the camp, and thus an abundance of pure water be supplied. The drainage is excellent, and for the comfort of officers and men, they can depend upon the constant sea breeze. I don't believe there is a pleasanter location on the Atlantic Coast, south of Bar Harbor, to spend the summer in than Miami.<sup>12</sup>

The possibility of being left out of the preparation for war caused anxiety among many Florida communities. Signal stations for lookout and early warning programs were being erected along the east coast of Florida, but only as far south as Cape Canaveral. The paper objected, believing that signal stations should be constructed as far south as Miami because of its proximity to Havana and the potential need for protection. *The Metropolis'* attitude toward security was "better safe than sorry." "We do not anticipate an excursion from the Spanish," the journal noted, "but at the same time the unexpected often happens and it is well to be prepared for it."<sup>13</sup> Further, in its efforts to obtain its objectives, *The Metropolis* resorted to reprinting articles and excerpts supporting this viewpoint in the Jacksonville *Times-Union and Citizen*, a newspaper in which Flagler also had an interest. In the matter of Miami's potential role as a supply and embarkation center the *Times-Union and Citizen* stated, "Miami unquestionably should be this point, on account of proximity."<sup>14</sup> It added, "The rail routes via Jacksonville to Port Tampa and Miami are open, and there is plenty of good coal up in Alabama."<sup>15</sup>

Simultaneously, *The Metropolis* discovered that the war scare, Miami's location, and its real or imagined apprehensions about the Spanish could mean geographic, demographic, and financial growth. As fleeing refugees from Key West landed in Miami, the newspaper expressed concern for their safety and continued to hope that war could be avoided.<sup>16</sup>

On April 15, 1898, *The Metropolis* reported that construction of fortifications had commenced on Brickell Point overlooking Biscayne Bay. A battery of four large guns consisting of two ten-inch and two eight-inch mounts were to be installed in order to protect and guard Miami's harbor entrance. *The Metropolis* suggested that a gunboat or two and one or more torpedo boats might also be stationed in the bay as additional protection.<sup>17</sup> The War Department, however, felt that the gun emplacement was adequate security.<sup>18</sup> Sarcastically, Byington, the editor, observed that, "The War Department is evidently in need of a revised map of Florida."<sup>19</sup>

By this time though, the press approached hysteria over Spanish preparations to ravage Miami and the countryside in search of provisions, and *The Metropolis* issued a call to arms.<sup>20</sup>

Spain had to obtain supplies from somewhere, and consequently, *The Metropolis* noted, "her war ships can come near enough to send a few hundred men in small boats on some dark night to pillage stores, carrying off provisions, and do other damage."<sup>21</sup> A well-equipped home guard, the paper theorized, would be of valuable service during such a time and therefore should be organized immediately. The community, in turn, responded by forming two local militia groups, the "Miami Minute Men" and the "Miami Rifles," containing 100 and 63 men, respectively.<sup>22</sup> Apparently, the paper reasoned that if the War Department was not going to protect them, they would protect themselves.

When war came on April 25, 1898, the War Department announced that it had selected Tampa as its primary logistical site in the Caribbean because of its harbor and railroad facilities, a decision *The Metropolis* was quick to call short-sighted. Annoyed by the choice, the paper wondered how Tampa could be chosen over Miami, when Miami offered itself willingly to the government during this critical time. Discarding the notion that Miami was jealous of its sister city, *The Metropolis* instead insisted that the city took pride in Tampa's achievement. *The Metropolis*, however, did lament, "the focus which has been drawn upon Tampa, and the utter disregard which has been shown for Miami is difficult to understand."<sup>23</sup>

As if to point to the faultiness of the government's choice and the advantages overlooked, *The Metropolis* reiterated Miami's salient features. Again and again, it noted that in terms of transportation and location the city contained an ample railway which placed the city one hundred miles closer to Key West than Tampa and a deep harbor which was viable and feasible as demonstrated by the established steamship line connection with the island city. Miami's climate was an ideal spot for a camp because it was the healthiest summer point in the South with an unlimited supply of pure water. These valuable aspects alone, the paper felt, made it imperative that the authorities reconsider the southeast coast of Florida for a military camp.<sup>24</sup>

The pride of Miamians and *The Metropolis* was not the only thing smarting from the War Department's snub; so were their pocketbooks. Byington editorialized that there were good times, "By reason of the massing of troops at Tampa the merchants of the city are reaping a rich harvest."<sup>25</sup> Troop expenditures, gov-

ernment purchases, and an influx of visitors which necessitated the opening of its winter hotels, allowed thousands in profits to be made by Tampa's businessmen.<sup>26</sup> This effrontery weighed heavily upon *The Metropolis* and the city, particularly since they believed that Miami possessed advantages equal, if not superior, to Tampa's from the standpoint of location, hotels, water, and climate. However, Miami, "had seen nothing of war preparation beyond the location of small guns at Brickell's point."<sup>27</sup> Indignantly, the editor declared, "We are patriotic all right, but when this near to the seat of war it would be more satisfying to have some of the recognition which is naturally to fall to us."<sup>28</sup>

In the meantime, the biggest thrill that Miami received was the arrival of Spanish prisoners-of-war as they came from the front and were transferred northward for confinement. One of the more memorable of these occasions occurred when Colonel Cortijo, reputed son-in-law of Captain-General Valeriano Weyler, commander of the Spanish troops in Cuba, arrived during the week of May 9 as part of an exchange for two *New York World* correspondents held captive by the Spanish in Cuba. *The Metropolis* lost no time in public relations when the Colonel was forced to remain overnight because of a missed steamship connection to Key West. The colonel and his entire entourage were comfortably provided for and given a tour of the city with the result that they, "expressed themselves as being much pleased with Miami."<sup>29</sup> At approximately the same time the army sent Brigadier General James Wade to study Miami as a possible camp site, but quickly rejected the city for reasons unexplained by *The Metropolis*, even though the paper enthusiastically predicted that, "Nothing has yet been given out as to what will be done in this matter, but the indications are that several large commands will be ordered here within a week."<sup>30</sup> This setback did not discourage the paper from launching another offensive to obtain more war preparation or troops.

The paper reiterated what the government could find in Miami:

Excellent camping grounds. Pure Water. The softest air on earth. A healthful climate. Good bathing facilities. Excellent sanitary arrangements. No malaria. No fevers. No mosquitoes. Plenty of fire wood. A deep water channel. Good railroad facilities. The biggest and best dock in Florida.<sup>31</sup>

Everything was here and available except Spaniards. Anxious to curry favor with the government, *The Metropolis* averred: "If Uncle Sam doesn't see what he wants let him ask for it."<sup>32</sup>

Additionally a new endeavor was found for Miami. In June discussion began over the possibility of transferring the prize depot for captured ships from Key West to either Savannah or Charleston. This became necessary because of harassment of prisoners on board detained ships by the Cuban populace. One way to end this abuse and prevent further trouble would be to move the prize depot. Not missing an opportunity or taking the chance of being ignored, *The Metropolis* interjected, "We beg to interrupt the progress of the row with the suggestion that as a prize depot, Miami would be better than either Savannah or Charleston, and that if Key West is to be abandoned Miami should be chosen in its stead."<sup>33</sup>

Secondly, the paper introduced efficiency as an argument for Miami, Taking note of the postal problems at Tampa, the paper commented that the same would occur here unless the government took action by forwarding additional postal clerks if and when soldiers would be stationed in Miami.<sup>34</sup> However, if the government had the foresight to do so then *The Metropolis* felt that their postmaster would have little difficulty in handling the task.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, a second inspection of Miami was underway by General Lawton as a possible site for troops.<sup>36</sup> After spending a day in "Marvelous Miami," General Lawton drafted a more favorable report than that of General Wade. This second tour was prompted because, as the paper saw it, the government recognized the value of Miami's geographical location and decided that it would be prudent to go over the ground a little more thoroughly.<sup>37</sup> *The Metropolis* now revealed what it felt were the reasons why Miami was rejected in the first place: Secretary of War Russell Alger had heard rumors of mosquitoes, bad water, and fever.<sup>38</sup> But the presence of such maladies were dismissed by the paper stating that a physician was sent who, "found absolutely no fever here of any kind and he pronounced the water good," and, "The mosquito problem was looked into and it was found that there were no mosquitoes here."<sup>39</sup> The paper hoped that because of the differences between the first and second report troops would be located in Miami shortly.<sup>40</sup>

*The Metropolis* had figured right. Troops of the Seventh Army Corps began arriving the following Friday, June 24, 1898. They





There were 2,000 people living in Miami on June 24, 1898, when the troops of the Seventh Army Corp began arriving. Within seven days their number reached 7,500.

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consisted of two brigades of volunteers comprising six regiments. The First brigade was composed of the First Texas, First Alabama, and First Louisiana while the Second brigade was composed of the Second Texas, Second Alabama, and Second Louisiana. These infantry regiments were transported by rail, arriving at the rate of one thousand a day until they numbered 7,500, quite a number considering Miami's population stood at 2,000.<sup>41</sup> Assured a week earlier that the soldiers would arrive, the paper now came out slugging at what it considered a severe oversight from the beginning: "The truth is that Miami should have been selected in the first place, instead of Tampa, over which we have every advantage in the matters of location, healthfulness, good water, and freedom from the pests which afflict most other places."<sup>42</sup>

Once the troops settled, they discovered that Miami was far from idyllic. Studies have shown that the soldiers experienced an uncomfortable, difficult and even violence-plagued tour. Various



reasons accounted for their unpleasant stay. Some were due to the army's logistical problems and others to Miami itself. Supply shortages were a constant problem. Shortages of cooking items, camp equipment, improper uniforms, missed pay days, and irregular rations made the soldiers angry and unhappy.<sup>43</sup>

Soldier displeasure was compounded by the partially completed camp site and their enlistment in clearing the land in addition to their military training duties. Nearly sixty years after the encampment, Sgt. Charley H. Carr of Company F, First Texas, recalled that he, "cleared a lot of land for Henry Flagler when Miami was only a depot, a hotel and a jungle."<sup>44</sup> As if this situation was not bad enough, the soldiers experienced unhealthy water, miserable weather, and a growing sick list. Ill soldiers received poor treatment due to inadequate medical supplies. Mrs. Harlan Trapp, a Coconut Grove pioneer, reminisced: "I was glad to mend garments and gave them all we had for an improvised hospital across the road."<sup>45</sup> Not surprisingly, rowdiness became a problem, and the scarcity of recreational facilities and activities needed to occupy soldiers in their off-duty hours did little to alleviate trouble. As Donna Thomas in "Camp Hell," inferred, Miami's chief contribution to this predicament and an added source of disillusionment for the troops was the city's complete lack of facilities needed to sustain a military camp.<sup>46</sup> The reality contrasted sharply with *The Metropolis'* comment during the first week that, "They're all pleased with Miami."<sup>47</sup>

Reading *The Miami Metropolis*, one would not realize the sense of dissatisfaction felt by many camped here. Only through a careful perusal can one distinguish the change in tone from enthusiasm to defensiveness. During the first several weeks of Camp Miami, the local press appeared only interested in what the troops meant to the city, the business community and the diversions provided to the troops during their off-duty hours. The paper literally bubbled with exuberance as it claimed that a "Report says that the deposits in the Bank of Bay Biscayne have increased over \$55,000 since the coming of the troops. Business of all kinds has more than doubled. The merchants can hardly get goods fast enough."<sup>48</sup>

Distractions from the loneliness and rigors of camp life were supplied by local groups and institutions, and the Army. The swimming pool of the Royal Palm Hotel, Miami's major hostelry, was opened to the soldiers. The Young Men's Christian Association

put up tents where soldiers could read and write letters or play checkers or backgammon. The First Texas and First Louisiana erected booths for the purpose of reading and writing. The Second Texas even organized a band to entertain the troops and Miami-ans. Military canteens were opened to provide soft drinks and personal necessities such as soap, razors, and tobacco. Also, local pastors and churches attempted to assist regimental chaplains in their moral advising and counselling duties. However, these attempts proved insufficient because of the difficult tour that the soldiers were experiencing.

Soldiers found other means to distract themselves in their off-duty hours. Sgt. Carr remembered mischievously that on July 4, 1898, "He and a few buddies took their rifles, 'borrowed' a boat, and went up the Miami River to shoot alligators."<sup>49</sup> Others swan naked in the bay, spent time on the beach or practiced their marksmanship by shooting coconuts out of trees.<sup>50</sup> While these pranks were harmless, other attempts to alleviate boredom proved to be dangerous to Miami's black residents.

J. K. Dorn, a Miami pioneer, wrote of harrassment of black Mi-amians by Company L of Texas over the course of several days. It started one afternoon when two white women came across a black man coming down a sidewalk. Instead of stepping off the walk and allowing the women to pass, the black continued on course forcing them to move aside. This scene was witnessed by a couple of Company L soldiers who reacted with rage. They grabbed the man, beat him, and attempted to lynch him on a nearby tree. Some officers, however, were able to prevent the murder.<sup>51</sup> That evening, soldiers from Company L marched into the black section of Miami and began shooting out every kerosene lamp found burning. This action caused blacks to evacuate to Coconut Grove, a community five miles to the south. Without black labor, Dorn recalled, white Mi-amians found it difficult to operate their restaurants, hotels, and stores, "so we sent a squad to Coconut Grove and promised them they would be protected, so they returned and by eleven o'clock were working again."<sup>52</sup> The next night soldiers from Company L went north a mile outside the city limits to Billy Woods Saloon where liquor was sold and blacks were permitted to drink separately. The soldiers went into the saloon and raised a ruckus before returning to camp.<sup>53</sup>

The most outrageous act occurred on July 23, 1898. That eve-

ning Virgil H. Duncan, a private in Company M, First Texas Regiment, shot and killed Sam Drummer, a black cook, in the middle of a public street. The incident began in a crowded store when Drummer brushed against a white woman while attempting to pass here in a narrow aisle. According to *The Metropolis*, "Duncan seems to have had cause to regard this occurrence as intentional rather than accidental."<sup>54</sup> He became enraged and threatened Drummer but did nothing until the black completed his business, walked out of the store and into the street. Duncan followed Drummer and several seconds later fired four shots into him killing him instantly. At this point, "Lieutenant T. S. Smythe rode up on horseback, and having seen what had occurred, disarmed Duncan and sent him under guard to camp."<sup>55</sup> A coroner jury exonerated Duncan, ruling that, "Drummer came to his death by an unknown."<sup>56</sup>

Next, the army had its turn. A General Court Martial was held charging Duncan with first degree murder. Specifically,

In that he did, in time of war, with premeditation and design to effect the death of one Levi Drummer, a citizen of the United States of America, unlawfully and with malice aforethought, kill the said Drummer, by shooting him to death with a pistol or revolver. This at Miami, Florida on the 23rd day of July, 1898.<sup>57</sup>

Without explanation, the court found Duncan not guilty, released him from confinement, and returned him to duty.

Nevertheless, financial and commercial growth remained a primary focus of *The Metropolis*. The first pay day for the troops on July 21, 1898 attracted considerable attention. Nearly \$80,000 was paid to the soldiers. One regiment received \$40,000 because it had not been paid since May 1st.<sup>58</sup> *The Metropolis* eagerly watched and followed the money as it went to businesses, "Any one passing through the streets last night could not have any doubt about yesterday being pay day. The cold drink stand reaped a rich harvest, and those that had eatables for sale filled their coffers with the filthy lucher."<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, Miami's banks and post office had banner days, as over \$3,700 passed into the money order department, while the understaffed express office simply could not keep up with the business.<sup>60</sup> Evidently, many soldiers saved or sent money home to their families. In typical Horatio Alger fashion the paper moralized that the boy who saved his money or sent it home to assist his family was a prince.<sup>61</sup> Noting one boy in particular, who

sent all but three dollars of his pay to his mother in Louisiana, *The Metropolis* predicted that, "That boy will, bye and bye, make his mark in the world."<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand the hardships of the men were minimized by the paper: "Despite hard drilling and the general disagreeableness of soldier life, the boys are enjoying their stay in Miami. Some of them spend almost the whole of their spare time on the bay."<sup>63</sup> But by the third week and throughout the remainder of the encampment, *The Metropolis* hinted at an undercurrent of problems endured by them. July heat prompted a change in drill hours and the necessity of restricting soldiers to camp between the hours of 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. as a means of keeping them out of the sun during mid-day.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, *The Metropolis* felt that, "A three hour's steady drill in the hot sun is a good test of the ability of the troops to stand hard service in a tropical climate. This is what one company did yesterday and we are told not a man fell out."<sup>65</sup>

Sanitation was a problem from nearly the beginning. Of particular nuisance was the disposal of human waste, which was the major source of disease and death within the camp.<sup>66</sup> Soldiers were advised that Miami was healthful and every precaution should be taken to keep it so, warning that, "It is hot weather and garbage decays rapidly filling the air with disease germs."<sup>67</sup> Obviously, this admonishment was not enough since two weeks later *The Metropolis* announced that the Sanitary Committee had appointed a new sanitary inspector citing that, "There has been a great deal of just complaint in regard to the general sanitary condition of the town, also of the dumping of garbage in the north portion of the city."<sup>68</sup> The inspector was authorized to stop illegal dumping of garbage in the northern end of the city and placed in charge of seeing to it that the area was cleaned and stayed that way. Along with these responsibilities, he was empowered to condemn spoiled fruits and vegetables being sold by grocers and vendors.

Though the retailing of liquor was not practiced in Miami, alcohol abuse and alcohol related problems plagued the city and the soldiers. The organization of a local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and its call in *The Metropolis* for help from local churches supports this conclusion. Further, the Union requested a meeting with women and ministers in order to enlarge its working force by forming an auxiliary. The W.C.T.U.'s expressed aim was to work for the comfort and best interest of the soldiers camped in Miami.<sup>69</sup>

Nightly church gatherings and revivals were a clue that morale was a problem. Miamians were scolded for their lack of concern for the moral and spiritual welfare of the soldiers. Some system had to be devised to ensure that at least one chaplain or pastor would be present each evening to preach or talk to the men. These meetings were felt to be a source of encouragement for the soldiers to do right and to help them through a hard day.<sup>70</sup>

This attitude of concern shifted to one of defensiveness when on July 29, 1898, *The Metropolis* revealed that Secretary of War, Russell Alger, had dispatched General Fitzhugh Lee, commanding the Seventh Corps, to investigate incidents of sickness in Camp Miami. A week earlier, the paper reported that besides measles and mumps there were no serious illnesses.<sup>71</sup> However, on the 29th, it reversed itself while defending Miami:

There are quite a number of cases of sickness among the soldiers. The great majority of these are cases of measles, for which Miami is in no wise responsible. The other cases are typhoid fever and a variety of minor ailments for none of which this climate is responsible. Our own citizens are enjoying the very best of health.<sup>72</sup>

According to the newspaper this investigation was prompted by an inquiry by the governor of Texas to the Secretary of War Alger concerning the condition of the Texas troops at Camp Miami. The Secretary responded by ordering General Lee to Miami to examine the situation first hand, instructing him to move the troops north if illness prevailed to an unusual degree.<sup>73</sup> Apparently, the general did not like what he saw, for on August 1, 1898, General Order No. 37 was issued detailing the troops to Jacksonville. The soldiers began breaking camp on the following day.<sup>74</sup>

*The Metropolis* should not have been completely surprised by the situation. It had a point of contact within the local chain of command and had become aware of the possible departure. The paper admitted as much in its July 22nd issue, noting: "We met a soldier with whom we have become quite well acquainted and he said, 'I am awful sorry but we have received marching orders. The 7th corps is to be consolidated at Jacksonville.'" <sup>75</sup> Obviously, what became the immediate concern of the paper was not the pullout of the troops and loss of business but the reasons why. The army ostensibly removed the soldiers because of widespread sickness and the general unhealthfulness of the region. Circulation of

such accusations was bad publicity which could hold far reaching ramifications for a city that prided itself on its location and climate as its major appeal to attract further settlement and development.

With this prospect evidently in mind the paper printed a separate defense of Miami and its climate, absolving it of any responsibility for the illness of the soldiers. Calling the stories circulating exaggerated and false, *The Metropolis* shifted the blame to the victims, to another area of the country, and, indirectly, to the war and the Army. Causes for the illness, it wrote, were the result of the soldiers undergoing the transition from civilian to military life and their arrival from a malarial infested region off the gulf coast of Alabama. Miami, on the other hand, should be judged by the health of its citizens, which was never better; not by conditions which existed in the encampment among men who brought illness with them or as a consequence of military life.<sup>76</sup> Among the 7,500 troops the paper counted only 13 deaths in five weeks, listing the cause of these fatalities: suicide (1), gunshot (1), typhoid fever (6), and from measles complicated by other ailments (5). These figures were compared and contrasted to Miami's own population of 2,000 citizens of which no adult citizen had died since February, 1898.<sup>77</sup> With defiant air *The Metropolis* concluded that Miami was a healthful city as evidenced in its citizenry.

The Army's reasons for removing the troops, and the paper's defense, served only to cover the larger explanation for the departure. In a somber letter from Brigadier General William W. Gordon, Commanding Officer of the Second Brigade, to Joseph A. MacDonald, civilian director of Camp Miami, a more plausible explanation, beyond health reasons, was offered. While not blaming MacDonald for any of the shortcomings experienced by his troops, General Gordon wrote, "The fact is that the number of troops were too great for the resources of a place where almost everything they needed had to be created."<sup>78</sup> Miami simply did not have the resources and facilities to accommodate 7,500 troops, 2,000 citizens, plus a number of assorted camp followers who were attempting to reside within its limits, let alone serve the needs of the 36,000 soldiers, 10,000 visitors, and 25,000 citizens who located at Tampa.<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, the newspaper celebrated the immediate accomplishments of the encampment and a dynamic profitable future awaiting the city at the close of the war. In the short run, the stay

of the troops meant one hundred acres of scrub land cleared, one mile of railroad sidetrack, construction of two warehouses, additional streets paved, an artesian well begun, employment for everybody for six weeks, profits running into the thousands of dollars for some businesses, and the advertisement of Miami from Maine to California.<sup>80</sup> The *Metropolis* believed that this progress was only a foretaste of events to come because,

When the war closes, with steamships plying between Havana, Nassau, Key West, and the islands of the sea, the ships loaded with the products of these islands which are being exchanged for American products, all passing through this port, will begin to reveal to the world something of the important position Miami occupies in the commercial world. Watch Miami.<sup>81</sup>

With its geographical position and proximity to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean, the recently incorporated city of Miami welcomed the Spanish-American War as an opportunity to further its growth and development. *The Miami Metropolis*, the city's lone newspaper at this time, reflected this booster attitude. Since the paper's inception on May 15, 1896, it had been the policy of its editors to boost the new settlement, focusing on location and climate as its major assets. The Spanish-American War offered still another element for boosterism. There is a sense of irony to the city's boosterism. Like other Florida papers before the war, *The Metropolis* perceived peacetime as the proper environment for prosperity. Once the war began, however, and the paper discovered that the city would remain untouched by the war's destructiveness, it targeted its attention toward gaining benefits from the army and government in furthering Miami's self interest.



## NOTES

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